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## Language Policy as a part of the Linguistic Curriculum

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For students of languages and linguistics language policy hardly exists. They may have heard that in some countries such as France there exists an official institution that is responsible for the purity and the quality of the national language and that some national governments enact laws to prevent the influence of foreign languages in their country – see for instance the Loi Toubon (1994) in France – but for most students of languages and linguistics there is hardly any relation between language and politics.

However, the question which language to use as the official language of a community or a country is one of the most fundamental issues in discussions about (national) identity and minority rights. See for instance the long lasting violent language struggles in Spain, Belgium and Northern Italy. The same applies to the question which language norms should be taught in schools or which standards are to be used in public communication. See for instance the ongoing heavy debate in Flanders about this topic. Similarly, the question which endangered languages should be documented, protected or supported is not an issue that should be left to legal specialists and politicians only, linguists also have a responsibility and expertise here. However, most of the national experts of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages of the Council of Europe are lawyers, educators or former politicians.

Sociolinguists working in the field of minority languages and linguists working in the field of language documentation usually are aware of the problems sketched above. However, they seldom have any expertise in policy making, since this is an aspect which is far removed from their daily interests. Their possible involvement is further hampered by a basic lack of knowledge about language policy. That is why language policy should become part of any linguistic curriculum.

Nobody wants to leave environmental policy to engineers, lawyers and politicians only. Specialists with knowledge about soil, water, air, flora and fauna also make their contributions. Similarly, language policy is more than a playground for educators, journalists, lawyers and politicians. Linguists must take their responsibility, which means that students of languages and linguistics should be educated to do so.

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