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Research and publish, publish or perish, so what?

Author: Fellis N. Mutune

Affiliation: PhD Candidate Machakos University

Email address: Senseimutune@yahoo.com

Postal Address: 2530-90100 Machakos

Mobile Number: 0721585913

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Abstract

Research primarily is geared towards creation of new knowledge. Researchers in Applied Linguistics are expected to identify and solve linguistic problems in the society. For this to be realized scholars in applied linguistics should engage in research that influences policy formulation or change of policy and also engage stakeholders at the formative stages of the research process. Over the years, scholars have pursued Applied Linguistics and explored varied issues in an endeavour to acquire certificates for different motivations. In each and every institution of higher learning in Kenya, there has been a research policy that at the undergraduate level, each and every student must come up with a project before graduation. The Commission of University Education has passed that at the post graduate level, a candidate pursuing masters should publish a paper from their research project or dissertation before graduation. At the PhD level, one has to publish two papers from their research work. Of what value are these research activities? As applied linguistics researchers we need to bring the policy actors and stakeholders on board. This paper explores platforms, strategies and opportunities which an applied linguist can maximize in engaging the policy actors. Further, the paper examines the tools and skills that an applied linguist should have for effective communication with various types of stakeholders to get value for the research conducted. Also, the paper explores the tools which an applied linguist can use for mapping policy actors. It is hoped that the issues addressed in this paper will be instrumental to an applied linguist on how to engage the stakeholders in the research process and also the implementation of the research findings to facilitate formulation of policies that bring change.

Key words

Publish, perish, policy actors, stakeholders, Commission of Higher Education, Applied Linguistic

Introduction

Most scholars research and publish for different motivations. The most apparent reason for researching and publishing is a scholarly activity which has been undertaken for decades. Others do it out of the love and interest that they have for writing. This observation means that researching and publishing are out of intrinsic motivation. Other scholars will publish because it is a condition by the disciplines they are pursuing.

One such motivation is for promotion, especially if such a scholar is an academic staff. Commission for University Education (CUE) provides a publication formula which is used besides other parameters such as teaching experience, ability to attract research funds, mentorship staff that are due for promotion. The more publications a researcher or scholar has, the more the points during consideration for a promotion. Ouma (2018) notes that the standardisation of the CUE guidelines on publication may not reflect the actual contribution of authors. CUE may not reflect the real contribution of authors. Again the scholars are pressurised to publish or "perish". This pressure makes even some to publish in 'predatory' journals on a pay-as-you publish basis. From a different perspective, some individuals may also piece up unmerited work and publish as single authors. Even as other scholars such as Ouma (2018) recommend

that the CUE should adopt the internationally established standards of recognising academicians' research on other platforms such as web rankings and others provided.

Brown (2017) opines that publishing increases the credibility of the research, the practitioner and puts the knowledge in a permanent and searchable record. The practitioner can be inferred that by publishing in peer-reviewed journals, the other researchers and scholars who refer to your publication will seem to believe the contents than when referring to a blog or even another source.

The practitioner again, who publishes in a credible journal, is rated higher than those who publish in predatory journals. However, Sherman (2014) advances two apparent reasons why practitioners research; to prove to the funders that they spent the money well and show their employers that they are utilising their free time adding the prestige of the University. From this perspective, it is clear that the motivation for publishing is self-centred. Nevertheless, the scholar asserts that there are some compelling reasons to publish. These are, for the researcher to understand his or her discovery, to get reviews, especially before the paper is published and lastly to become part of the scientific community. Sherman and Brown seem to agree that a practitioner who has published is highly regarded than the one who has not. Another voice to this ongoing issue on publishing is Kramer (2012) who alludes to Sherman's perspective that publications provide recognition within the field of the author by becoming reputable as a key opinion leader. Gilles Pie (2018) reasoning on why scholars publish is similar in some way with the previously referred scholars. She notes that publishing enables the practitioner to attain avowal for their research word and also build a professional reputation. Just like other scientists, applied linguists conduct research and publish the findings for their advancement in terms of being promoted as academic staff. Lack of publication translates to stagnation in terms of their cadres as academic staff.

This situation leads to the coinage of the slogan 'publish or perish' emanates. As a scholar, I entirely agree and strive to achieve this in my entire academic life. But the question is, for whom should we publish? Bascoro and Almeida (2006) note that the use of research results for policy decision-making is gaining greater prominence in recent years. They attribute this to the outstanding processes of world change, which call for concrete evidence to support or challenge the novelty which is implemented in varied contexts. As social scientists, we should embrace this trend, which was initiated in the 20th century. Research findings should be used to formulate policies that bring change. It is, therefore, vital to connect researchers with policy actors and practitioners. This paper shades light on how an applied linguist, being a social scientist, can reach out to the policy actors.

The first part of the paper explores platforms, strategies and opportunities that are at an applied linguist disposal to engage the policy makers maximally. The second part examines the tools and skills that an applied linguist should possess for effective communication with various types of stakeholders. Further, the paper examines the mapping tools that can be used to grade the stakeholders.

For any research to translate to policy formulation or policy change, the policy actors should be engaged at the formative stages of the investigation. The early engagement harnesses practical information for study and also helps to create an audience for the research findings and recommendations. This engagement can be done at the development/presentation of the concept, especially with the in-charge of the institution where the research would be based. It is important to consult at the initial stages of the study with the people who 'matter' as far as one's research problem so that later one may engage them in the implementation stage of the research recommendations. For instance, if the area of research is based on clinical linguistics, it is crucial for the researcher to engage the superintendent of the specific hospital in which the investigation

will be conducted. However, some applied linguists may lack information on strategies, opportunities and platforms that they can use to engage the stakeholders. Therefore, this section explores them as follows;

2.0 Strategies for preparing for stakeholder engagement

From the onset of any research idea, an applied linguist should have highly ranked descriptions on how to approach stakeholders. There are three aspects of putting stakeholders in as far as engagement, mapping and looking for ways of defining their influences.

An applied linguist should frame their findings to appeal to the interests of their audience. The framing should happen in situations where there are no policy windows that already exist. An applied linguist should concentrate on researching issues that are current and try to look for solutions to the problems at hand. By doing so, he or she will know who to engage and why?

An applied linguist should choose the right tool and platform to reach out to the relevant stakeholder or policy actor. A decision should be made from the formative stages of the research on which policy actors to engage and how.

An applied linguist who would want to influence policy formulation should ensure that they value all the relevant policy actors and stakeholders to ensure that they own the subject under research from the initial stage and start thinking on how best it can be incorporated in the policy. An applied linguist should devise a way of engaging the relevant policymakers without taking up their time. This section highlights the strategies that an applied linguist can use.

2.1 Message box

The message box captures the five areas of a research concept. These are; the problem being addressed which should be apparent and create curiosity. The researcher should pose the following questions to identify the problem: What specific problem or piece of the issue am I addressing in broad terms? What is the most critical issue? So what? Why does this matter to my audience? What happens if it is not resolved? The gain or loss of addressing the subject is also included and the benefit; which is a list of stakeholders to benefit Solutions – the question to pose is what the potential benefits of resolving this problem are? A message box captures the researchers' message (summarise the issue one is tackling, challenges, benefits and the issue at hand).

2.2. Elevator pitch

An applied linguist should be able to state his or her primary research area within one minute when asked. The name –elevator pitch- reflects the idea that it should be possible to deliver the summary of the research idea in the period of an elevator ride or approximates 30 seconds to 2 minutes. This strategy is suggested due to the limited available amount of time. This strategy enables a researcher to express the most important ideas or concepts in the shortest time possible.

The researcher should be lucid and may follow these stages; a) trigger – which is the starting point b) development – output which is a short description of a research idea that explains the concept in such a way that any listener can understand it in a short period. The development stage describes who the product is for, what it does, why it is needed, and how it will get done. For the latter, when explaining to an individual, the description generally explains one's skills and goals and why they would be a productive and beneficial person to have on a term. An elevator pitch does not necessarily include all of these components, but it usually does at least explain what the idea is and why it is valuable. Elevator pitch as a strategy is used to entice a stakeholder or describe a thought. The goal is to convey the overall concept or topple excitingly. The name –elevator pitch- reflects the idea that it should be possible to deliver the summary in

the period of an elevator ride or approximates 30 seconds to 2 minutes. It is advantageous as a strategy since it is a useful strategy which minimises on time to be use when a researcher is explaining the research concept to a potential policy actor or stakeholder.

2.4 Policy briefs

A policy brief is a concise summary of a particular issue, the policy options to deal with and some recommendations on the best option. It is aimed at government policymakers and others who are interested in formulating or influencing policy. There are two types of policy briefs. These are;

Advocacy brief – argues in favour of a particular course of action.

Objective brief – gives balanced information for the policymaker to make up his or her mind.

A policy brief should provide enough background information for the reader to understand the problem. Again, the researcher should convince the reader that the issue must be addressed urgently by providing evidence to support one alternative. A policy brief should be stimulating to prompt the policy actor to make a decision.

A policy brief should be short and to the point focusing only on meanings – what one finds out (the research findings) relate to a big picture. Most importantly, policymakers are busy people and are probably not specialist in one's area; therefore they are likely to read only something that: Looks attractive, appears unusual and is short and easy to read. A policy brief should meet this criterion.

2.3 Press release

A press release is a ticket to publicity. It a tool made to announce something newsworthy in the most objective way possible. This is a strategy that an applied linguist can maximise to reach out to policy actors. The whole purpose of a press release is to get coverage and get noticed by a target audience. The coverage, therefore, serves as a means of communication to the research findings and recommendation. As a means of communication, the press release can be written, recorded, or even shown. When writing a press release, it's essential to start with basic questions like who did what, when and where it happened, what it was for. This tool should be short and straightforward and preferably in a form that allows copying and passing because journalists are always busy. The press release should be precise and to the point. It should be written with an attention-grabbing headline in bold format. The lead sentence should be a concise summary of the subject of, and the rest of the body should capture the essential details of your research, who, what, when, why and how?

3.0 Platforms for an applied linguist

This section of the paper explores the platforms that an applied linguist can use for engagement of the stakeholders. The platforms enable policy actors to act on the research findings.

3.1 Newspapers

An applied linguist can make use of the newspaper to reach out the policy actors. A newspaper is a powerful tool, and it has broad readership. For the findings to be printed in the paper, the researcher will present an article in the opinion editorial to the editor. Once printed, it can attract relevant policy actor who in turn may contact the author. This way, the findings will affect policy change. For instance, if an applied researcher has conducted a study on "The role of an applied linguist in the preservation of the Dholuo folklore", this may interest the minister in charge of gender and culture in the Luo Nyanza County. The minister may partner with the applied linguist in ensuring that Dholuo culture does not die (culture death). Again, the applied linguist

who succeeds in having his or her findings appear in the opinion editorials column may be called upon in a radio show or television to shed more light. Weintraut (2013) notes that editorial writers build on an argument and try to influence public opinion to promote critical thinking, and sometimes cause people to take action on an issue. For these reasons, therefore, newspaper editorials can change the way things are done (policy).

3.2 Television

Television channels are good news sources. According to the Communications Authority of Kenya, the number of TV stations has risen to 66 since 2015. An applied researcher could come in contact with the host of a talk show in any of the television channels and even express interest of being a participant in such shows. Through these shows, the applied linguist can get the attention of a policy actor who may then contact him or her for more discussion. Ilie (2006) notes that talk shows are widely influential media phenomena. This observation means that it is a robust platform that can be utilised to reach out to the relevant stakeholders. According to this researcher, talk shows are geared to public debate using party conversation and that they target at the same time a multiple audiences. Again applied linguists should be part and parcel of the solution to the issues at hand. Therefore through the talk shows, an applied linguist can give insights to social or moral problems. Linguistic problems are presented in society. For instance, if an applied linguist is researching on 'the Language used in a hospital set-up and how that affects service delivery', he/she can present the findings of the research on television which may get attention of the Cabinet Secretary of Health who may later on engage the applied linguist for making the issue clearer. This move may change the way the medics communicate with the patients.

3.3 Radio

Radio stations in Kenya are an excellent means of making Kenyans, and even the world informed of the latest news and up-to-date information from Kenya and beyond. According to the Kenya Communications Authority, there are over 100 radio stations in Kenya. Lee (2002) advances that some scholars argue that talk shows can provide forums for public deliberation since they consist of persons who are invited to shed more light on the issues which are of public interest. The guests advance their circumstances and their position. Research findings which are as a result of rigorous and credible work are regarded to be factual. In this regard, an applied linguist can liaise with radio talk shows hosts to be invited in one of such programme to air out their findings and recommendations. Radio is a medium which has an extensive listenership. In this case, the talk show may catch the attention of relevant policy actors. For example, if the researcher is researching on 'how gender roles are reflected in the current Kenyan secondary school set books', such talk may be listened to by a human rights activist who may take up the discussion to a higher level primarily if the gender is represented in a biased way. This explanation implies that the radio is a platform that an applied researcher can use to reach out to the would-be policy actors for the utilisation of the research findings.

3.4 Social media platforms

There are several social media platforms that an applied linguist can maximise to reach out to the policy actors. These include the blogs, twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, slide share, among others. All these provide an opportunity for the researcher to discuss research findings. These forums offer the researcher to write freely the conclusions and recommendations which may get the attention of a policy actor.

4.0 Opportunities

An applied linguist researcher has several opportunities to engage policy actors that can be exploited to his/her disadvantage. These opportunities if used maximally can enhance the researcher's quest to influence policy formulation or change. Some of these opportunities are as expounded in the section that follows.

4.1 Conference Dinner

During conferences, the CEO's or the Vice Chancellor of the organisation or institution may invite the participants for a conference dinner. During such informal forums, there are free interactions, especially among all those who attend. An applied linguist should grasp such an opportunity and maximise it to his/her advantage. Introductions are part of the dinner and this means that one can easily reach out to the relevant policy actor. For instance, if the applied linguist is conducting a study on the communication strategies in a given University or organisation, he or she may approach the Vice Chancellor during the conference dinner and engage him or her armed with the findings with the aim of drafting a communication policy for the organisation or institution. Upon having the opportunity at hand, an applied linguist can pitch the results without spending much of the Vice Chancellor's time since he/she has the right strategies.

4.2 Any other business

In each and every notice of meeting, there is always a list of matters to be considered and discussed or to be transacted. Any other business is among the items on the agenda. This revelation means that during such time, members can sneak in issues that are not part of the business to be transacted. Applied linguists are affiliated to different groups and organisations which hold meetings. Therefore, such is timely avenues that he or she can raise specific findings and recommendations on an area he or she had been researching. During the meeting, there could be a relevant stakeholder whose attention can be attracted to the sentiments of the researcher. If this occurs, the applied linguist can, later on, be engaged by the policy actor during which the researcher can clarify some issues.

4.3 Workshops

Workshops present possible opportunities which an applied linguist can use to reach out to the policy actors. This is so since workshops are meant for people who are working together or are working in the same field. Again, the workshops are facilitated by people who have real experience in the subject under discussion. It is, therefore, possible that some of the facilitators could be policy actors. An applied linguist can raise findings from research work that he/she has conducted, which is geared towards changing or formulating a policy. Workshops encourage the attendees to participate in a seminar actively. The workshop period is an opportunity which an applied linguist should grab and make use of so as to reach the policy actors.

4.4 Request by organisations or institutions to be Keynote speakers

Applied linguists should take advantage of any offer or opportunity for engaging in activities which are initiated by, or is in the interest of the target policy actor or stakeholder. For example, an applied linguist researching on gender issues that may hinder the proper implementation of the basic education act should attend all meetings organised by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) and the non-governmental organisations that agitate for gender parity in education. Again the applied linguist should not decline any request to take up an advisory role with an NGO or even giving keynote speeches at organised conferences by professionals. Such requests present valuable opportunities which should be used to influence the mindset of the attendees on a given issue, possibly one which he/she would wish he/she has researched on.

5.0 An Applied Linguist as a policy actor

It is vital all times for applied linguist researchers to ask the so what question as they conceive research ideas. This question is crucial as it enables the researchers to uncover the stakeholders in the area of research field whom they can partner with to change the society.

Research in applied linguistics should be geared towards solving linguistic problems in society. (Policy research). As applied linguists, researchers should be guided by the so what question. It is essential to list all the policy actors in one's area of research. For instance, policy actors in applied linguistics research on gender representation in English teaching and learning materials are; Publishers, Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, Ministry of Education, authors, teachers, learners, Gender-based organisations, KNEC.

Once the policy actors are identified, their constellations should be analysed based on interest, power, influence on each other and coalitions. The analysis of actors constellations gives; a clear picture of conflicts of interest, Potential alliances, an opportunity to determine clusters of stakeholders who may inhibit different levels of interest, capacities and interest in the issue in question

In the above example, the researcher will have to engage the MOE, KICD, the publishers and the authors. The question is, how? At this point, the applied researcher will have to come up with tools which he/she will use for mapping these policy actors. Mapping the policy actors of research is a complicated and time-consuming exercise since it identifies which policy actors are in which quadrant and how to move stakeholders

Some mapping tools that can be used include;

5.1 Net maps

A net map is an interview-based mapping tool that enables people to understand, visualise, discuss and improve situations in which many different actors influence. The network map is a crucial exercise for starting to analyse the influence of policy actors and tap into previously uncovered groupings. Using this mapping tool, individuals and groups can clarify their perspective of a situation, foster discussion and develop a strategic approach to networking activities. In the earlier example where an applied linguist is researching on gender representation in English textbooks, using the net maps, gender-based NGOs, the MOE, KICD, the publishers, the authors and the teachers will present their views on gender and the current position on how the issue of gender is represented in the TLM. The presentation will foster discussion on the subject at each of the stakeholders engages the other. Ultimately each of the policy actors will develop a strategic approach on the issue of gender, and the different perspectives. Net maps help the researchers to determine; what actors are involved in a given network? How are they linked? How influential are they? What their goals are?

A net map allows researchers to be more strategic about how they act in these complex situations. This mapping tool helps researchers to answer questions on whether they should strengthen the links to influential supporters (high influence, same goals), e.g. gender-based NGOs. Would have a high influential in a study investigating gender inequalities. Whether to be aware of a prominent actor who does not share your goal is also a pertinent question. For example, publishers. Yet another question would be whether increased networking helps empower the researchers' dis-empowered beneficiaries. This tool is low-tech and low cost and can be used well with the rural community as well as policy actors.

The process of net mapping includes; Preparation-define question, links, goals and decide who is to be involved. Actor selection-write names of actors involved. Draw links- on who is linked to whom. Arrows should be drawn according to interviewee direction. The goals of each policy

actor are written and influence towers assigned to each of the policy actors. After the stipulation of the goals, there is a need to establish what the network means for the strategy of the organisation, the source of the influence and also the outcome in the case in case of conflicting interests

5.2 Participatory impact pathways analysis

PIPA is designed to help researchers to make explicit their theories of change (how they can achieve their goals and having input). This tool is drawn from program theory evaluation, social network analysis and research to reveal and foster development. Project pathways describe how the project will develop outputs and the policy actors who can be involved to achieve growth and impact positively to the project at hand. Researchers and policy actors' work together to map knowledge and research products must scale up to meet the desired change.

A crucial feature of PIPA is scaling out- building a favourable institutional environment for the emerging change process through; a positive word of mouth, organised publicity, Political lobbying, Policy change. For instance, a research project that is piloting the challenges of using mother tongue as a medium of instruction in lower primary, coming up with a project's Impact pathways may involve the Ministry of Education which will encourage broad adoption. Secure positive communication between the researcher and the MoE and strong joint implementation-increases the likelihood of the MOE effective use of the research findings. Another impact pathway might be for the researcher to use evidence from the study to influence decision-makers in the MOE services head office to support the work. PIPA encourage researchers in research for development projects to want their research to bring about development outcomes.

Impact pathways raise the profile and give legitimacy to brokering activities in which researchers are actively involved in establishing the interpersonal and organisational links, which will be needed for future impact. The impact pathways are crucial in explaining a research's rationale for it links the project goal framed in terms of a challenge or problem and what the project is going to achieve.

5.3 Problem trees

A problem tree is a useful tool for understanding the different points of view of various policy actors. Problem trees describe the main problem. Problem trees focus on issues rather than opportunities. They may appear negative and can turn the problem trees into objective trees-achieved by reframing the problem into the desired state. This is done to motivate the policy actors on the positive change to be brought about by the research.

For instance, in investigating how well mother tongue can be used as a medium of instruction in lower primary, some of the foreseen problems would be a --cosmopolitan community where different mother tongues are spoken, The TSC delocalisation policy, Town set up where children learn Kiswahili or English as their mother tongue and Intermarriages.

This tool is good at causality-only identifies what the research work is doing and what it needs to do to have the desired impact. Problem trees do not identify who needs to do what. To overcome this weakness, the tool should be combined with another one. For example network maps (identifies the policy actors responsible). A branch of a problem tree ends once it has identified a problem that the project will solve e.g. in coming up with a problem tree of the representation of gender in TLM, a branch will end when it has identified gender inequality which will be addressed by the research.

5.4 Campfire

This mapping tool involves drawing of campfires representing the stakeholders by the facilitator. The stakeholders who have the power (and so can see and talk with each other, as well as get all the heat) are close to the fire while the ones with the least power are furthest away. The Stakeholders are then depicted by different sized circles – where the diameter of the loop refers to that stakeholder's interest/dependence etc. on that resource. This representation provides a basis for discussion, argument, negotiation and eventually agreement. It can be layered in that different stakeholder groups can do their analysis first and then it can be combined. Schiffer (2008) notes that campfire is another excellent and easy tool to understand the picture, which represents the power of the various stakeholders in terms of implementing the research findings and recommendations. The process is even made more manageable by adding links between the different actors which simplifies the understanding of what happens (flows) between the stakeholders.

5.5 Alignment-Interest and Influence Matrix (AIIM)

This AIIM helps researchers to unearth the stakeholders in their area of research. It is a crucial mapping tool for it allows researchers to be in a position to answer the question so what? At the initial stages of conceiving the research idea, it's vital to list all the relevant stakeholders. The next step involves sorting out the listed stakeholders into quadrants in terms of engagements based on the degree of alignment and interest and degree of influence.

The AIIM can be represented in a table as follows:

Alignment—Interest and Influence Matrix (AIIM)

High	Quadrant	Quadrant
Degree of Alignment	Quadrant	Quadrant
Low		High

Degree of influence

Table 1

Those stakeholders

In quadrant 2 have both a low degree of alignment and interest and low degree of influence.

Quadrant 1 has a high degree of alignment and interest but a low degree of influence

In quadrant 3 are critical in terms of engagements since they are aligned to the researchers' objectives, and they have the influence. That is they have both a high degree of alignment and interest and degree of influence

In quadrant 4 have a high degree of influence but a low degree of alignment and interest.

Researchers should engage the stakeholders in quadrants 1, 2 and 4 by coming up with mechanisms to convince them to create interest so that they move to quadrant 3. This observation means that none of the stakeholders should be ignored in terms of engagement regardless of the quadrant they fall in since all of them are important and should be brought on board for intended change to occur.

Conclusion

Researchers should be encouraged to align their research activities to real issues in their societies to offer practical solutions and input accordingly. There is a need to publish research work for the benefits of others and researchers themselves. Indeed it is essential to engage relevant policy actors at the initial stages of our research so that we align our research to the societal needs and also fast track the implementation of the research findings. As applied linguists, we need to make use of the opportunities, strategies and platforms at our disposal to reach out to relevant policy actors.

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The Contribution of the Bantu Mother Languages to Tanzanian Socio-economic Development through Media