English Language Teaching Policy in Iran and Singapore: A Qualitative Meta-Analysis

Reza Shahi [1], Reza Khany [2*], Leila Shoja [3]

[1] PhD Candidate of English Language Teaching, Department of English, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Ilam University, Ilam, Iran
[2] Associate Professor of English Language Teaching, Department of English, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Ilam University, Ilam, Iran
[3] Assistant Professor of English Language Teaching, Department of English, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Ilam University, Ilam, Iran

Abstract: This study intends to conduct a systematic qualitative meta-analysis that focuses on research studies into English Language Teaching (ELT) policy in Iran and Singapore. To identify and compare the main features of the studies and also to provide a contemporary picture of the field in Iran and Singapore, 13 articles published between 2010 and 2021 were included in this review. The analysis revealed that Singapore has employed a top-down language policy and utilized a holistic curriculum which has led to an English knowing society. The policies are well articulated and few mismatches were reported in the policies. In addition, the policies are positively perceived by stakeholders, leading to effective implementation of the policies. However, the findings showed that the Iranian top-down policy negatively framed ELT. Moreover, the policies are not well articulated and there are some inconsistencies between the policies and some mismatches between policy and practice. In addition, the analysis revealed that Iranian stakeholders negatively perceived the policies. They believed that the policies have marginalized the role of teachers and their professional judgment. Finally, research gaps for future research studies in ELT policy were highlighted and recommendations were offered.

Keywords: Language Education Policy, ELT, Iran, Singapore, Meta-Analysis.

_____

* **Corresponding Author.**

Authors' Email Address:
[1] **Reza Shahi** (r.shahi@ilam.ac.ir), [2] **Reza Khany** (r.khany@ilam.ac.ir), [3] **Leila Shoja** (l.shoja@ ilam.ac.ir)

Introduction

The English language has appeared as a lingua franca for countries around the world in recent decades (Hamid & Nguyen, 2016). English Language Teaching (ELT) is a global phenomenon and no country is free from it. However, the nature and aim of English teaching vary from country to country, depending on the state of socio-economic development and the depth of global penetration of the cultural and educational system (Tupas, 2018). In reaction to the spread of English as the language of industrialization and the dominance of English in communication (Low & Ao, 2018; Tupas, 2018; Hamid & Nguyen, 2016), countries around the world have essentially undertaken a fundamental reform in their language policies.

In 1966, the policymakers of Singapore introduced a bilingual education policy and declared English as one of the official languages. Moreover, in 1997, policymakers in Iran criticized the previous language policy and called for a revolution in Iran's education system, and introduced a new language curriculum based on Islamic culture. Singapore has always been introduced as a leading country in education and ranked as one of the highest countries in Asia and the world. Identifying and specifying the features of effective and successful education systems is of particular importance. In addition, Iran has always been criticized for its educational system (Sajjadi, 2015). To establish and refine educational policies, policymakers need new and practical ideas and methods. Therefore, this systematic meta-analysis intends to summarize the findings of scholarly articles on language education policy in Iran and Singapore to provide a contemporary picture of the field in both countries and to provide practical thoughts to Iranian policymakers to consider in their policymaking process.

English Language Policy

English language teaching policies have always been the main subject of policymakers' attention in many countries around the world (Levin, 2008). Debates over ELT policy planning and practice have generated a rich array of research studies, and researchers have continually expanded the scope of inquiry and provided new insights into the goals of English language policies (e.g., Amir & Musk, 2013; Bruen & Sheridan, 2016; Elyas & Badawood, 2016; Flynn & Curdt-Christiansen, 2018; Hawanti, 2014; Hult, 2012; Mirhosseini & Khodakarami, 2015; Mohamed, 2020; Nguyen, 2011; Ulum, 2015; Yang & Jang, 2020).

According to Levin (2008), "policies govern just about every aspect of education – what schooling is provided, how, to whom, in what form, by whom, with what resources, and so on" (p. 8). Language policy is a dominant policy that has a significant role in the ELT curriculum. Language policy influences language practice in schools. As Ahmad and Khan (2011) note, language policy specifies language-related rights and functions, therefore, the design of the curriculum.

ELT in Iran

ELT has witnessed many extreme ups and downs in Iran (Aliakbari, 2005; Iranmehr & Davari, 2018). During the Pahlavi dynasty (1925–1979), English language and English teaching received much more attention as a result of extensive cooperation with Western countries, especially the United States and England (see Aliakbari, 2002; Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2017; Borjian, 2013; Farhady, Hezaveh, & Hedayati, 2010). By the contribution of the British Council and the Iran-American Society, two prominent language centers (Aliakbari, 2002), English became the most commonly used foreign language in Iran, between 1950 and 1978 (Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2017; Tollefson, 1991). According to Aliakbari (2005), "this vigorous attention to English and the presence of native-speaking teachers led to some extreme positions that certain national universities were commonly referred to as American universities" (p. 3).

However, this flourishing period of the English language did not last long and a change of scene occurred after the Islamic Revolution (Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2015). English language teaching in the post-revolutionary period has also experienced many ups and downs (Aliakbari, 2005). The Islamic government furiously turned against the Western countries, especially the United States (Borjian, 2013). As a result, English language teaching experienced waves of hostility (Aliakbari, 2002).

According to Borjian (2013), in the first years of the Revolution in Iran, the question of what should be done with English and whether it should remain in the curriculum or be banned altogether was at the center of the debate in Iran. The debate over "teaching or not teaching English" among new policymakers of the country, led to teaching English (Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2017), and the Islamic Revolution planned to nationalize the use of English (Tollefson, 1991). Therefore, new localized ELT textbooks were developed and a curriculum in line with the Islamic ideology was planned (Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2015). Currently, English is the only foreign language in Iran (Rassouli & Osam, 2019). By increasing the demand for

communicative approaches, public-school systems have been reformed, and traditional methods and materials have been challenged (Aghagolzadeh & Davari, 2017). And since 2013, new materials have been introduced based on Islamic values.

ELT in Singapore

After Singapore's independence, the Singaporean Government introduced a quadrilingual curriculum that included Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, and English (Cavallaro & Ng, 2014; Tan & Ng, 2011) and made it compulsory in 1966 (Lim, 2010; Tan & Ng, 2011). As a result of the language policy, Singaporean students were required to master one of the ethnic languages and the English language. However, Singaporean language policy valued English for its economic function (Tan & Ng, 2011), and English was embraced as the main official language due to its function as the language of industry and economic development (Patrick, 2011). Therefore, all Singaporean students were required to acquire the English language as their first language and Mandarin as their second language (Tan, 2014). The English language has experienced some changes in Singapore since its introduction in 1950. Table 1 summarizes the changes in the English language policy follows:

Table 1. *The History of English Language in Singapore (based on Lim, 2010, p. 40; Silver, 2005, pp. 113–121; Chua, 2011 p. 129)*

Years	Policy shifts
1965-1978	Official languages The English language as an obligatory subject in the schools English-knowing country and bilingual policy in the schools
1979-1984	Campaign of Speak Mandarin language English language ability streaming in High schools
1985-1991	English-medium of instruction, 'Mandarin taught as a second language A communicative curriculum Only English-medium schools
1991-2000	Good English Movement New English language syllabus to meet the needs of the new digital age New English syllabuses for primary and secondary schools More communicative teaching for teaching English
2001-2010	More emphasis on acceptable English More focus on listening and speaking skills

This Study

Iran and Singapore differ in their political structures and language policy concerns and they have their own educational system. The education system of Singapore has always been ranked as one of the highest in the world. However, Iran has always been criticized for its educational system. By synthesizing research findings on the English language policy of Iran and Singapore, it is possible to identify and compare the main features of the policies to provide a fresh insight into the field for the policymakers, ELT teachers, and scholars. The current systematic meta-analysis intends to identify and compare the research findings on the English language policy in Iran and Singapore and find how the policies are framed ELT in both countries. To this end, the following research questions are posed:

1. What publication trends do ELT policy studies in Singapore and Iran reveal? (Authors, publication year, participants, and methodology)
2. How do the studies portray ELT policy in Iran and Singapore?

Methods

The present study utilized a qualitative meta-analysis to describe the features, trends, and patterns of current research studies on ELT policies in Iran and Singapore. This study used PRISMA (Preferred Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis) guidelines (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, & The Prisma Group, 2009) and the declarations of Timulak (2009).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To be included/excluded in this qualitative meta-analysis, each paper had to meet the predefined inclusion/exclusion criteria (Bereczki & Kárpáti, 2018). The studies were included if they were 1) designed, entitled, or described as English language teaching policy in Iran and Singapore; 2) written in English; 3) published between 2010 and 2021; and 4) related to the educational context. Moreover, book chapters, short communications, dissertations, theses, reviews, and editorial reports were excluded.

Databases and Search Strategy

The authors executed a systematic and comprehensive search to identify as many of the potentially relevant studies in the electronic databases. Searched databases include Taylor and Francis, Sage, and Science direct. The authors searched the databases in December 2021. The

search terms used in this study included language policy and Iran/Singapore terms. To get more relevant studies, the search was limited to the title and abstract of the publications in databases. The search strategies for the electronic database were as follows: Language policy AND Iran [Title]; Language policy AND Iran [Abstract]; Language policy AND Singapore [Title]; and Language policy AND Singapore [Abstract]. In addition, the search of this systematic meta-analysis was limited to articles published between January 2010 and November 2021.

Study Selections

Figure 1 shows the selection process of peer-reviewed scientific articles for this qualitative meta-analysis. The database search delivered 245 publications (Iran= 87; Singapore= 158). First, references were checked, and duplicate references, book chapters, book reviews, and publications published before 2010 were excluded (n= 103). Next, the remaining 144 articles were divided among the authors and their titles and abstracts were screened by using the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. After screening, 25 studies were selected for full texts analysis. To solve inconsistencies between the authors during the review process, they discussed until the highest level of agreement (above 95 %) was reached. Out of the 25 articles, 12 were excluded based on the inclusion/exclusion criteria. Finally, the review delivered a sample of 13 studies which were included for analysis.

Data Coding and Analysis

The research team (authors of the study) employed Garrard's (2020) framework to develop a data coding template that captured basic information including 1) article information, 2) participants, 3) research methodology, and 4) research aims. This review employed both descriptive and analytical analyses. Following Ali (2020), the research team used descriptive statistics to examine the surface characteristics of the selected studies, and in-depth thematic analyses to analyze the objectives of the articles along with other characteristics of the studies.

AREL

Taylor and Francis (Iran: 54; Singapore: 92) = 146

Science direct (Iran: 14; Singapore=13) =27

Sage (Iran: 19; Singapore: 53) = 72

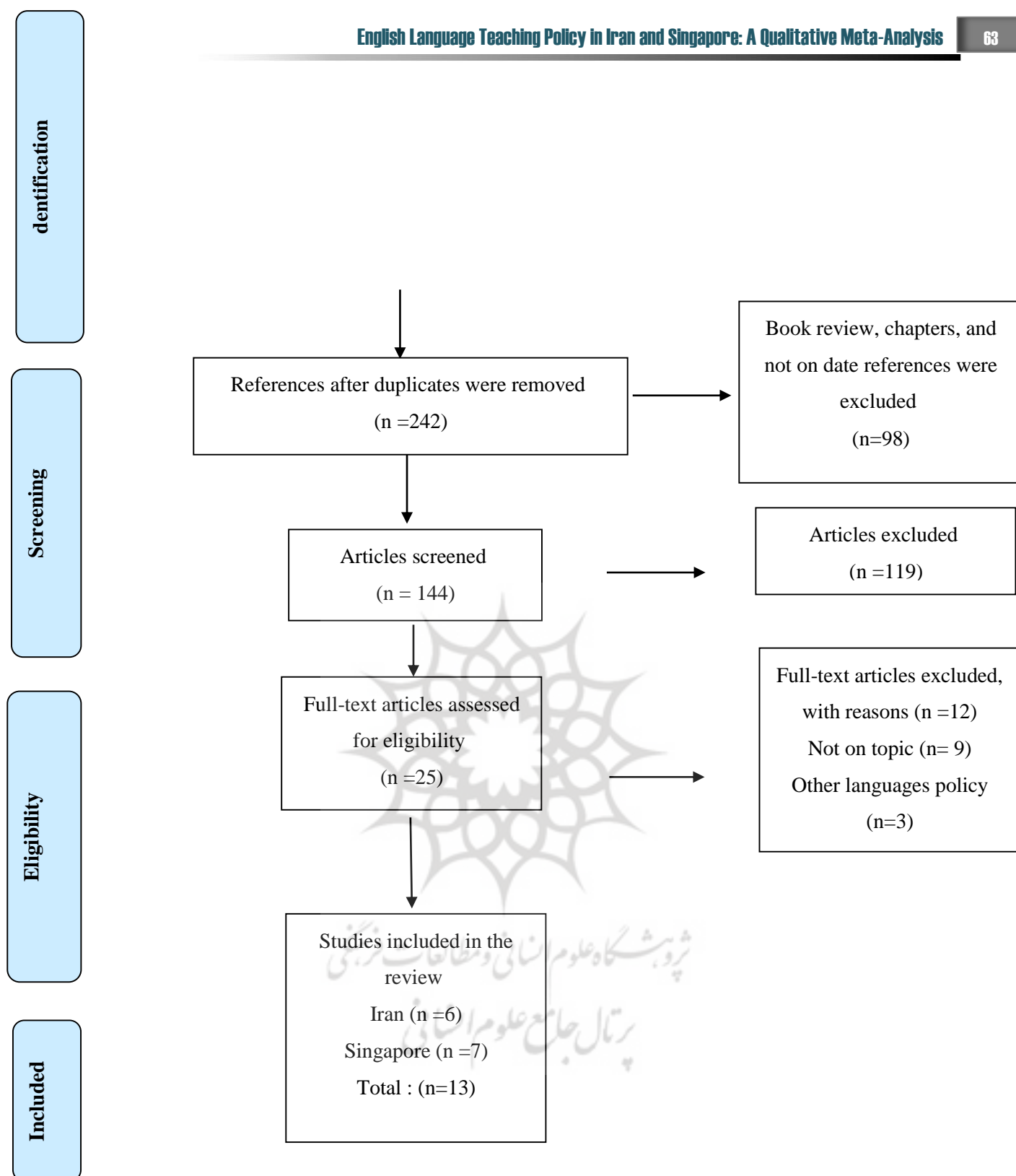Total number of references identified through database searching

Figure 1. *Flow Chart of the Study*

Findings

Descriptive Analysis

ELT Policy Studies' Research Design Approaches: The design of the studies was presented in Table 2 (Singaporean studies) and 3 (Iranian studies). The analysis showed that the reviewed studies utilized a wide variety of research designs. However, there was a bias towards the qualitative research approach. As shown in tables 2 and 3, nine out of 13 studies (6 Singaporean studies, 3 Iranian studies) used a qualitative research design, whereas 4 studies (1 Singaporean and 3 Iranian studies) used a mixed–methods research design. Most of the studies were descriptive qualitative studies (n= 6). In addition, survey and interview were the most popular data collection tools in the studies (n= 5), followed by document analysis (n= 2).

The Participants of the ELT Policy Studies: ELT policy research studies focused on a wide range of participants in both countries. The main actors of ELT policy studies were key official members, administrators, students, and teachers. The analysis revealed that most of the studies focused on language learners. In total, 4 out of 7 ELT policy studies focused on learners, while 3 studies targeted teachers, curriculum developers, and ELT lecturers. In addition, 6 out of 13 studies were conducted without participants. They were qualitative descriptive studies conducted by using document analysis.

In-depth Analysis

With regard to the content of the studies, this systematic meta-analysis provided a thematic analysis according to three main focuses of the studies: promotion and privilege of English language in education, stakeholders' perception, and inconsistency between policy and implementation.

Promotion and Privilege of English Language in Education: English language teaching was highly prominent in the Singaporean policy context. Five out of seven studies in the Singaporean context focused mainly on bilingual policy and the position of the English language in their educational system and society. These studies examined the English language policy by focusing on issues such as language ideology and medium of instruction (e.g., Curdt-Christiansen & Sun, 2016; Chua, 2011), the functional differentiation of languages (e.g., Tan & Ng, 2011), and economic concerns of language policy (e.g., Tupas, 2018; Zein, 2017).

Chua (2011) reported that Singapore's bilingual policy has renovated Singapore into an English-speaking country and shaped a robust language ideology that permeates English language teaching and learning. He mentioned that the Singapore government, by allocating

substantial resources to the education system and designing the curriculum, has legitimized English as the first language of learners and the medium of instruction in Singaporean schools at all levels (Curdt-Christiansen & Sun, 2016; Chua, 2011). The implementation of English as the medium of instruction policy in all sectors of the society has led to the gradual acquisition of English by most Singaporeans, with a growing percentage of learners reporting English as their first language. As a result of this policy, there has been a significant shift away from the mother tongue toward English in all ethnic groups (Curdt-Christiansen & Sun, 2016). And the interface of the English language along with other local languages in Singapore has caused the construction of a Singaporean version of English (Singlish) that was mainly used by uneducated people to deal with English but is now progressively spoken by young people as their first language (Chua, 2011).

Although the Singaporean policymakers have long regulated the English language as the medium of instruction, they have continued to strongly develop English as an essential means for economic growth (Tupas, 2018). In addition, Tan and Ng (2011) reported that the language policy in Singapore is reinforced by the idea of functional differentiation which values the English language for its economic function. However, they argued that the aim of utilizing English for its economic function and value is impaired by the interface and popularity of unsatisfactory standard of English (Singlish) in Singapore.

Zein (2017) found that Singapore's language policy is dominated by economic considerations. He stated that by growing the role of English for achieving success in global competition, the policy of including the English language in primary school curricula in Asia, especially Singapore, has been increased greatly. All countries in Asia, including Singapore, have reformed their language policies to use the English language as a means for playing a key role in the global market and economy (Tupas, 2018). The Singaporean policymakers believed that the English language would permit the Singaporean people to gain a high place in the competitive and international market and economy.

Considering Iran, three out of 6 studies in the Iranian context examined ELT policy and the position of the English language in the Iranian education system. Mirhosseini and Khodakarami (2016) reported that Iranian language policy is related to the socio-cultural and political conditions and religious values in Iran. They examined four documents that specify general and specific directions of ELT curriculum in Iran: The Science Roadmap (2009), The Twenty-year National Vision of Iran (2005), The Fundamental Reform guidelines of Education (2011), and The National Curriculum Document (2009). Mirhosseini and Khodakarami (2016)

summarized the general direction of Iran's official education system to be achieved by 2050, based on the National Vision of the Islamic Republic as follows:

"Iranian society, within the perspective of this vision, will have these features: developed in accordance with its own cultural, geographic and historical characteristics, and relying on the ethical principles and values of Islam … loyal to the Revolution and the Islamic system and to the blossoming of Iran, and also proud of being Iranian" (p. 24).

They also elaborated on some points that must be adopted in ELT practice. According to them, the predominance of the Islamic Tawhid worldview should be integrated into all aspects of science and the Islamic perspective should be incorporated into the curricula and materials in order to raise the level of Islamic values. Moreover, foreign language curricula and materials should be localized based on the Islamic culture.

Based on Mirhosseini and Khodakarami (2016), *"The Fundamental Reform Document"* that arranges the ideals of educational reform, emphasize *"Islamic–Iranian culture, revolutionary characteristics"* [italics in original] and *"common Islamic–Iranian identity"* [italics in original] (p. 25). In addition, the document places emphasis on strengthening the Farsi language. Moreover, the document sets a clear policy for foreign language teaching and states one of its strategies as: *"Provision of foreign language education … Islamic–Iranian identity* [italics in original]" (Mirhosseini and Khodakarami, 2016, p. 25).

In another study, Rassouli and Osam (2019) reported that the English language is the most important and common foreign language in Iran; however, Iran considers English as a big threat and danger to its Islamic identity. They noted that Iranian policymakers criticized the previous education system and decided to reform Iran's education system based on Islamic values. Thus, as Rassouli and Osam (2019) noted, Iran has developed "an education system based on their way of thinking and philosophy that aims at constructing a perfect humankind who believes in Islam" (p. 10). To this end, policymakers have evolved the programs based on Islamic values and developed materials (textbooks) that translate Islamic culture into English.

Inconsistency between Policy and Implementation: Research findings in both contexts revealed some inconsistencies between policy and practice. Curdt-Christiansen and Sun (2016) located some discrepancies in the policy of bilingual education in Singapore's schools. They reported that the main mismatch between policy and practice is in the goal of the teaching and learning of the Singaporean's mother tongue. Although the policy has emphasized the importance of promoting cultural awareness and appreciation of ethnic languages, the policy has not been particularly effective. Moreover, parents' and children's attitudes towards local

languages or their mother tongue remain ambiguous, yielding a further decline in the local language competence and dominating the use of English.

One of the main concerns of Mirhossaini and Badri's research (2018) was the inconsistencies between the Iranian ELT policies and their implementations by stakeholders. They investigated the national documents to find out if the research findings on language teaching policy were considered in the development and construction of the documents. They found that the documents were inconsistent in some points and did not express a coherent policy.

In another study, Rassouli and Osam (2019) examined the ELT policies of the government and found that there were some discrepancies between policies and the attitudes of people due to political and religious reasons. They reported that the young generation in Iran has a positive attitude towards English in contrast to the attitude and mindset of policymakers. The younger generation in Iran is aware of the key role that English language skills play in today's world in meeting their instrumental needs and achieving higher social status and prestige.

Stakeholders' Perception, Attitudes, and Understanding: Xie and Cavallaro (2016) investigated students' attitudes towards bilingual policy in the Singaporean context. They reported that stakeholders have positive attitudes towards the policies and they understood the advantages of bilingualism. However, in the Iranian context, participants negatively perceived English language policies. Atai and Mazloum (2013) situated the analysis of ELT at the nexus of government policy, culture, and teachers' implementation of the curriculum. They reported that Iranian teachers believe that Iranian socio-political considerations negatively framed ELT. The policies did not give teachers enough room to use their professional judgment. In addition, Tohidian and Nodooshan (2021) argued that the policies marginalize the teachers in language classrooms, and they emphasized that teachers should be involved in the policy-making process. They suggested that a change in the attitude of policymakers toward teachers' involvement in educational policy and decision-making would improve the classroom outcomes.

Table 2. *Singaporean Studies*

Author(s)	Title	Level	participants	Focus	Methodology
Chua (2011)	Singapore's E(Si)nglish-knowing bilingualism	Primary school	…….	The assumptions that underlie the changes in	Qualitative descriptive

				Singapore's language-in-education policy	
Tan and Ng (2011)	Functional differentiation: a critique of the bilingual policy in Singapore	School	……..	Functional differentiation in Singaporean bilingual policy	Qualitative descriptive
Curdt-Christiansen and Sun (2016)	Nurturing bilingual learners: challenges and concerns in Singapore	Pre-school	……..	Current bilingual educational challenges and concerns for young children	Qualitative content analysis
Xie and Cavallaro (2016)	Attitudes towards Mandarin–English bilingualism: a study of Chinese youths in Singapore	School and higher education	students	the perceptions of Chinese-Singaporean youths towards the benefits and dis-advantages associated with Mandarin–English bilingualism	Mixed method survey
Zein (2017)	Access policy on English language education at the primary school level in the ASEAN Plus Three member states: motivations, challenges and future directions	Primary school	…….	English language-in-education policies at the primary school level	qualitative
Low and Ao (2018)	The Spread of English in ASEAN: Policies and Issues	School		Policies pertaining to the use of the English language in the ASEAN countries	Qualitative descriptive
Tupas (2018)	(Un)framing Language Policy and Reform in Southeast Asia	All levels		language policy reforms in Southeast Asia	Qualitative descriptive

Table 3. *Iranian Studies*

Author(s)	Title	Level	Participants	Focus	Methodology
Atai and Mazlum (2013)	English language teaching curriculum in Iran: planning and practice	School	key officials, material developers, and ELT teachers	Curriculum planning in Iran's Ministry of Education and its implementation by teachers	Mixed method (interview and survey)
Mirhosseini and	Aspects of 'English language education'	School	Teachers	Officially stated English teaching	Qualitative (interview and

Khodakarami (2016)	policies in Iran: 'Our own beliefs' or 'out of who you are'?			policies in Iran; de facto policy orientations and their possible (mis)matches.	documents analysis)
Alizadeh (2018)	Exploring language learners' perception of the effectiveness of an English Language Teaching (ELT) program in Iran	Private institute	Learners	language learners' perception of the effectiveness of the ELT program	Mixed method (questionnaire and interview)
Mirhosseini and Badri (2018)	Perspectives of Iranian University Students on Learning English: A Practical Need and/or an International Policy-push?	Higher education	Learners	Students' viewpoints on the necessity and justifications for learning English and their awareness of international policies	Mixed method (questionnaire and interview)
Rassouli and Osam (2019)	English Language Education Throughout Islamic Republic Reign in Iran: Government Policies and People's Attitudes	School	Students	anti-intrusion policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) against the English language	Qualitative (document analysis and Survey)
Tohidian and Nodooshan (2021)	Teachers' engagement within educational policies and decisions improves classroom practice: The case of Iranian ELT school teachers	School	Teachers	Stakeholders' role in the recent reform in Iranian ELT curricula and policies	Qualitative (interview)

Discussion

What publication trends do ELT policy studies reveal in Iranian and Singaporean contexts?

The analysis revealed that about 30.7 % (n= 4) of the reviewed studies were carried out between 2010 and 2015, while 69.3 % (n= 9) were conducted between 2016 and 2021. In addition, the analysis showed that the policy studies included in this study were located in a large diversity of journals. Regarding research methodology, there was an inclination towards qualitative

approaches in the countries' studies. About 69.3% of the studies used a qualitative research design, whereas 30.7 % used a mixed-methods approach. The generalizability issue is complicated in qualitative studies. Generalizability in qualitative studies is based on the researcher's understanding of the issue rather than the collection of representative data (Carminati, 2018; Delmar, 2010). In addition, regarding the participants of the studies, the analysis showed that 4 out of 13 ELT policy studies focused on language learners, whereas 3 studies focused on other participants (teachers, key officials, etc.). The findings, in line with Borg's (2019) findings, emphasized the role of learners in the planning and practicing ELT policy. However, by considering the number of studies that used teachers as their main participants in the Iranian and Singaporean studies, it seems that the importance of teachers' roles in ELT policy and curriculum is marginalized in the literature, while they are the main stakeholders in ELT.

How do the studies portray ELT policy in Iran and Singapore?

The findings suggested that policy planning in Iran and Singapore is essentially a top-down process (see Chua, 2011; Tohidian & Nodooshan, 2021). This model of government policy undertakes a decision-making process in which the decisions are only negotiated by the head of the ministries involved in that decision-making process (Lau, 2003). However, the policymaking process "should involve balancing a number of contradictory demands, and soliciting support, or at least tolerance, from the many different segments of society which have an interest in education" (Haddad & Demsky, 1994, p. 9). And decisions should be made by negotiating with different interest groups (e.g. government ministries, stakeholders, etc.). However, as far as the reviewed studies showed, the negotiation between policymakers and stakeholders seems to be absent in both policy-making processes.

The analysis also revealed that the Singaporean government has adopted a top-down approach in developing new curricula for all school levels to avoid the disadvantages of inconsistent language policies (Chua, 2011). In addition, the results showed that the Singaporean government values English because of its economic function and its important role in gaining success in the global competition of the current century (see Tan & Ng, 2011; Zein, 2017). Therefore, the Singaporean government has employed a holistic large-scale approach to ensure that exposure to the English language is maximized in the schools (Chua, 2011). The reviewed studies found that the Singaporean language policy is successful and, in line with previously conducted studies, they reported that the policy has renovated Singapore

into an English-speaking society (Bokhorst-Heng & Caleon 2009; Chua, 2010, 2011; Curdt-Christiansen & Sun, 2016; Low & Ao, 2018; Pakir, 2008; Tupas, 2011).

Analysis of the studies revealed that teachers and learners have positive attitudes toward the policies and understood the advantages and benefits of the policies. The results are in line with the findings of Bokhorst-Heng and Caleon (2009) and Lee (2012). They reported that the policies increase the feelings of possession of English in Singapore and require them to learn more than one language (English). Despite the positive attitudes toward the policies in Singapore, studies have reported some inconsistencies between policy and practice. They reported that the main inconsistencies are in the goals of Mandarin teaching and learning. The attitudes of parents and children towards Mandarin are still negative.

Unlike Singapore, where English is highly valued, Iranian policymakers have viewed teaching and learning the English language as a threat to their Iranian identity. Therefore, they have introduced some strategies to integrate Tawhid into all aspects of English language teaching. To this end, they have incorporated curricula and textbooks with Islamic values and excluded western culture values from the materials to raise the level of Islamic awareness, beliefs, and behaviors. Despite the fact that policymakers have tried to reform language teaching, the outcomes have not been satisfactory. Language learners, in most cases, are not able to use English for communication after six years of education.

Moreover, in line with Iranmehr, Atai, and Babaii (2108) and Mirhosseini, Tajik, and Bahrampour Pasha (2021), the analysis showed that there are some inconsistencies among the documents, and they do not articulate coherent policies. In addition, as Rassouli and Osam (2019) noted, the policymakers intended to teach the English language for the provision of Islamic identity, while the language learners viewed it as a means to succeed in the competitive world. Inconsistencies between planned policies and between policy and practice may lead to the failure of the entire program. According to Atai and Mazlum (2013), the inconsistency between planning and practice is the result of a top-down policy-making approach taken by policymakers. To address this issue, policymakers should involve researchers and teachers in the policy-making process.

In contrast to the studies in Singapore, the studies in Iran revealed that stakeholders in the Iranian context negatively perceived English language policies. The findings of this study showed that Iranian socio-political considerations negatively framed ELT. That the policy did not give teachers enough room to use their professional judgment. Teachers' professional judgment is the key to successful policy implementation; thus, policymakers must support

policies that strengthen teacher decision-making power. Consistent with this study, the previous studies also showed that Iran's policymakers have a negative attitude toward English for political and religious reasons (e.g., Atai & Mazlum, 2013; Narafshan & Yamini, 2011; Kiany, Mahdavy, & Ghafar Samar, 2011).

Conclusion and Implications

The current study has identified the main features and trends of ELT policy in Iran and Singapore. The aim of this review is to understand the current state of ELT policy in Iran, which has been criticized for its educational policy, and Singapore, which has been ranked as one of the best countries in education. This qualitative meta-analysis has implications for researchers, policymakers, and ELT teachers. They need to know the current state of ELT policy for decision-making and future actions. The analysis revealed that Singapore has adopted a top-down language policy and utilized a holistic curriculum which lead to an English knowing society. The policies are well articulated and few mismatches were reported in the policies. In addition, policies are positively perceived by stakeholders, leading to effective implementation of the policies.

However, the findings of the study showed that the Iranian top-down policy has negatively framed ELT and English has been considered as a threat to Iranian identity. Moreover, there are some contradictions between policies and some inconsistencies between policies and practices. Moreover, the analysis revealed that the Iranian government negatively perceived Iranian ELT policies. Moreover, they have overlooked the role of stakeholders (teachers and learners) and their professional judgment.

Limitation of the Study

The present study has suffered from some limitations that should be considered by other researchers in other educational contexts. First, the present meta-analysis reviewed 13 articles limited to the educational context. Second, the study was limited to papers published between 2010 and 2021, so the time period was short. Third, because all included papers were original articles, other types of studies such as book chapters, short communications, reviews, editorials, reports, theses, and dissertations could have contributed to this paper.

References

Aghagolzadeh, F., & Davari, H. (2015). The Rationale for Applying Critical Pedagogy in Expanding Circle Countries: The Case of Iran. *Journal of Language Teaching & Research*, *3*(5), 973.

Aghagolzadeh, F., & Davari, H. (2017). English education in Iran: From ambivalent policies to paradoxical practices. In *English Language Education Policy in the Middle East and North Africa* (pp. 47-62). Springer, Cham.

Ahmad, A., & Khan, S. (2011). Significance of language policy awareness in English language teaching. *Procedia, Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *15*, 1897-1900.

Ali, A. D. (2020). Implementing action research in EFL/ESL classrooms: A systematic review of literature 2010–2019. *Journal of Systemic Practice and Action Research*, *33*(3), 341-362.

Aliakbari, M. (2002). Writing in a Foreign Language: A Writing Problem or a Language Problem?. *Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, *6*(2), 157-68.

Aliakbari, M. (2005). The Place of Culture in Iranian EL T Textbooks at the High School Level. *Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics (Journal of PAAL)*, *9*(1), 163-179.

Alizadeh, I. (2018). Exploring language learners' perception of the effectiveness of an English Language Teaching (ELT) program in Iran. *Cogent Education, 5*(1), 1553652. doi:10.1080/2331186X.2018.1553652.

Amir, A. & Musk, N. (2013). Language policing: micro-level language policy-in-process in the foreign language classroom. *Journal of Classroom Discourse, 4*(2), 151-167. doi:10.1080/19463014.2013.783500

Atai, M. R., & Mazlum, F. (2013). English language teaching curriculum in Iran: planning and practice. *The Curriculum Journal, 24*(3), 389-411. doi:10.1080/09585176.2012.744327

Bereczki, E. O., & Kárpáti, A. (2018). Teachers' beliefs about creativity and its nurture: A systematic review of the recent research literature. *Journal of Educational Research Review*, *23*, 25-56.

Bokhorst-Heng, W. D., & Caleon, I. S. (2009). The language attitudes of bilingual youth in multilingual Singapore. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *30*(3), 235-251.

Borg, S. (2019). Language teacher cognition: Perspectives and debates. *English Language Teaching*, 1149-1170.

Borjian, M. (2013). *English in post-revolutionary Iran*. Multilingual Matters.

Bruen, J., & Sheridan, V. (2016). The impact of the collapse of communism and EU accession on language education policy and practice in Central and Eastern Europe: two case-studies focusing on English and Russian as foreign languages in Hungary and Eastern Germany. *Journal of Current Issues in Language Planning, 17*(2), 141-160. doi:10.1080/14664208.2016.1099593

Carminati, L. (2018). Generalizability in qualitative research: A tale of two traditions. *Journal of Qualitative Health Research*, *28*(13), 2094-2101.

Cavallaro, F., & Ng, B. C. (2014). Language in Singapore: From multilingualism to English plus. *Journal of Challenging the Monolingual Mindset, 156*(33), 9781783092529-005.

Chua, S. K. C. (2010). Singapore's language policy and its globalised concept of Bi(tri)lingualism. *Journal of Current Issues in Language Planning, 11*(4), 413-429. doi:10.1080/14664208.2010.546055

Chua, S. K. C. (2011). Singapore's E (Si)nglish-knowing bilingualism. *Journal of Current Issues in Language Planning*, *12*(2), 125-145.

Curdt-Christiansen, X. L., & Sun, B. (2016). Nurturing bilingual learners: challenges and concerns in Singapore. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 19*(6), 689-705. doi:10.1080/13670050.2016.1181606

Delmar, C. (2010). "Generalizability" as recognition: reflections on a foundational problem in qualitative research. *Journal of Qualitative Studies*, *1*(2), 115-128.

Elyas, T., & Badawood, O. (2016). English Language Educational Policy in Saudi Arabia Post-21st Century: Enacted Curriculum, Identity, and Modernisation: A Critical Discourse Analysis Approach. In *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education.* 3 (3), 70-81. Lehigh University Library and Technology Services.

Farhady, H., Hezaveh, F. S., & Hedayati, H. (2010). Reflections on Foreign Language Education in Iran. *Tesl-ej, 13*(4), n4.

Flynn, N., & Curdt-Christiansen, X. L. (2018). Intentions versus enactment: making sense of policy and practice for teaching English as an additional language. *Journal of Language and Education, 32*(5), 410-427. doi:10.1080/09500782.2018.1475484

Garrard, J. (2020). *Health sciences literature review made easy: the matrix method*. Jones and Bartlett Publishers, Sudbury

Haddad, W. D., & Demsky, T. (1994). The dynamics of education policy making: case studies of Burkina Faso. *Jordan, Peru, and Thailand, Washington: Economic Development Institute of the World Bank.*

Hamid, M. O., & Nguyen, H. T. M. (2016). Globalization, English Language Policy, and Teacher Agency: Focus on Asia. *International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives*, *15*(1), 26-43.

Hawanti, S. (2014). Implementing Indonesia's English language teaching policy in primary schools: The role of teachers' knowledge and beliefs. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning, 9*(2), 162-170. doi:10.1080/18334105.2014.11082029

Hult, F. M. (2012). English as a Transcultural Language in Swedish Policy and Practice. *TESOL Quarterly, 46*(2), 230-257. doi:10.1002/tesq.19

Iranmehr, A., Atai, M. R., & Babaii, E. (2018). Evaluation of EAP Programs in Iran: Document Analysis and Expert Perspectives. *Applied Research on English Language*, *7*(2), 171-194

Iranmehr, A., & Davari, H. (2018). English language education in Iran: A site of struggle between globalized and localized versions of English. *Iranian Journal of Comparative Education*, *1*(2), 94-109.

Kiany, G. R., Mahdavy, B., & Ghafar Samar, R. (2011). Towards a harmonized foreign language education program in Iran: National policies and English achievement. *Literacy Information and Computer Educational Journal (LICEJ)*, *2*(3), 462-469.

Lau, R. R. (2003). Models of decision-making. In D. O. Sears, L. Huddy, & R. Jervis (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of political psychology* (pp. 19–59). Oxford University Press.

Lee, C. L. (2012). Saving Chinese-language education in Singapore. *Journal of Current Issues in Language Planning*, *13*(4), 285-304.

Levin, B. (2008). Curriculum policy and the politics of what should be learned in schools. *The Sage handbook of curriculum and instruction*, 7-24.

Lim, L. (2010). Migrants and 'mother tongues': Extralinguistic forces in the ecology of English in Singapore. *English in Singapore: Modernity and management*, 19-54.

Low, E. L., & Ao, R. (2018). The spread of English in ASEAN: Policies and issues. *RELC Journal*, *49*(2), 131-148.

Mirhosseini, S.-A., & Badri, N. (2018). Perspectives of Iranian University Students on Learning English: A Practical Need and/or an International Policy-push? *Journal of Changing English, 25*(3), 286-299. doi:10.1080/1358684X.2018.1479959

Mirhosseini, S.-A., & Khodakarami, S. (2016). Aspects of 'English language education' policies in Iran: 'Our own beliefs' or 'out of who you are'? *Journal of Multicultural Discourses, 11*(3), 283-299. doi:10.1080/17447143.2016.1217870.

Mirhosseini, S. A., Tajik, L., & Bahrampour Pasha, A. (2021). Policies of English language teacher recruitment in Iran and a glimpse of their implementation. *Journal of Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 1-19.

Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J., Altman, D. G., & Prisma Group. (2009). Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses: the PRISMA statement. *PLoS Medicine*, *6*(7), e1000097.

Mohamed, N. (2020). First Language Loss and Negative Attitudes Towards Dhivehi Among Young Maldivians: Is the English-First Educational Policy to Blame? *TESOL Quarterly, 54*(3), 743-772. doi:10.1002/tesq.591

Narafshan, M. H., & Yamini, M. (2011). Policy and English language teaching (ELT) in Iran. *Iranian EFL Journal*, *7*(5), 179-189.

Nguyen, H. T. M. (2011). Primary English language education policy in Vietnam: Insights from implementation. *Journal of Current Issues in Language Planning*, *12*(2), 225-249.

Pakir, A. (2008). Bilingual education in Singapore. *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*, *5*, 91-203.

Patrick, N. G. (2011). Language planning in action: Singapore's multilingual and bilingual policy. *Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific Journal*, *30*, 1-12.

Rassouli, A., & Osam, N. (2019). English Language Education throughout Islamic Republic Reign in Iran: Government Policies and People's Attitudes. *SAGE Open, 9*(2), 2158244019858435. doi:10.1177/2158244019858435

Sajjadi, S. (2015). Development discourses on the educational system of Iran: A critical analysis of their effects. *Journal of Policy Futures in Education*, *13*(7), 819-834

Silver, R. E. (2005). The discourse of linguistic capital: Language and economic policy planning in Singapore. *Journal of Language Policy*, *4*(1), 47-66.

Tan, C., & Ng, P. T. (2011). Functional differentiation: a critique of the bilingual policy in Singapore. *Journal of Asian Public Policy, 4*(3), 331-341. doi:10.1080/17516234.2011.630227

Tan, Y. (2014). English as a 'mother tongue' in Singapore. *Journal of World Englishes*, *33*(3), 319-339.

Timulak, L. (2009). Meta-analysis of qualitative studies: A tool for reviewing qualitative research findings in psychotherapy. *Journal of Psychotherapy Research*, 19(4-5), 591-600.

Tollefson, J. W. (1991). Planning language, planning inequality. *New York*, *12*.

Tohidian, I., & Nodooshan, S. G. (2021). Teachers' engagement within educational policies and decisions improves classroom practice: The case of Iranian ELT school teachers. *Journal of Improving Schools, 24*(1), 33-46. doi:10.1177/1365480220906625

Tupas, T. R. F. (2011). English-knowing bilingualism in Singapore: Economic pragmatism, ethnic relations and class. In *English language education across greater China* (pp. 46-69). Multilingual Matters.

Tupas, R. (2018). (Un)framing Language Policy and Reform in Southeast Asia. *RELC Journal, 49*(2), 149-163. doi:10.1177/0033688218772155

Ulum, Ö. G. (2015). EFL Policy of Turkey: Past and Present. *International Journal of Development Research, 5*(9), 5577-5580.

Xie, W., & Cavallaro, F. (2016). Attitudes towards Mandarin–English bilingualism: a study of Chinese youths in Singapore. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 37*(6), 628-641. doi:10.1080/01434632.2015.1122603

Yang, J., & Jang, I. C. (2020). The everyday politics of English-only policy in an EFL language school: practices, ideologies, and identities of Korean bilingual teachers. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 1-13.

Zein, S. (2017). Access policy on English language education at the primary school level in the ASEAN Plus Three member states: motivations, challenges and future directions. *Journal of Asian Englishes, 19*(3), 197-210. doi:10.1080/13488678.2017.1