Plurilingualism and Language Policy: the case of Algeria

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Abstract: *The present article will reveal the complexity observed on the national, institutional and individual levels to bring to satisfaction the language policy, known as the Arabization policy; the Algerian government has developed since independence. This policy which seeks to promote and generalize the Arabic language to all domains of use has been trapped within the challenge of global development. In fact, the importance and urgency attached to industrialization and modernism has cooled off the strong political enthusiasm for Arabization. The policy has been implemented in a de-facto plurilingual tendency for academic and professional purposes. As a process, it has evolved in the least scientific and technological disciplines and in the least demanding academic levels (the levels of education). In addition to French which is seen as the vehicle for technology, English is joining the sociolinguistic scene. The Algerian linguistic landscape displays strongly this tendency and calls for the Arabic language management along the evolving plurilingual situation.*
Keys words: *policy, Arabic, development, Scientific, technological, discipline, landscape, management, plurilingualism.*

Résumé : *Le présent travail s'intéresse à la réalisation de la politique linguistique de l'Algérie dans un contexte de politique de développement et de modernisme calqué sur le monde occidental. Dans son processus de promotion de la langue arabe et sa généralisation dans les différents domaines d'utilisation , le projet s'est vu contraint d'évoluer en parallèle avec le projet de modernisme et de développement industriel, se heurtant ainsi au problème de langues porteuses de développement et modernisme . Ceci a freine la réalisation du projet de la langue arabe qui a évolué dans les domaines les moins exigeants en termes de savoir scientifique et technologique. Outre la langue française qui s'impose dans le cadre du développement globale, s'impose une deuxième langue à savoir la langue anglaise. la politique linguistique conçue au profit de la langue arabe se voit contrainte de se réaliser dans un contexte plurilingue qui en principe doit être mis au profit de l'évolution de la langue arabe.*
Mots clés: *politique, l'Arabe, développement scientifique et technologique, discipline, paysage, aménagement, plurilinguisme.*

Introduction

No one denies that language is man- made and attitude based and is one of the most important elements to shape the geographical and political borders of a nation. Every language defines its speech community and is efficient for those who use it in their communicative activities. For these basic reasons every society needs at least a common powerful, reliable, and evolutionary language. Yet,

its choice and use depend on the requirements and needs that are manifested by the users. In fact; we live in a world of cross-cultural communication where the feeling of involvement and belonging has grown and passed from the tribal group, the city, the state, and the nation to the concept of the universal. And because the world is transformed into a society which is pluralistic culturally, politically, economically, and linguistically, to be on the safe side from whatever may result unexpectedly from such a contact, every society should not only develop and preserve its own means of survival, among which language occupies a major place but give importance to other manifestly worldwide languages to have access to knowledge expressed in such languages. It is within here that raise the need for national language policy and language policy in general.

1. Language Policy Issues

According to Cherif, M. (1990: 48) a common and powerful language is basic for a population to be edified into a nation. This power is derived from the activities of its users, their number, resources as well as, cultural, ideological, technical, and economic factors. Reliability is related to the services and advantages the language renders to its users and is measurable by means of the social and intellectual advantages the users realise. Evolution deals with the flexible character of the language to develop the productive and expressive potentials, which are vital for language expansion, and which depend largely on the user's attitude towards his language. Furthermore, the evolution aspect allows engaging safely into a contact situation with other languages.

When it comes to national language policy, in the quest to construct the post-independence era, Algeria adopted the western world model as a way through development and engaged in a development planning calqued on the westerners. This option for development has nourished the stormy discourse over the language planning policy project known as Arabization. As early as independence could but initiate the national language policy in parallel to use of French given the global development it opted for, and which among other foreign languages generally requires a French language backed managerial staff that education has to provide to guarantee the takeover. This has generated a problem of language use, language potential and the users' prospects together with the educational pursuit. Such a problem has led to work on two language fronts: CA and French with the objective of speeding the process of dissemination of the former and lessening that of the latter through the process of language planning.

2. Language Policy and Global Development

Within this context, the motivation for Arabization has been slowed down. As a process, it has become selective and fractioned in its implementation. This is due to the problems of CA to handle all the educational subject matters, to the absence of the required human resources, and to the educational policy, which has to devote more of the educational endeavors to scientific and technological domains that still escape the control of CA or has evolved at a snail's pace.

In reality, in addition to the language policy the global policy of development has been aiming at two related processes, one that has sometimes been called "modernization" and the other "development". "Development" suggests simply growth, that is, improvement in a country's economic and social conditions. More specifically, it refers to improvements in ways of managing natural and human resources in order to create wealth and raise people's standard of living. "Modernization" has been conceived as a process of change from a traditional way of life and organization to a modern style which allows overcoming the technical, scientific and normative gap between the industrialized Western World and the Third World in general. Partly because the industrial revolution first took place in the West, western civilization as a whole became the criteria for appraising and measuring "modernity''.

In fact Western culture, technology and life style represent the reference point not only for policy-makers, but also for individual private behavior. Modernization has been largely equated with westernization in spite of the rhetorical assertion of the ex-colonized countries. Both modernization and development are conceived as an attempt to catch up with the Western methods of production, western techniques of analysis, western approaches to organization, and western styles of behavior.

Language use in Algeria has to be seen in this wider context. Because of these questions in the background, the language planning policy in Algeria has to be regarded in relation to those wider processes of modernization and development and their associated process of alien penetration.

Implementation has not all the time come up to the Arabic language advocators' expectations. Significant also is the fact that Arabization was faced to the French language burden as school has to operate on a two language fronts with a clearly hierarchical distribution granting linguistic leadership to the French language in the educational domains that are science and technology appealing.

Among the advocators of the French language is Mazouni, A. (1969), who assigns a rational and technical potential to the French language and remains convinced that the use of French is a no way out formula for industrialization and modernism. For Madi, M. (1997: 121). Accordingly, it permits access to logic or experimental scientific truths while the Arabic language is but that, which develops the ability to enjoy beauty and express dogmatic or metaphysical facts.

Furthermore, and as matters stand, education itself pre-supposes the availability of economic and human resources to be on active service. Algeria, like any other developing country, was lacking educational facilities to ensure the start in 1962. It was necessary then to give equal importance to the economic sector in order to inject investments in education. However, this sector still operates in French. and has been in want of a French language background. Thus to lead the language planning policy to satisfaction, planning strategies needed to emphasize on developing the expressive power potential of the Arabic language in its classical form, henceforth CA , i.e., 'the school form' so as to become a powerful, reliable and evolutionary language to be used for the social, economic, technical and scientific activities. In addition, it will become so only if investments in education and in human means are geared to such objectives. The technical capital is not the only element for language promotion. Investment in Man for language acquisition is inevitably an investment in language development and promotion.

The existence of language in the universe coincides exactly with that of Man. Their very existence is determined by their mutual need. Conceivably Man and language develop at the same time. There is a parallelism between Man and development as well as socialisation processes and stages. Furthermore, society presents itself as a super imposed entity which operates on language through the new needs the individual manifests and which constitute the key factors favouring language improvement. So, the power of a language derives from the capabilities of its society and attitudes towards the environment in which language is used. A person inquisitive about the environment will certainly generate words for the new needs.

Productivity is not a quality particular to some languages. It is a consequence of the role the individual plays in favouring conditions to the acquisition of this quality. Nacib (in Alain and Gerard, 1988:179) reacts strongly against the classification of languages according to ability and suggests the removal of the ambiguity established long ago by the erstwhile ethnocentrism, that is, the so called congenital

incapacity of certain languages to express concepts clearly, conduct analyses and syntheses. And so to speak, the inability to serve as an instrument of administrative work, cultural, scientific, economic and social development. Surprising as it may be, Nacib (op.cit: 180) notices that the languages so condemned to "infirmity" are by pure chance those of the dominated population or those who had been dominated, and he asserts that these languages are not the causal factors

In general terms, languages are not strong or weak by virtue of their existence. For Haugen, E. (1966:103) ''the history of languages demonstrates convincingly that there is no such a thing as an inherent handicapped language. All great languages of today were once undeveloped." An undeveloped language is simply (Haugen op.cit: 103) "one which has not been employed in all functions that a language can perform in a society." If a language is then undeveloped, the society within which it evolves is at fault. Similarly, Emile. B.Y (1982:158) relates the state of a language to the idleness, activity and spirit of its native speakers. The world displays different examples of language development. Some have developed to such an extent as to bear a whole civilisation, others declined or fell into oblivion, while others remain in a stationary state not going beyond lower spheres of use. This is because languages are not submitted to established norms of development. Their development is chiefly function of the users. Wattas, M. (1988:263) is convinced that the development of a language is determined by its use. It is tightly related to the competence of the users, and their efforts to improve culturally, scientifically, and economically. There is a clear vision regarding the role of society in liberating the social forces that must be geared to the requirements of language development. If language is a social product reflecting the status of a society, society then must be the focus of attention so that it can take in charge the language task.

In the case of Algeria, the language policy has been captured together with the importance attached to industrialisation and modernism which have cooled off the strong enthusiasm for Arabisation. The challenge of development then affects the way in which the policy of Arabisation is realised. In spite of the efforts which have been made so far, we note that the economic and industrial development rise as factors which dissociate the objective of modernism and development from the objective of language promotion and development. This can be illustrated by the evolution of the policy of Arabisation.

As a process, it evolved in the least scientific and technological disciplines such as history, geography and philosophy and in the least demanding academic levels (the levels of education). It also evolved in the sectors which are isolated from the economic and industrial ones. These sectors which are Education, Information, Defence and Justice are directly related to the State sovereignty. A symbolic value then is attributed to CA. Given the development of Arabisation, CA is not led to make a real and efficient entry in the sectors related to development and technology transfer and for which French is retained as a medium.

There is no doubt that the decision to promote Classical Arabic as the official and national language of Algeria stems from the role it plays in ideally unifying the Algerians within a geographical and religious space. Consequently, this politically motivated impetus finds itself strengthened with a policy of Arabisation. As a choice it is politically convenient and bears the idea of generalising the use of CA. It is a strategy for its development and conquests of the most important domains of use mainly science and technology. Appel and Muysken (1987:46) highlight some of the language planning processes especially in the third world or recently independent countries. According to them, *"they have to choose a national language, they have to further develop or cultivate it to make it more useful for various communicative needs, they have to foster its spread..."* (Efurosibina, 1994:140).

But within the scale of development, Arabisation has played second fiddle to the politics of modernisation and industrialisation. The strategies of development relied heavily on material investment and neglected to a large extent investment in human capital, which plays an important role in the preparation of the social environment to bring projects to realization. The national language project is then squeezed by foreign language learning which in fact should not be seen as hampering the project but rather as ways to open up on the outer world to seek contact and knowledge transfer. The introduction of other languages of wider communication must be regulated so as to allow the learners to take advantage of the scientific and technical services they render and the process of knowledge transfer foreign language learning induce.

In general, research in the field of foreign language learning show socio-economic, cultural and educational benefits for the individual and the society. In fact; People who have the command of more than one language show better performance than monolinguals. They show openness and understanding of cultures. Plurilingualism may be

considered as a potential source of power giving opportunity to learners to have access to the other. Though this process may come into conflict with the internal ideological need, it is politically desirable to synchronize between national language policy and language policy in general (foreign languages) to cope with the outer world and secure the inner world as far as the national language is concerned.

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