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The Status of English in Language Policy Models Proposed for the Moroccan Multilingual Context

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Abstract

This paper suggests a language policy model for Modern Morocco, which can respond to both, the national needs of identity and the demands of Globalization, These two needs are the two major forces that shape the status of the various languages involved in the Moroccan sociolinguistic context, including English. The paper concisely describes how different sociolinguistic phenomenon produced by the ex-colonial powers shape the status of the different languages involved in the Moroccan multilingual context (i.e. language conflict, language competition, language selection and linguistic militantism). It also gives a detailed account of the different approaches and language policy models proposed by various Moroccan intellectuals and linguists in order to face such a de facto multilingualism. Finally, it proposes a multidimensional model that may contribute to reducing tensional relations between the different linguistic varieties cohabiting in Morocco, meeting the requirements of the Moroccan identity, and responding to the needs of modernity, prosperity, science and technology imposed by globalization.

Key Words: English, Globalization, Language Policy multilingualism, Sociolinguistics

Introduction

Like many other developing countries, Morocco, which was under the colonization of both France and Spain, had to face a very controversial situation with respect to its Arabic identity and the imperatives of modernity and prosperity, which require the maintenance of foreign languages (i.e. French). It is between these two major forces that the evolution of the status of English has been figured out in this paper.

Several linguistic varieties cohabit nowadays in Morocco: Arabic – language "de jure" – has a legal status, but suffers from the Francophone realpolitik, which made it stagnant and not responding to the increasing needs of modernity. Darija is a variety of Arabic, whichconsists of an indefinite number of accents. Tamazight, a language that actually refers to three main dialects: Tarifit, Tachelhit and Tasusit. However, at the beginning of this third millennium, Tamazight could "forge a place" within the educational system. The efforts to release a super-linguistic structure, based on the structural similarities of its varieties, finally gave birth to Tifinagh and raised its status to the second official language of the country.

In reference to foreign languages, while French does not actually have the status of a foreign language, even if the political discourse presents it as such, it enjoys a "de facto" official status. The presence of English, Spanish and some other languages in the educational system corresponds to the international power of their supporting countries and the demands of the Moroccan linguistic market.

The situation concisely described here is due to several factors, such as the political decisions imposed by the Panarabist ideology (Al-kawmiyah), the establishment of the Francophone model in the country, the ex-colonial past of France and Spain in the Kingdom, the new renaissance of the Tamazight movement and the "policy of openness" towards other civilizations of the world that the Moroccan government has adopted in the years since independence.

In the absence of well-defined language planning, the above-mentioned factors contributed to what some linguists call "chaotic multilingualism" (Cheddadi 2011, 56-57). Hence comes the need for language planning that clearly determines the functions of national, local and foreign languages in the various domains of social life, especially in the field of scientific research and in the educational system. In fact, in schools, multilingualism represents a reality that is very difficult to handle.

In fact, the exposure of students to several languages at the same time has transformed the Moroccan school into a laboratory of experiments and created a feeling of linguistic insecurity for both instructors and students, which has resulted in low and unsatisfactory academic outcomes. In addition to that, the illiteracy rate in Morocco remains high (45% according to the World Bank) and results in complicating the language issue and leads to a non-recognized pluralism backed-up by the intellectuals who possess the power.

Perhaps the Moroccan multilingualism is not a sign of cultural prosperity but one of sociolinguistic disease. The marginalization that is exercised, at various levels of society, toward Arabic, combined with the increasing appreciation of foreign languages, particularly French, are clear signs of such disease. In addition, in the absence of true political willingness to overcome this chaotic situation, the learning of foreign languages will continue to have the effect of replacing Arabic and hampering its development and normalization, as opposed to enriching it or allowing its access to university scientific spheres.

Additionally, in the absence of diagnostic studies that can help articulate an explicit and comprehensive language policy, this linguistic crisis will persist and the different problems that emerge from the coexistence and contact of various languages, such as language conflict (especially between Arabic, French and Tamazight), the issue of selecting the language of instruction (Arabic, French and recently English), the real status of Standard Arabic and its relation to the Moroccan accents, the status of Tamazight varieties, the future of foreign languages, and the issue of linguistic militantism will never be solved. That is to say that in the absence of language planning that clearly defines the domains and functions of all the languages incorporated in the Moroccan linguistic repertoire, giving the huge gap between the "de jure" and "de facto" policy that the Moroccan government uses to deal with language issues, an overloaded militantism that instrumentalizes language in political discourse becomes a very common practice among Moroccan linguist activists.

Despite the try of the Moroccan policy makers to consider all the components of the Moroccan linguistic repertoire and articulate a language policy that brings balance to its linguistic market, the new language policy model, mainly embodied in the new Constitution and the Charter of Education and its subsequent documents, has complicated the linguistic situation in Morocco. Ibn Farouk, for example, asserts that the coexistence of several languages within the same educational and administrative spheres of state necessarily gives rise to serious problems, and signs of a linguistic crisis are not only visible but also persist and worsen despite the measures taken by the state (Ibn Farouk 2004).

This dire situation has urged many intellectuals and sociolinguists to propose a variety of models and proposals with the hope of bringing back stability and balance to the Moroccan linguistic scenario. In the following, we are going to introduce these models and explore how each one of them relates to the status of English.

1. The Open Monolingualism Model

For Al-Awraghi, until today, the language choices adopted by the Moroccan State in the educational system respond more to political exigencies than to cultural or functional ones. Such politicization and ideologization of language is so pervasive that it is not possible to craft a coherent language policy. For example, despite the presence of many languages in the educational system (French, English, Spanish, German and Italian), the compulsory character of French and its use as a language of instruction in comparison with the optionality of the other languages can only be explained by the degree of political power that the Francophone elite has in the country. Also, the officialization of Tamazight

and its inclusion in the educational system, despite its variability, local character and poor functionality came as a response to the political pressure exercised by the Tamazight movement. To Al-Awraghi, opting for such a politicized multilingualism has a negative impact on the whole nation, but particularly on students who are unable to gain proficiency in any of these languages. He adds that in Morocco the majority of citizens are not fluent in any language and the mixing of codes is deeply rooted in the society (Al-Awraghi 2005).

After distinguishing between closed monolingualism (the exclusive use of a language in instruction, as is the case in France, United States, England, Spain, etc.), which is more suitable for the most advanced nations, and open monolingualism (the parallel use of a national language and other foreign languages in instruction, as is the case in Morocco), which is more suitable for developing nations, Al-Awraghi recommends the latter as an alternative to such a politicized and unplanned multilingualism. He further explains that open monolingualism consists of adopting Arabic as a national language and introducing foreign languages in the educational system based on their functionality and ability to connect the Moroccan student with the international community. To him, this is the only way to avoid social fragmentation and eliminate the code-mixing phenomenon, which leads to linguistic incapacity, intellectual perturbation and the extension of a very superficial culture.

However, the following guidelines should be considered in the course of applying his model:

- *Learning Arabic should be compulsory for all citizens, while linguistic openness should be optional.*

- *The selection of a language must be on the basis of its rich cultural content and not on the basis of political pressures.*

- *The introduction of a language in the educational system should be aimed at extracting the necessary expertise for the development of the country, not at achieving ideological ends.*

- *The relationship between Arabic and any other foreign language must be conceptualized as a complementary relationship, and not one of competition, conflict or struggle for power.*

To Al-Awraghi, for this model to be correctly implemented, language acquisition planning should be founded on two bases: The first of these is constantly (at all stages of education) exposing citizens to Arabic, for the purpose of weakening and eliminating what Al-Awraghi calls "Laghat and Lakat" (non-sense language mixing and borrowing), which characterizes Moroccan society and disturbs its identity and future. In parallel to this process, all those foreign languages that allow access to global cultures – not only those that are imposed by political force – should be offered through the educational system. If applied, this model entitles English – insofar as it is an international and global language – to a better position within the Moroccan linguistic context.

Based on the above-mentioned guidelines, it seems that Al-Awraghi is for a pragmatic multilingual model instead of an unnecessary multilingualism that is prevalent in both the social and educational spheres and puts the ideal linguistic balance between national and foreign languages at risk. The latter is favoured by the state and weakens both individual and national identity and all the values associated with them; proof of it is the current situation of Moroccan schools, where the learning of several languages in parallel to the national language and local varieties is not only time-consuming but also, and above all, very expensive and damaging to the psychology of students. Therefore, openness towards foreign languages should be guided by the desire to gain knowledge and expertise, not to weaken the Arabic language.

2. The Supported Monolingualism Model

According to FassiFihri, the current Moroccan state's policy favours linguistic conflict between the languages that make up the national identity (Arabic and Tamazight) and foreign languages, especially French. This conflict benefits those who have political power at the expense of a harmonious multilingual environment that can benefit the entire society. He further notes that there is a financial interest behind the perpetuation of such a conflict, which goes a long way toward explaining the inconsistency in post-independence language policies and the changing attitudes of the elite towards them. This notion is supported by the fact that the same intellectuals who in the past were for Arabization are currently in favour of Francization, and those intellectual Amazighs who never had a negative attitude toward Arabic now see Arabophones as conquerors of the country (FassiFihri 2007). He concludes that in Morocco there is an increasing level of "language pollution," founded on an immature approach to multilingualism.

Since there is no country in the world that supports linguistic division within its boundaries, or takes a foreign language for a national one, FassiFihri recommends a supported monolingualism, which consists of a language policy that perceives Arabic as the only language that can fulfil the function of national language. In addition to Arabic, he proposes a purposeful multilingualism, where foreign languages should be incorporated in the Moroccan educational system with the purpose of allowing access to other cultures and enriching the structure of Arabic when necessary. To him, it is crucial to make a clear distinction between the use of a foreign language in domains where there is a need for it and its generalization in all aspects of life, including those where it is not needed. He further recommends a multilingualism that is aimed at transforming the linguistic reality from competitive juxtaposition to a purposeful diversity. FassiFihri proposes the following guidelines for his model:

- *Establish an identity rooted and continuously modernized national language. To him, Arabic isthe best – if not the only – candidate for this function.*

- *Opt for a "cumulative and supported multilingualism" founded on the functions that eachlanguage can have in the society, and not based on political criteria. That will lead to theconsideration of more than one foreign language, not only French.*

- *Introduce foreign languages only at the high school and university stages, since introducingthem as early as the national language disturbs not only the process of learning Arabic butalso the learning of foreign languages.*

According to Al-Fihri, these guidelines should prevent foreign languages from taking over the functions that the national language has, and open the doors for them to contribute to the betterment of Morocco, in a prioritized way: French, for its historical, political, strategic and economic power in the region; English, for its scientific and technological value; and Spanish, for its geographical, historical and progressively international value.

3. The Econo Communicative Model

To Ibn El-Farouk, the establishment of a unifying and rational linguistic policy inMorocco requires the consideration of both the communicative and the economic values that different languages can ensure for the Moroccan state. For that purpose, Moroccan language policy makers should consider three dimensions: the national dimension, the Panarab dimension, and the international dimension. The first dimension requires the consideration of Arabic and Tamazight; the second one can be achieved only through Arabic, while the third one requires the consideration of English and French (Ibn El-Farouk 2004).

In reference to the international dimension, Ibn El-Farouk emphasizes the importance of foreign languages, not only because of the demands of technology, economics and science, but also because of the high degree of hospitality, tolerance and openness of the Moroccan citizen towards the other. He also asserts that, in a world where relations among states are becoming more globalized, it is absolutely imperative for Morocco to adopt one or two foreign languages that allow citizens to integrate into the global community. He believes that English should be promoted for its scientific value, while French should be prioritized for historical reasons.

4. The Gravitational Model

Messaoudi proposes a gravitational model that theoretically rests on the SwaanAbraam model (2002). This model compares the relationship between languages to the hierarchical order of galaxies. For Messaoudi, in Morocco, there are few spoken Tamazight varieties that are organized around a central language used in national communication (Arabic with its Darija varieties). Arabophones are organized around a more extended foreign language, which is French. Finally, there is a supra-international language, which is English. She concludes that any planning meant to establish a balanced relationship between national diversity and international dimensions should be founded on this model.

The implications of this model for the Moroccan sociolinguistic context should contribute to the perception of Arabic and French as the most important languages. Darija should be perceived as a lingua franca that serves for communication between all social

classes (Arabophones and Amazigophones). Tamazight, with all its varieties, should be perceived as a local language.

In reference to the educational system, Messaoudi wonders about the criteria used by the State at the time of including one or more languages in school. In other words, are languages introduced as subjects or as languages of instruction? To address this question, Messaoudi suggests a tripartite approach:

- *Strengthen the position of Arabic as an official language of the country, improve the quality of its teaching in school and rigorously develops its functionality within the modern society. To achieve this goal, she stresses the urgency of establishing the Academy of Arabic and a permanent body or institute in charge of the protection of this language.*

- *To have access to sciences and be well positioned in the international context, Morocco has to be open to international languages, particularly English, French and Spanish. In this context, Messaoudi recommends the establishment of an Institute of foreign languages, which should be responsible for the planning of these languages.*

- *The protection of the national linguistic heritage, embodied mainly in the Tamazight varieties,and the conviction of Tamazight leaders that, before being Arabs, Amazighs, or Frenchspeaking,they are mainly Moroccans, and that the learning of Tamazight must, above all,facilitate the transition to standard Arabic, and not become a shell in which the Amazighactivists become enclosed. Furthermore, Messaoudi recommends that Tifinagh should betaught in college or in high school as a minority language. Finally, she sees that IRCAM's missionmust be limited to the protection of this heritage. It should not feed linguistic conflicts,complicate the Moroccan linguistic reality, facilitate its Balkanization, or prevent thedevelopment of the country.*

5. The Glocalized Model

In his glocalized model, Boukous proposes a multilingual policy that should take into account the Arabo-Amazigh cultural heritage and the socio-economic challenges imposed by globalization. In other words, it should balance the local, national, and global dimensions of Moroccan language policy. Boukous asserts that the ideal model for an ex-colonized developing country like Morocco is one that combines the local-national dimension with the international one, which means that it is almost impossible to opt for a single language of instruction in the educational system. He further asserts that the decision to incorporate a language of instruction in the educational system must take into account the internal structure of that language, its symbolic value in the linguistic market and its ability to satisfy professional and social needs. It is based on these parameters that Boukous proposes the following guidelines for a more convenient language planning:

- *Arabic should be the language of teaching, from elementary school to university, of subjects relating to the Arabo-Islamic civilization (language, literature, culture, arts, history and religion). With reference to the national culture, Arabic can be used to teach literature, arts, culture, national education, history, environment, human, social, political and legal sciences.*

- *French should be the language of instruction from high school to university, specializing intechnical, technological, scientific, economic and administrative fields.*

- *English should be the language of instruction in laboratories, scientific and doctoral studiescenters, and in the domains of strategic, financial, and business planning.*

- *Foreign languages that are taught in secondary schools should facilitate specialization inhigher education and professional training, especially in the educational sector.*

- *Tamazight should be the language of instruction of everything that is local, from elementaryschool to University. The meaning of 'local' in Boukous model is vague, knowing thatMoroccan dialect is also local.*

Boukous concludes that, contrary to the approach that conceptualizes Arabic as the onlylanguage of scientific education (Arabization), and those who prioritize French over Arabicin fulfilling this function (Francophones), the glocalized model seems to be the mostqualified to improve the educational system. In addition, it should ensure a high level of functional complementarity between languages, put an end to the current conflict betweenthe defenders of Arabization and Francization and open the doors for other foreignlanguages to contribute to the development of the country.

6. The Distributional Model

Esmili classifies Morocco among the countries that did not have a very clear strategy ofhow to deal with the language of the colonizer. Morocco did not give a specific status to thelanguage of the colonizer and proceeded by "le laissez-faire" policy, which has contributedto a chaotic and absolutely unbalanced linguistic situation. Therefore, Esmili advocates fora Moroccan language policy model where each of the languages is called to play a particularrole. To him, considering the various factors that shape Moroccan society, multilingualismin Morocco must be accomplished according to a precise configuration or distribution.

> *La mondialisation, la compétitivité, la qualité, l'enseignement, la formation,l'alphabétisation, la restructuration de l'entreprise, la modernisation, la démocratie, l'Islam,l'intégrisme, nos relations avec l'Europe, avec le Magreb, avec le Monde Arabe, avec la MENA,avec le reste du monde, notrepropreidentité, qui sommenous? quevoulonsnousêtre?, desMarocainsou des simples commerçantsimportexport?,de nosreprésentations de nousmêmes?,de notre contribution au concert des nations? Touscesthèmes de réflexionbuterontsur un rocher monumental qui est le problème de la langue* (Esmili 2001, 50)

"Globalization, competitiveness, quality, education, training, literacy, the restructuring ofeconomic enterprise, modernization, democracy, Islam, integration, our relations withEurope, the Maghreb, the Arab world, the MENA, and the rest of the world. Our own identity,who are we? What de we want to be? Are we Moroccans or simple import-exportmerchants?What is our

contribution to the civilizations of the world? All of these themes of reflection arefounded on a monumental rock which is the problem of language". [Translation is mine]

He further proposes the following guidelines for a well-balanced language policy:

- *Since each one of them has a specific function that does not contradict the others (i.e. Tamazight varieties have deeply rooted functions related to identity and community; spokenArabic serves as a national lingua franca and fulfills, at the same time, the role of communitylanguage; written Arabic serves as a support for written expression and communication. In itsclassic form, it has heritage and liturgical functions. In its modern form, it also has aninternational communicative function within the Arabophone world).*

- *Foreign languages should not take over the functions of community languages. They should beincorporated in the educational system with the purpose of understanding the cultures ofother peoples and nations and carrying out literary, scientific and technical translations.*

- *Teaching, at all levels, must be offered in Arabic. However, students should be exposed at anearly age to the learning of foreign languages, in a way that does not harm their learning ofthe national language.*

- *The State should not privilege French at the expense of other European or Anglo-Americanlanguages, mainly English, Spanish, German and Italian. Rather, it should give citizens theright to choose one or two languages in a certain learning order.*

7. The FunctionalInterventionistModel

Bourqia who presented her model through the third magazine, "*Madrasah Al-Maghribiya*,insists that the officialization of Arabic requires the continuous development ofits structure (corpus planning) and functions (status planning); the continuous work toreduce the differences between Darija and MSA through raising the popular awareness inreference to the value of the latter; the clear definition of the status of French in relation tothe national languages and other foreign languages; the recognition that the ideologizationof language policy is a very decisive factor in the escalation of language conflict; and thatlanguage policy should not be applied only to the educational system, but also to alldomains of communication (administration, economy, technology, science, research, media,etc.) that ensure access to development and modernization.

It is based on these guidelines that Bourqia imagines an interventionist role for the State,which should be founded on the following principles:

- *The right of each language to exist implies the recognition of multilingualism as the normalstate of the society.*

- *The principle of functionality should ensure a relationship of complementarity betweenlanguages, not a relationship of conflict or competition.*

- *The need for state intervention in implementing language policy and putting an end to thedistinction between de jure and de facto policies. In other words, the constitutionalization of*

alanguage does not mean anything if the state does not respect the requirements of theconstitution.

- *To fight linguistic militantism that results in the ghettoization of communities while the reality of globalization requires being open towards other languages and cultures.*

- *The elaboration of a linguistic convention or contract, which determines the status of eachlanguage within the education*

In support of this model, Kabli proposes the adoption of a plan that redefines the limitsand functions of "identity tongues" (Arabic and Tamazight) and those that allow access tothe modern world (foreign languages in general). Such a process should lead to thereconsideration of historical factors in redefining the status of French and Spanish. Itshould also lead to prioritizing identity languages in elementary education and languagesof openness in higher education and scientific research (Kabli 2011).

Conclusion: Toward a New Model of Language Policy

After thoroughly analysing the post-independent Moroccan language policy models andconsidering the different components of the Moroccan society, the complexity that theircoexistence impose, and the different cultural agendas that are activated and implemented,this paper proposes the guidelines of a multidimensional model designed to better dealwith the de facto multilingual face that the Moroccan context represents today. Thefollowing platform or plan of action should be considered for the success of such amultidimensional approach:

For a more comprehensive definition of the domains and functions of all the languagesincorporated in the Moroccan linguistic repertoire, diagnostic studies in the field ofa great interest in developing studies that can respond to this need but a lot more has to bedone. This descriptive and synthetic study hopes to partially fill this gap.

A true reform of the linguistic affair can be achieved only through a more comprehensivereform of the political system. That is to say, unless the Moroccan State truly adopts morecomprehensive socio-political changes, including consistency between de jure and de factopolicies, then any reforms – including educational ones – will not be at all relevant orsignificant. In fact, without filling the huge gap currently existing between the "de jure" and"de facto" policy, an overloaded militantism that instrumentalizes language as a weapon ofpolitical struggle will continue to be a very common practice among Moroccan linguistactivists; and the balance that is hoped to be brought to the Moroccan linguistic market willnever be achieved.

There is an absolute consensus among all sectors of the society that education inMorocco was always a failure mainly due to the very ideologized and politicized linguisticchoices that have been made since independence. It follows that for a positive change tohappen in this field, it is necessary that the State give up those unpopular politicizedchoices and embrace ones that correspond to the real needs of the majority of Moroccans.

Arabic is the most qualified language in the country to respond to the needs of identity,education, modernity, science and diplomacy. Therefore, it should be adopted as the onlynational and official language of the country, and should be progressively and steadilyincorporated as the only language of instruction in school. Insisting on practicallyweakening it and empowering French will continue to generate tension and linguisticinterference of spaces. Recognize that the Arabization of the educational system failedmainly due to the high illiteracy rate (approximately 48% of Moroccans are illiteratesaccording to official sources), not because of internal problems in the structure of Arabiclanguage.

The improvement of the corpus and status of Arabic should be a priority. That shouldencompass the language in the fields of science and technology. Giving other languages thesame functions as Arabic will continue to generate language conflict and unbalancedcompetition for the same spaces. Also, the current diglossic condition of Arabic is not dueto the inability of the language to unite its different varieties, but to the unnecessary andunneeded bilingualism promoted by the State.

The elite and intellectuals should assume their responsibility in correcting the currentlinguistic situation by doing their best to raise the status of Arabic to that of a national anduniversal language, exactly as the Spanish intellectuals could do for the Spanish language.They should stand firm against any attempt to secularize the language, which meansrestricting its use to religious functions and isolating it from the daily life of Moroccancitizens.

The Tamazight should be conceptualized as a national heritage that every Moroccan canhave access to. The Tamazight movement should stop placing Tamazight in conflict orcompetition with Arabic, since neither its corpus nor its status qualifies it to face thechallenges of globalization.

Foreign languages (especially those that had a colonial past in the country: French andSpanish) should not enter into struggle or competition with Arabic, and must admit it asthe national language of the country par excellence. Any conflict with it disturbs andhinders not only its development but also the development of those foreign languages.

Foreign languages should be introduced in the educational system with the purpose offacilitating access to technology, science and cultural values of other nations. That impliesremoving the ambivalent and privileged status accorded to French and opening the door toother languages, mainly English. Foreign languages should be also introduced in the schoolsystem beginning in High School, which should be conceived as a preparatory stage aimedto empower students to pursue their college studies in Arabic or in any of these languages.

The multidimensional model proposed in this paper takes into account the Arabo-Islamic, the Tamazight, the Euro-Mediterranean and the universal or global dimensions. Inthis model, Arabic is conceived as the only national language of the country

and MoroccanArabic as a continuum dialectal that should work for consolidating the status and corpus ofArabic; Tamazight as a local heritage that every Moroccan has the right to embrace, Frenchand Spanish as two regional languages, that should give Moroccans access to the Euro-Mediterranean civilizations and cultures, and English as a universal language that shouldhelp Moroccans meet the requirements and challenges of globalization.

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