

Towards a Successful Educational Planning Policy in Algeria

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Abstract

Education is irrevocably the weaving machine within which the fabric of individuals could be realized. Education is considered as a sphere for making progress, disseminating knowledge, and producing a myriad of values, skills and behaviours only when it is embodied in a context of fruitful language planning policy, and a coherent governance. To this end, it is of paramount importance to investigate the relevant path to reach a sound educational system in Algeria. Hence, this study will thrash out an ecological framework that embraces nexus analysis and linguistic landscape paradigm, and provides the practical cartography for language planners to undertake their language vision, mission and revision fruitfully.

Keywords: language management, nexus analysis, linguistic landscape paradigm, the rational triangular of languages.

ملخص

التعليم هو الآلة التي ينسج ويصنع فيها الأفراد. فهو يعتبر مجالا لتحقيق التطور ونشر المعرفة وإنتاج مجموعة من القيم والمهارات والسلوكيات فقط عندما يجسد في إطار سياسة لغوية مثمرة وحكم راشد. ومن أجل بلوغ هذه الغاية، من الأهمية القصوى أن نستقصي الطريق الأنجع لنصل إلى نظام تعليمي سليم في الجزائر. وبالتالي هذه الدراسة ستناقش ويعمق الإطار الأيكولوجي والذي يضم التحليل الارتباطي والمشهد اللغوي النموذجي ويعطي الخريطة العملية لخططي اللغة لبأشرة رؤاهم، مهامهم، وتقوياتهم اللغوية بنجاح.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإدارة اللغوية، التحليل الارتباطي، نموذج المشهد اللغوي، المثلث العقلاني للغات.

1. Introduction:

It is communication, notably through language, that enlivens human beings co-existence in their societies, to facilitate their exchange of ideas, and to trigger their capacities to plan for the future. Besides the role of education to acquire knowledge, to make progress, and to gain awareness is useful and fruitful. It teaches us how to maintain what is good and valuable, and how to get rid of what is ambiguous and irrelevant. Undoubtedly, modern societies are aware that the good planning of an entire educational institution will have successful outcomes on the social, economic, and cultural spheres; that is to say, it will engender a beneficial output that contribute to the betterment of life. Thus, planning strategy is a rational endeavour, conscious and well organized operation based upon expedient studies for changing society to attain progress.

2. Rationale of the study:

In particular, Algeria provides a considerable realm of study in language issues; first, because of its experience with a long period of French colonialism (i.e. the persistence of the French language); second, the pressure of world globalization (i.e. the prevalence of the English language; third, the future of local languages for argument's sake the Berber languages and Algerian Arabic. After independence (in 1962), the linguistic struggles were evident and varied between opponent to Arabic and proponent to French. These conflicts make any language reform ill prepared or undertaken inadvertently. Moreover, Language planning policy (LPP) in Algeria has frequently related with coincidence of circumstances, instead of functional decisions to encounter the country's greatest challenges. Therefore, the scope of this study is to try, first, proffer a successful Educational Planning Policy (ELPP) in Algeria to get rid of the languages' illness in schools, and to overcome the failure that features the Algerian educational institution. In addition, the second root aim is the necessity to move from the descriptive to a more explanatory and critical thinking in LPP; thus, language ecology, social ideology, and human agency have increasingly become very important areas, and rich elements for moving the LPP forward (Ricento, 2007:34).

3. The Educational Language Planning Policy in Algeria:

First and foremost, it is irrational to enlighten the way and arrive at a fruitful ecological paradigm without examining the major educational language policies that have shaped the Algerian educational enterprise: the imposing status of the French language through the Jacobean⁽¹⁾ assimilationist colonial policy, the challenges of Arabization, world globalization, and reversing mother tongues' shift are salient and undeniable facts.

Indeed, the presence of French in the Algerian linguistic market is due to a long period of colonial rule that exercised an ethnocentric⁽²⁾ approach to keep it as the only eminent language. Moreover, the French imperialist imposed their assimilationist policies without taking into account the native people's consensus, as well as the language situation in Algeria. Similarly, after independence, the choice of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as a national official language was neither promising nor methodical. The Arabization process, that created a division between the Algerians, was in the hands of some who did not take into account the parameters of LPP (i.e. status, corpus, acquisition, and prestige planning), and it was not embodied within the coherent LPP framework (i.e. conscious initiation, relevant implementation, and worthy evaluation). The faster and bigger Arabization project made Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) badly implemented; that is to say, no language cultivation, no social participation, and partial Arabization of higher education.

What is more, MSA is not weak or incapable of coping with the newness of everyday life; however, the Algerian decision makers' irrational practices, the laxity of MSA's regulatory bodies, and the practical disregard applied by the Algerian leaders towards this language devastates the situation more than before. Further, this bitter failure pushed our political language planners to change the way of drive by claiming that MSA is not in tune with modernity and science. Consequently, they call for an urgent shift due to globalization, which is seen as a second step in the hits and miss of a reform policy (if foreign languages are present, the policy towards them lacks coherence and realism). In addition, the political leaders overestimate the globalization era by claiming that French and English are languages of every day miracles, mobility and opportunity. Further, the aim of reversing language shift, and

maintaining the mother tongue pushed the Berbers to exercise a pressure on the Algerian regime to recognize Tamazight as a national and an integrated subject within education in the Kabylia region. Tamazight was recognized at the expense of Algerian Arabic, Targui, Chaouia, and Mozabite. The opaque acknowledgment of Tamazight as a national language lacks officialization and reliable standardization.

Stressing its failure, worse, numerous reforms have led to a progressive cultural retraction. Decisions implying the management of languages or dialects have not taken into account the parameters rooted in the social reality of the Algerian polity. The Algerian student is torn between three alternatives: MSA, mother tongues, and foreign languages. Not only but school also has become “a living laboratory where the language problems are presented, where tentative answers are experimented with, but where no lasting solution is likely to be found (Miliani,2006:98).

Moreover, no one would dare to deny the Algerians’ language awareness manifested in the privileged presence of MSA as a primordialist language entrenched in the Algerian identity; and mother tongues’ key role as constructivists for an overall linguistic heritage; and foreign languages with its instrumentalist dimension. Thus, it is a whole hybrid identity that ensures its unity. The following diagram 1.1 provides an overview of the interactions between the global, the national and the local variables in the Algerian language ecology that have been mentioned at various points in this study.

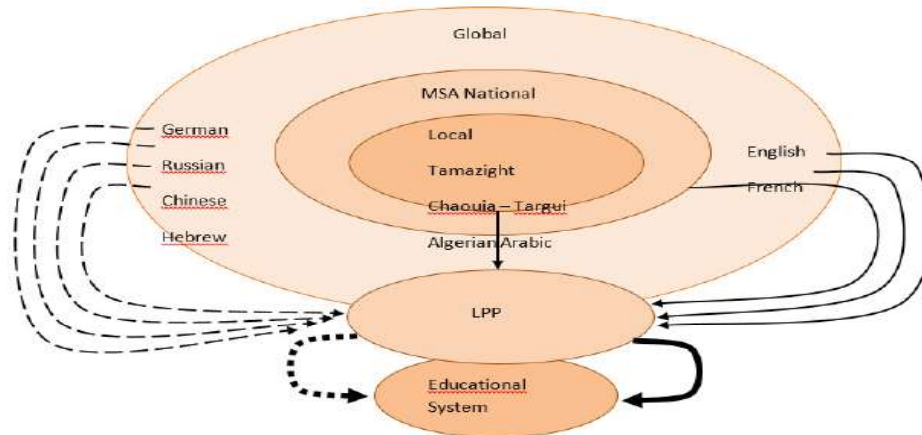


Diagram 1.1: Global, National, and local interactions in the Algerian Language Ecology.

Therefore, the failure of the Algerian ELPP is due to the carelessness that is executed towards the languages, the unsoundness of the policy-making process, and the disregard of the environment. To conclude with, our work would not be complete without a few suggestions that could be helpful to revamp our education.

4. Towards a Successful Ecological Framework within Education: Nexus and Linguistic Landscape Paradigm.

It is worth mentioning, that the language ecology⁽³⁾ has emerged as a useful conceptual orientation in that it brings together the micro and the macro level streams of sociolinguistic research that are necessary to fully grasp all aspects of the social linguistic mechanism. The union of the two methods; that is to say, nexus analysis and linguistic landscape analysis is rigorous and flexible. On the one hand, nexus analysis is to examine the mutually constitutive nature of discourse and society (Scollon, 2004). On the other hand, a linguistic landscape analysis is constructed through a collection of social actions committed by linguistic landscape actors. Therefore, it is of prime importance to propose Cooper's Scheme: "what actors attempt to influence what behaviours of which people for what ends under what condi-

tions by what means through what decision-making process with what effect” (1989:70) as a guide to operationalize our educational system in a rational and efficient way.

4.1. Nexus Analysis:

4.1.1. Actors:

The acknowledgement that educational language planning policy (ELPP) is shaped by many forces; such as, politics, culture, religion, and by many different people in various professional and personal roles, supports the principle that “implementation requires much more than a set of top- down decisions” (Kaplan, 2005:97). Indeed, many people should be involved in creating, implementing and supporting ELPP to form a well coordinated team; for instance anthropologists, economists, historians, industrial engineers, international relation specialists, political scientists, administrators, educators, teachers, material developers, curriculum specialists, learning psychologists, inspectors, learners’ representatives and language activists. On the same line of thought, ELPP should not be at the benefit of political interests, much more attention is to be devoted to local context; that is to say, bottom-up actors as fundamental and substantial element in the overall language planning policy operation.

4.1.2. Behaviours:

The types of language behaviour such actors have to influence are status, corpus, and acquisition planning. The status planning must take an explicit note of the wants and needs, the views and attitudes, and linguistic competencies of the public. It is high time to involve the Algerian citizens within linguistic matters, through awareness and information campaigns, and with continual dialogue between the macro and micro levels. Therefore, a behavioural equilibrium between government’s policies and the people’s consent is needed. It is of paramount importance to link status planning with a reliable corpus planning by keeping the languages selected at the speed of social, political, economic, and technological transformations (i.e., Arabic’s elaboration and Tamazight codification). In addition, acquisition planning has to determine clear social purposes in influencing the behaviour of those who

will be the society's future members. It should be able to cater for individual, group, and community interests. Thus, only a non – xenophilic and a non – xenophobic attitudes would solve the transitional phase foreign languages are bound to go through (as far as their status is concerned), and only a non – linguistic schizophrenic attitudes would solve the transitional phase mother tongues are bound to go through (as far as their status, corpus and acquisition is concerned).

4.1.3. People:

In ELPP, people should represent the majority whose agreement is intended. Actors should cater to the broad masses of the people rather than to a restricted elite. Accordingly, minority communities are indigenous to the country and actors regard the use of their language as a human right. The developments of new contexts of use, new resources and new processes all need to be responsive to local languages in Algeria such as, Mozabite, Targui, Algerian Arabic, Chaouia, in which no 'one size fits all' approach ought to be applied'. If a policy does not do this, then planning language becomes planning inequality (Tollefson, 2007: 50) or linguistic imperialism.

4.1.4. Ends:

Actors have to consider the feasibility of their educational projects; that is to say, the possibility of the policy implementation as it is planned. Thus, the goals of our educational system ought to be woven around three principles: identity, image and equality (Ager, Tollefson, 2003: 15). Protecting the identity of the group or the nation has to be a strong motivation for Algerian language planners, and has to remain at the heart of the Algerian functional measures toward MSA. Yet, preserving the desired external image should also be a strong impetus: policies of multilingualism, strategies of apparent openness towards foreign languages instead of hiding behind a restrictive oligolingual doctrine. Besides, social equality should be a strong backing for ELPP by the promotion and maintenance of local cultural richness. Good ELPP should promote tolerance, interculturality and intraculturality.

4.1.5. Conditions:

It is highly recommended to take into account the five environmental factors to actions devised for ELPP: situational, structural, cultural, environmental and informational. Situational elements are conditions or events that have an immediate effect on policy and are significant for educational projects mainly when they concern political and technological change. Structural elements are unchanging features of society's political, economic, demographic, and ecological structures, such as, the type of political regime or economic system, the geographic location and the degree of urbanisation. Cultural elements are the attitudes presented by the community as whole. Environmental factors are events, structures, attitudes that exist outside Algeria's borders such as the agreement on the institution of literacy campaigns in recent years in many countries, and the introduction of mother tongues into schools as a response to the call of UNESCO. Informational aspects refer to the data that are required for good decisions.

4.1.6. Means:

The implementation of educational projects is a matter of major importance for actors, where the power of a government depends on its resources. Thus, perfect implementation should involve adequate time and sufficient resources to the programs; for argument's sake, classrooms, equipped libraries, computers, language labs, printing equipment. Otherwise, planning activity will be fated to staleness.

4.1.7. Decision – Making Process:

To envisage educational reforms is not an easy activity but it requires constant and continuous efforts. First:

4.1.7.1. Needs analysis:

To satisfy our educational needs, language planners have to set an agenda to discuss issues related to language. This platform – setting stage is vital because it will solve communication needs that trigger ELPP, formulating tentative solutions, elaborating procedures for their implementation, and clarifying systematic evaluation processes. The choice regarding which

language or languages should be put on this platform. Primarily, agenda – setting should be based on a clear understanding of the language needs of the people for whom the decisions are made. Language planners should conduct a detailed individual and societal language needs analysis to facilitate objective data collection and to reach solid facts to cater for language needs. The language needs therefore, should be ‘associated with the whole spectrum of national life and not merely with selective or high culture activities’ (Fishman 1974: 534).

4.1.7.2. Decision – making:

The formulation of ELPP is the theoretical and conceptual decision – making regarding the solutions to be worked out in order to answer language communication challenges. Therefore, a detailed description of the solutions should be schematized, all the individuals, groups, bodies, institutions involved should be recorded, the rules and regulations should be made overt, the funds to carry out the policies should be specified, and the materials and infrastructures should be provided. Other important decisions should be made at this stage, namely, the elaboration of teaching methods and materials with regards to syllabus content, curriculum design, teacher supply, their initial and in – service training, their qualifications, human resources needed, the learning facilities, the level at which the foreign or mother tongue language will be taught should be part of the decision – making process.

4.1.7.3. Implementation:

At the implementation level, actors such as teachers in their classrooms, learners, and heads of schools, among others, have to play a prominent role in the success of ELPP. The administration has to play an effective role to provide the teaching support services and equipment and should create the supportive climate in the school. Besides, the policy also should be realistic; that is, the country should have the financial, economic, human and technological resources to implement the language policy already designed. The ELPP should be realistic in nature and pragmatic in choice, for instance, it may not be realistic to conceive providing all the classrooms, teachers, and designing curriculum for every language spoken in our society.

4.1.7.4. Evaluation:

Evaluation, in ELPP, is a fundamental task that must be carried out systematically since the results could be used to control the on – going language planning programs. The results of evaluation can provide perceptive feed – back on the strategies adopted for modification, innovation, or improvement by the policy – makers. The focus of evaluation should be on two main types: formative and summative evaluation. The former should be carried out while the activities are in progress; it should identify the weaknesses and the strengths of the programme and provides feed – back. However, the latter, should be undertaken at the end of a language programme or project to introduce innovation and provide inputs whether a programme is to be continued or discontinued.

4.1.7.5. Effect:

As far as the effect of the policy is concerned, a great deal of attention is to be cast on considering the efficiency of the policy; that is to say, to measure the results of the policy (i.e. its outcomes); for instance, is the policy real, efficient, and pragmatic? or only a waste of time and efforts. Undoubtedly, the development of a functionally adequate and popularly acceptable language policy for Algeria will not be easy or rapid, but each step will bring the country to more efficiency and success and far from confusion and contradiction. Therefore, nexus analysis in the Algerian educational setting will be a principle of looking away from first things and realities, and of looking towards last things and consequences.

5. Linguistic Landscape Analysis: The Rational Multilingual Approach within Algerian Education.

In the same way, a learner is expected to have a guide on the side, education is expected to have a rational LPP. Indeed, ELPP should have a coherent, systematic and meticulous framework that follows careful procedures. Interestingly, the approach suggests a complementary triangular with the three language – formula (i.e., Arabic, mother tongues and foreign languages). Stressing its significance, Arabic is put on the summit of the triangular as the queen – primordialist language, central to minimize internal diffe-

rences and maximize external ones, its slogan is : internal cohesion, external distinction, in other words, ‘no – gap , no – overlap’ between insiders . A language of unity and authenticity, and not division or fragmentation. Therefore, even though standard Arabic has no native speakers, it has native users as Parkinson confirms, “MSA is a full – fledged language, and that it has native users, with native intuitions about its use: people who read it fluently and listen to it with ease and understanding every day, they use it effortlessly and skilfully” (2000: 292). Even though education is the microcosm of MSA’s implementation, it is advisable that the whole Algerian community with varied gradations and at different levels ought to be the real custodian for MSA’s promotion. The influence of Eliezer Ben Yehuda on the revival of Hebrew is widely known. His influence in actively using Hebrew as an everyday language, with the development of new lexical items as required, is frequently cited as initial steps in the revival of Hebrew.

Further, the rational triangular integrates mother tongues (i.e. Algerian Arabic, Mozabite, Chaouia, Targui) even under choice, and puts them on the right side because it is a human right which play a key constructivist role for our local linguistic richness and cultural heritage. Then a shift to foreign languages on the left side of the triangular because of its instrumentalist functions for worldwide integration. Again, the word ‘left’ is derived from the verb ‘to leave’ and we may leave foreign languages’ learning since their use is linked to power, and power is relative and skeptic. As far as English is concerned, John Hayden stated,

“English is a tool, just like a piece of technology. Much of world’s economy is tied up in English speaking countries and for that reason, English is like a cell phone provider offering the best plan but if the dollar continues to drop, the most viable option could shift. Mexico and Korea do not need English to communicate if Korea begins to find it profitable to learn Spanish” (2004: 58).

In addition, the qualitative transition towards the summit (MSA) is needed to affirm the Algerian linguistic hybridity that supports its unity, fixedness and rootedness. In the heart of the triangular, language as – a resource – awareness should be a goal oriented to our educational enterprise. Language plan-

ners and policy – makers in Algeria have not come to grips with understanding the human nature, besides being loyal to one’s own language for identity reasons, ‘humans like butter on both sides of their bread and if possible a little jam as well’ (D’souza, 1999 : 42). For Algerians, MSA is the cultural nutritive bread, the bedrock of their identity and culture, and mother tongues constitute the buttered sides of their bread. Eventually, foreign languages are delicious jam. The following diagram shows the rational triangular for languages in education.

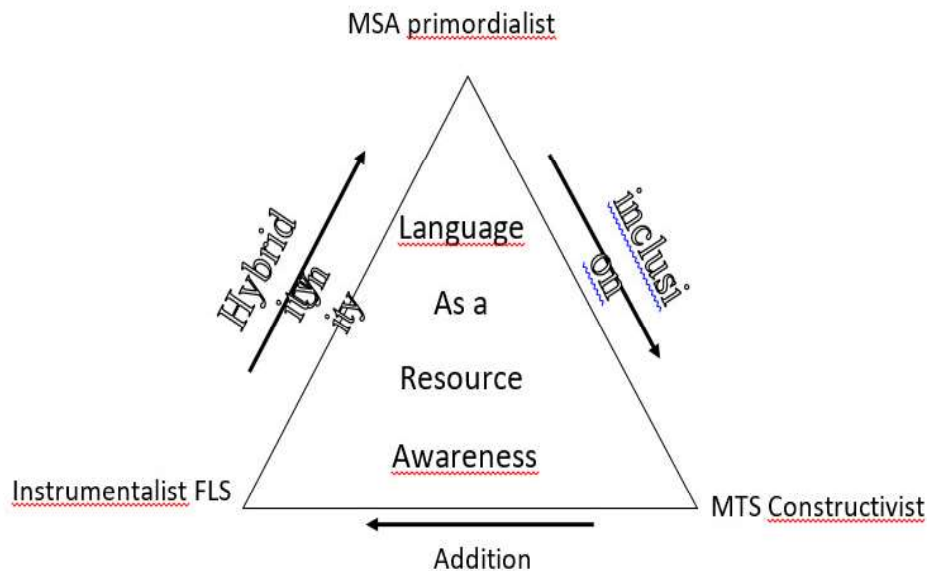


Diagram 4.3. The rational triangular for languages in education.

Therefore, Algerian languages should survive, develop, and spread. Support for the recognition of mother tongues’ teaching is based on the principle that providing some continuity of language experience facilitates the transition from the home to mainstream schooling and is therefore of educational , intellectual and emotional benefits to learners. Besides, language awareness, which is the growing individual’s sensitivity and consciousness of the key role of language, exhibits his language ability as Widdowson has mentioned, “knowledge can be characterized in terms of degrees of analyza-

bility, ability can be characterized in terms of degrees of accessibility” (2005: 67). The rise of civil rights issues, equal opportunities and the economic potential of being multilingual, increased parent’s demand for their children to be taught languages at school .The introduction of the rational multilingual approach within Algerian education is woven around the following principles:

. It aims to balance the global, national, and local interactions between the languages in the Algerian educational ecology.

. It acknowledges the potential of a language – as – a resource ideology as an alternative to language – as – problem and the oligolingual orientation in LPP.

. It takes into account the importance of recognising that social actors have agency (i.e. a role and space) and can exercise it to support or undermine ELPP.

. It takes into account that the symbolic power of languages can promote or undermine their position in the language ecology.

. It takes into account the need to provide a niche for Arabic, mother tongues, and foreign languages in the Algerian education.

. It enhances the fact that the Algerian people demonstrate a salient awareness towards the languages that are multiple. This latter will weave the cultural threads of the Algerian society only through a tapestry of everyday’s uses, scopes, and functions.

Therefore, nexus analysis and linguistic landscape analysis means successful language ecology.

6. Conclusion:

The way of improving the educational system depends tremendously on the continuity and nexus of many parameters. The presence of many actors so as to affect relevant behaviours with the acceptance of the general public for achieving well designed ends, under a given conditions, with the support of means, through a solid decision-making process, with reliable effects will undoubtedly lead our educational language planning policy to success and advance.

Notes:

1-Calvet stated that the Jacobean ideology's principles are:

- Xenophobic purism, at the level of the national language, illustrated by attempts to remove foreign elements.
- Cultural centralism directed against dialects.
- Nationalist centralism directed against national minorities.
- Colonialism or linguistic expansionism beyond the frontiers of the country (1999:262)

2-Ethnocentrism refers to put one's identity (ethno) at the centre (centricism) of the universe. It fosters negative judgements and can lead one group of people to think it has the right to dominate and exploit other groups, and to suppress other cultures.

3-A useful presentation for the contexts is language ecology defined by Haugen as "the study of the interactions between any given language and its environment (1972:18).

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