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*African Dynamics in a Multipolar World*

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## **MULTILINGUALISM, IDENTITY AND DYNAMICS OF CHANGE IN MOROCCO: TOWARD A NEW GLOTTOPOLITICAL MODEL**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper examines language policy and identity in Morocco and its relationship with sociolinguistic dynamics of change. The analysis focuses on the importance of the language policy and identity axis in the creation of the unitary nation state model that has been implemented in Morocco since the Independence. The paper also presents a review of the evolution of the linguistic diversity in Morocco from a critical sociolinguistic point of view in an attempt to show how this landscape has evolved over recent years, creating a dynamic market of change in language and identity in Morocco. Finally, the paper presents a critical evaluation of the Moroccan state's model of language policy and identity, proposing a different model according to the dynamics of change currently taking place.*

**Keywords:** Multilingualism, identity (ies), Nation-State, language policy and dynamics of change in Morocco

## **1. Object of the study**

When we want to analyse Language Planning and Policy (LPP) in a society such as Moroccan society, there are many questions that we have to ask. One of these has to do with certain categories and aspects we consider essential in the current debate on language politics. Starting from this point, I will construct the analysis of a new hypothetical model in which we consider the actual socio-political context and the dynamics of change that are occurring in Morocco, economically and sociolinguistically. The second question ~~is~~ refers to the appropriate methodological framework in our analysis and LPP model. In fact, we attempt to study the different levels and categories in which the social and political action of language politics is present in greater depth.

In this sense, our hypothesis has a direct relationship with whether or not a new model of LPP currently exists in Morocco and how this new model ~~is~~ looks like. So, as a hypothesis, I assume that a new model will require the implementation of different models to the extent that each process, each action and each proposed language policy leads us to another model in which there will be different issues, ideologies, aims and elements; therefore, the language policy or politics would be the establishment of a complex, dynamic and changeable multi-model.

## **2. Theoretical and methodological framework**

The choice of a theoretical and methodological framework has to do directly with the object of study and hypothesis. To achieve this purpose, I will use, at first, sociolinguistic criticism, defined by Heller (2003) as “une sociolinguistique capable de révéler quels intérêts sous-tendent les actions, les représentations et les discours, et qui bénéficie de l'évolution des processus sociaux» (p.14). Secondly, I will follow the concept of *knowledge* about languages and

language policy proposed by Heller (2007). She states that ‘knowledge’ “is understood as organized sets of discourses with organic connections among each other that take shape as a function of how institutional processes are organized and how actors are involved in the production and circulation of resources" (p.35) Thirdly, I opt for the notion of LPP as discourse proposed by Blommaert (1996) and also “discourse about language planning and language policy” (Blommaert 1999). Specifically, I will use Labrie’s (2010) concept of *language politics*.

He states that

*Language politics corresponds to the exercise of social control on linguistic diversity and linguistic variation through political channels, which include, on one hand, the expression of power relationships within the civil society and, on the other, the codification of language practices by agents who hold institutional power. (p.334).*

Finally, I will follow the concept of categories of analysis in LPP as proposed by Ricento (2000 & 2006) . My analysis focuses on the evolution and dynamics of change in language politics. In order to understand this evolution, it is necessary to develop some instruments to analyze the different categories. I will use three categories of analysis. Firstly, I will consider the macro socio-political category, which refers to the evolution of language politics and its context and dynamics, focusing more on the discursive activity that occurred around LPP. Secondly, I will also consider the epistemological factor corresponds to how to move from description to a critical analysis, located in a critical sociolinguistic approach and in a critical theory of LPP. Finally, I will explore the strategic factor which concerns what actions we should take and what is the methodological option that we need in our research on language politics to promote a *language policy* that is more pragmatic and democratic.

### 3. Context analysis based on the results of previous research

The first research I carried out in this area was my PhD dissertation (2003-2008) entitled as *Linguistic diversity, identities and discourses in Morocco: the struggle for legitimacy*. The objective of the research was to analyze the history of language policy in Morocco through a critical analysis of different discourses about language, identity and multilingualism. In this research, I found that the model of political unity, linguistically, is based on official monolingualism and unitarianism. It is an imagined and symbolic model. Despite this, as Spolsky notes (2004 ) “the monolingual polities turn out to be multilingual in practice (p. 57). In fact, knowledge has been built around this model through the various discourses on language, identity and language policy that reflect the multilingualism and linguistic diversity in Morocco: i) the official discourse; ii) the traditional discourse; iii) the alternative discourse (focused on defending the Amazigh language); and finally, the modern and liberal discourse (which focuses on the defence of mother tongues and the language rights of individuals and communities). I assume that if the dominant discourse were opened up to other Moroccan linguistic varieties, we would find other types of discourses. In addition to language politics as an interactive, linked process, the discursive dialogue that arose in the field of language politics was structured around three basic topics: Arabization/Arabism, Amazighness, French-speaking (Francophony) /*Frenchness*.

The analysis of the different discourses demonstrates that the context and the socio-political, economic and linguistic dynamics of change have influenced the type of knowledge generated by the discourse on language politics. Therefore, there has been a change from 2000 to the present in the discursive representation of language and identity and multilingualism in official discourse and, consequently, in the rest of the discourses. However, a discursive order

has been arrived at that is dominated by a power relationship between different discourses and different models of *language policy*. There was a causal relationship between the fact that language (s) / identity (ies) are in a subordinate position and the discourse that occurs around these language varieties and identities. Finally, the process of representing linguistic diversity and constructing national (ethno-linguistic, cultural and social) identity changes according to the discursive interaction and depending on the socio-political context in which the different discourses on language politics occurred. The more important point in this analysis is that every change involves implementing a new model; therefore, this implementation is carried out unconsciously.

#### **4. Constructing the nation-state vs, social, economic and linguistic democratization: toward a new Glottopolitical model.**

The articulation of language, identity and nation-state was central to creating and legitimizing the Moroccan nation-state, and it was also central to how this axis has represented this legitimacy at different times of Morocco's post-independence. In addition, I argue the importance of the role played by language in constructing new identities and new forms of belonging. As Spolsky (2004) notes "the importance of language policy is fundamentally rooted in the rise of the modern state." (p.10). In this sense, what is the relationship between the modernisation of the nation-state and linguistic innovation? Their relationship was defined by Boukous (2008) as "Modernité maîtrisé et développement humain." In fact, this process of building the nation state, modernisation and *linguistic regulation* will have certain consequences.

One of the consequences of the Moroccan model of LPP after independence was the creation of: i) a population-related technical world, business and capitalism (industrial, financial

and so on), which has the ability to use the French language and controls material and symbolic goods, ii) a population, somehow deprived of the world of technology and large capitalist enterprises, that is not able to use standard Arabic or French. It is the people with Moroccan Arabic or Amazigh as mother tongues who have not known any kind of social, economic or political advancement. In this sense, the lack of equality between languages and language communities, in the choice of language practices and the right to recognize the linguistic, social, cultural and regional identity of some linguistic communities and some individuals leads, consequently, to an economic and sociolinguistic conflict. According to Tollefson (1991)

“In general, economic disadvantage is associated with constrained linguistic choice. Indeed, around the world many peasants and urban poor may have no alternative available to them to resolve their language problems. We can say that they are dominated by those who enjoy a wider range of alternatives.”  
(p.15)

But currently there are ongoing economic changes in Moroccan society in the form of the expansion of the "new Moroccan economy" related to initiatives of local, regional and national economic development.

These changes have introduced new language practices and new power relationships between languages. It is important to remember that economic development has more power over policy decisions related to language and language practices. The new economy requires a model of communication and reporting between the different linguistic varieties. As Heller (2010) notes:

“there is a political economic reason for why economic arguments are now more authoritative than political ones, although the State still has a role to play in the advancement of the economic interests of its producers and consumers. The State and the private sector, however, have to figure out how to manage the new communication-oriented forms of production, as well as the circulation and value of its communicative products. (p.349)

An example of these practices in the Moroccan linguistic field is the growing use of Moroccan Arabic in the private and public economic sector and in the process of production and consumption of products in different fields (telecommunications, real estate, arts, media, the language-teaching industry and tourism). Regarding the Amazigh language, there is some recognition in terms of its value in the symbolic and material field in Morocco through its introduction into the education industry and the media. (Boukous, 2008). What questions can we ask in connection with these practices, these actions and changes? Are we facing new forms and new organizations of the power languages? Is there a new economy of linguistic exchanges and new skills? How is this process articulated at these levels: the nation-state, the construction of social categories, and the power relationships between languages, economically, politically and sociolinguistically? Are we facing a model of a Moroccan linguistic field in a new economy characterized by ethno-linguistic stratification? And if so, what are the socio-linguistic dynamics that characterize the Moroccan linguistic market today? What effects will it have on language attitudes and on the behaviours of individuals and linguistic communities?

##### **5. The sociolinguistic dynamics of changes**

After Moroccan independence, the control of linguistic diversity has resulted in the implementation of a hierarchy and sociolinguistic subordination (not diglossia) between linguistic varieties, discursively manifested and reinforced where Moroccan Arabic and Amazigh are still considered a low-value product and dominated in the Moroccan linguistic market (Boukous 1999 & 2008). Nevertheless, we are now observing a revitalization and an empowerment of the varieties that have until now been considered vernacular dialects. How does this revitalization and empowerment occur?



### *5.1. Revitalization and empowerment at the sociolinguistic level*

One of the forms of revitalization and empowerment is the beginning of a standardization process of communicative practices and forms and the appropriation of variability that especially concerns the Amazigh language and Moroccan Arabic (see Moustaoui, 2011). Regarding this standardization, what relationship has currently been established between the languages? What is the impact of the standardization in terms of the use and function of the dominant languages in an official context (standard Arabic and French) and the relationships established so far between linguistic varieties in the linguistic field in Morocco?

### *5.2. On the legislative level*

The political and legal recognition of these varieties (Moroccan Arabic and Amazigh, and other varieties) aims to protect the language rights of communities, both majority and minority. Concerning the Amazigh language, it is important to stress the recognition of the new Moroccan constitution of Amazigh as an official language in Morocco and the recognition of the spoken and vernacular varieties used in Morocco. For example, Hassanya has been acknowledged as Moroccan linguistic and cultural heritage in the new constitution.

### *5.3. On the discursive level*

A socio-political discourse that aims to revitalize and put pressure on the state language policy has emerged. Defending Moroccanness (language, identity, culture and society) appears in the discourse of certain scholars and institutions as follows: i ) Laraoui (2009). *تعميم الفصحى*, with the dialectalization of standard Arabic, ii) the Magazine *Nichane* (Ahmed Benchemsi) / that has defended Moroccan Arabic as a national language for years and iii) Foued Laraoui and

Abderrahim Youssi, intellectuals with a discourse that promotes the standardization and use of Moroccan Arabic in different formal contexts. I must emphasize the work developed by the Zagoura Foundation, an institution that defends a literacy program through the use of the mother tongue. There are also various artistic events (music and art of the new generation) that use and defend vernacular varieties (cf. Moustououi 2010 & 2011). And, finally, a peripheral-regional discourse with a certain degree of nationalism, both north and south, exists.

In connection with these peripheral-regional discourses, I participated in a project whose results I will present briefly, along with the model we have proposed to the Moroccan regionalization commission. The project was entitled “New Territorial Organization in Morocco (Advanced Regionalization) and the Management of Symbolic Capital: Language and Identity.” After a critical analysis of different discourses, the ubiquity of the sociolinguistic conflict was noted. We also discovered that the different discourse devices (social protest) regarding language politics and identity contain a number of elements of a territorial character and the objects of the conflict are language and identity related to certain territories and the model of *language politics* and identity policy (Benothmane 2002).

The actors involved in the conflict represented and still represent a group or a linguistic community in different regions in Morocco (north and south). There is an attempt to resolve the issue by the State, so the advanced regionalization proposed by the State was good evidence. In this way, the model we have proposed should be the result of a constitutional, governmental, legislative, administrative or legal decision; in the field of language politics theory, this is called “the principle of territoriality” ( Labrie 1997 & 1998). This model assumes from the outset the existence of ethnic plurality and multilingualism. Its first objective is to reduce tensions between the center and the periphery and resolve confrontations between linguistic and ethnic groups and

the state. This model also guarantees the recognition and maintenance of geographic areas in which these groups feel safe and the recognition of their identity by the state. The desired result is a sustainable and democratic pluralism, what Boukous (2008) called pluralistic democracy. However, we found that this model imposes some restrictions on the freedom to choose languages in the territory, on one hand. And on the other hand, this model based on the principle of territoriality is a solution of an institutional nature; but it ignores the reality of individuals in a multilingual society. Multilingualism in Morocco is not a question of one region or two or three; multilingualism is present throughout the entire territory. And finally, the model based on the principle of territoriality assumes the existence of political boundaries, as it has territories associated with one language and one identity. I also have to emphasize the need for a large budget for any territorial reorganization or for a democratic and sustainable language politics, not only at the central level but also at the regional and local levels. As Labrie (1997) notes "Ce modèle appelé à se modifier dans l'avenir en fonction des changements politiques liés, d'une part, à la régionalisation et, d'autre part, à la globalisation, l'interdépendance et la supranationalité." (p.216)

## **6. Conclusions and challenges of research on a new model of LPP**

One of the challenges of the exercise of language politics is to change the language utopia that sets up a direct relationship between "Language Policy/ Planning and the construction of social, political and economic inequality," as James W. Tollefson (1991) announced in his book *Planning Language, Planning Inequality*. So how can we achieve *Language Planning and Policy*, and guarantee at the same time the promotion of *Equality*? How can the LPP become a policy to promote democracy on all levels and in all areas? In this sense, the pragmatic option

has to gain ground and overcome the symbolic and ideological option defended by the institutions that exercise a certain power in society. Also, the dynamics of change at economic, political and sociolinguistic levels should be taken into consideration for any action in language politics. One of the approaches that can analyze the connection between all levels of language politics is the critical approach based on the ethnography of language policy. Its objectives are:

To demonstrate how language politics: i ) “create and sustain various forms of social inequality, and that policy-makers usually promote the interests of the dominant social group”, ii) to develop more democratic policies which reduce inequality and promote the maintenance of minority languages (Tollefson 2006).

To propose a heuristic methodology that considers the following to be necessary: actors involved in the process, the objectives, the analysis of the process, the discourses that circulate, and, finally, the social and political dynamics and economic policy of the context in which language politics are exercised.

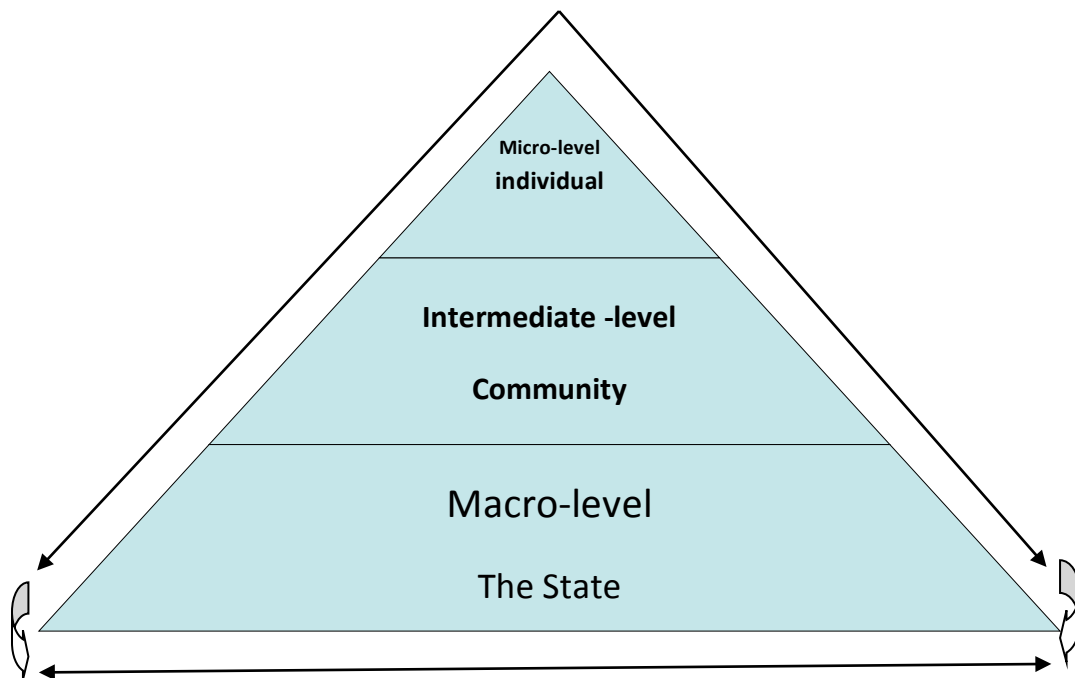
To see how different discourses of language politics based on different linguistic ideologies are interpreted and how they are absorbed at each level and in each context: on the national, regional and local levels, in public and private institutions, and by families and individuals.

One of the post-research actions is to establish a model of language politics or language policy of linguistic diversity in which all these actions can connect at all levels: We start with the individual micro level, then the community level and, finally, the macro level that corresponds to the state.

According to Ricento (2000) language policy research has tended to fall short of fully accounting for precisely how micro-level interaction relates to the macro-levels of social

organization. Moreover, Johnson and Freeman (2009) observe that Language Policy can provide thick descriptions of, and contribute to, policy processes to validate and promote language diversity as a resource in society. One example of the ethnography of language politics in Morocco based on a triangulatory approach is a research project in which we are investigating the relationship in terms of interpretation, absorption and action of: 1) discourses and language practices of a group of teachers, inspectors and students in primary education regarding the use and choice of language practice in the classroom in a primary school in Morocco, and 2) the discourses and language practices of social actors (intellectuals, private foundations, multinationals), which put pressure on the social and political state, with the dominant official discourse.

### *Pragmatism, Influence and Change*



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