

Preface by the Series Editors

The decision of Kluwer Academic Publishers to launch both a new journal and a new book series on language policy recognizes the growing importance attached to the field. Language policy has come to be significant not just in newly independent states but also in well-established ones. We define language policy as having three interrelated aspects: practices, ideologies, and management. It may be inferred from studying the systematic choices of linguistic items or varieties as part of the language practices of a community, or from the language beliefs and ideologies about language use current in a social group. Or it may be made explicit in language management (which we define as efforts by people or institutions that possess or that claim authority to modify the language practices or ideologies of others). Because it is an ongoing process in continuous interaction with a great range of other factors (social, political, religious and so on) in a society, its study comes to have even wider significance. To study a society or state without considering its language policy, or to study language policy without taking into account its full social context, leads to an impoverished understanding.

In the book series and the journal, we will therefore seek and publish scholarly and scientific analysis of cases and issues and development of theories that take into account careful empirical study, whether qualitative or quantitative and thorough reasoning. While recognizing that most scholars in the field have firm opinions about controversial language policy issues, we will discourage polemic. The books and articles we publish will cover the full scope of language policy, whether at the largest or smallest social or institutional or political level. Because language acquisition policy, especially as it effects the decisions about which languages to use for instruction and which to teach, is such a fundamental and universal aspect of language policy, we will aim for full coverage of language education questions.

We therefore welcome the present volume as the first in the book series because it helps make clear not just our major concerns with policy in context but also the critical role of decisions about language education as an integral component of language policy. There are of course many special local features concerning Arab minority language education in Israel, but the topic allows the authors to explore the complex general relationships between the design and implementation of a school policy for teaching and using languages and the rich

sociolinguistic, social, political, religious, attitudinal, and economic contexts in which the policy exists, offering thus a model of much wider significance, especially to the many countries in which ethnic and language conflict exists. It shows how in a democratic society, compromises may develop that, which not satisfying all interests, permit limiting conflict while allowing for continued tension for improvement.

The book by Amara and Mar'i sets forth a number of intriguing paradoxes. In spite of the continued political struggle between Arabs and Jews in the Middle East, Israel is one of the few non-Arab countries where there is state-supported mother tongue instruction for Arabic speakers throughout primary and secondary school and in teacher training institutions. Israel is also among comparatively few states in the world that offer this amount of instruction in a home language of a minority.

At the same time, as this study makes clear, there remain important problems in the design and implementation of the system. In part, no doubt, this reflects the general difficulty of developing an appropriate policy for a community that is ethnically or linguistically different from the majority. The issue of ethnic or religious (or ethnic-religious) definitions adopted by polities sets up challenges for recognition of appropriate civic status for minority groups. It is a controversial issue not just in Israel (where the matter is exacerbated by the continuing conflict between Israel and the surrounding Arabic-speaking countries) but potentially wherever one group is singled out for recognition in national constitutions or ideologies.

The ambiguities in the nominal recognition of Arabic as an official language of Israel are clearly analyzed in the book. Robert Cooper has distinguished three meanings of official language: statutory, working, and symbolic. The preservation of the status of Arabic (first recognized as a statutory but limited working official language by the British Military Government which took over after the defeat of the Turks in World War I) as a statutory official language after the 1948 independence of Israel has had only weak implementation as a working language, with the major exception of the school system described here. This situation is starting to be challenged by an Israeli Arabic movement for civil equality, concerned at signs of declining proficiency in Arabic and increasing use of Hebrew among Israeli Arabs, but the issue is clouded in the meantime by the continued political crisis.

Focusing as it does on the Israeli education system and its language policy, and also on the place of the Arabic language, the book makes clear how the policy is not at all autonomous, but must be seen in the full Israeli sociolinguistic, political, economic, religious and cultural context. The situation of Arabic in Israel today is unique as it needs to survive and compete in a

trilingual struggle with Hebrew, the language of the hegemonic majority and the national language, with the higher status of statutory, working and symbolic backing, and with English, a global language the knowledge of which is a condition for entrance into higher education and to economic success. While Arabic is maintaining its role in the home and local community, and serves as a major mark of identity, the lack of external recognition is contributing to a loss of status and use. The volume asks then whether and how the educational system might contribute to resisting shift away from Arabic.

The authors of this book, both graduates of Bar-Ilan University, have been studying Arab language education in Israel for some years. Abd Mar'i has a doctorate in Hebrew literature, and teaches at Beit Berl College. He was responsible for a major study of the teaching of Arabic in the Arab community. Muhammad Amara teaches in the departments of English and political studies at Bar-Ilan University and also at Beit Berl College. He has conducted a number of studies dealing with the sociolinguistics of the Arabic language as it used in Israel and with language and identity and recently published a book entitled *Politics and Sociolinguistic Reflexes: Palestinian Border Villages*. Their book draws on research each has conducted, including a larger study of Israeli language education as a whole. Because they are committed and activist members of the community studied, while at the same time academically qualified researchers accepted by mainstream society, they have both the perspective and tools to undertake the challenging task set by the topic of the book. We are pleased that their book launches the Kluwer series on language policy.

Elana Shohamy

Bernard Spolsky

Preface

In the last three years a number of eye-catching events related to Arab-Jewish cleavage took place in Israel. In 1998 the Jewish citizens of the state celebrated 50 years to “the establishment of the state, Jewish independence and the realization of the Zionist dream” (Gavizon and Abu-Rayya, 1999: 9). In contrast, the Arab citizens of the state mourned fifty years to the *Nakba*.¹ Another event in the same year, called by the Arabs ‘Black Sunday’, was a violent confrontation between thousands of Arab inhabitants of Um-el-Fahm and Israeli police forces. The recent events, in September and October 2000, between Arab demonstrators and Israeli police forces led to the killing of 13 Arabs and dozens of wounded. With a quick look at Israeli newspapers the following picture emerges: Arabs started to develop a perception that the country treats them as enemies rather than citizens, and many Israeli Jews indicate that Arabs do not only demonstrate and protest, but they also want to shake the pillars of the Jewish state.

The above examples express well the intensity of the Jewish-Arab cleavage in Israel. The Israeli reality points to a number of deep divisions among the population (such as between Sephardi-Ashkenazi, Orthodox-secular, men-women, Arab-Jew), most of which, in our opinion, are progressively decreasing as time passes. The Arab-Jewish divide is the deepest of all, and there is still no solution. In spite of its intensity, it does not enjoy a centrality whether in public debates or in the academy. This subject comes on the agenda after sharp tensions between Arabs and Jews.

In this book we will explore in more detail some aspects of the Arab-Jewish cleavage, which raise fundamental questions regarding the place of the Arabs and Arab language education in the Jewish State. More specifically, the aim of this book is to describe and analyze language education in the Arab society in Israel from the establishment of the state in 1948 until today. For this purpose internal processes which are embedded within the Arab population itself, such as the socio-economic condition of the population, the diglossic situation in the Arabic language, and the wide use of Hebrew among Arabic speakers, and

¹ The literal translation is “catastrophe”. This term describes the drastic change that occurred in the status and situation of the Palestinians as a result of the 1948 War, whether in their demographic dispersion or the transformations in their political and socio-economical situation.

external factors such as the policy of control and inspection of the Ministry of Education over the Arab education system in general and on language education in particular, the dominance of Hebrew, and the definition and perception of Israel as a Jewish State were examined, together with their influence on language education and learning achievements. A comprehensive examination was made of Arabic, Hebrew and English. Also examined was the teaching of French in a number of community schools.

The principal questions focused on are:

1. What are the characteristics of Arab language education in Israel? What are the principal factors which fashion it?
2. What are the considerations which guide those who make decisions in the forming of the language education policy (E.g., formulation of goals, choice of learning materials, etc.) among the Arab population?
3. Why are the achievements of the Arab students in language education so low? What are the principal and secondary factors that bring about these results?
4. What status does the Arabic language have in Israel? What significance does this have for language education?
5. What issues are on the agenda and what are the problems which hinder the progress of language teaching? How can Arab language education be improved?

Since the subject of the research is complex and covers a broad area, we have used a number of research methods in order to gather the relevant data. These include:

1. *Examining teaching programs.* We examined study programs in the three main languages which are taught in the Arab schools. We made a comparison between the new programs and earlier ones.
2. *Examination of textbooks in the three principal languages.* We looked at contents, structure and style of earlier readers compared with those used now.
3. *Conducting interviews.* We interviewed the inspectors of the three principal languages and language teachers in elementary, junior high and high schools. The interviews examined the declared goals of the language education from the point of view of the planning level (the decision makers), the teachers' implementation, the current problems and possible solutions.
4. *Questionnaires.* We surveyed the attitudes and perceptions of high school and college students about the various languages and their speakers, and also the degree of fluency of the students in the languages, the way the language is used and interest in the communications media. The sample included 999 Arabs from all significant geographical areas in Israel: the Little Triangle, Galilee and Haifa District, the Negev, mixed cities, and Druze villages.
5. *Archives.* Since there is not much published literature on the subject, we used archives such as the Beit Berl Archives, and the State Archives in

Language Education Policy: The Arab Minority in Israel

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2002, XXIII, 198 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-1-4020-0585-5