Language Policy in Morocco: Role of Government Agencies in Effecting Language Change

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Plan B
“The Berber Renaissance: Berber in the Time of Mohammed VI”

Contemporary Morocco: State, Politics and Society under Mohammed VI.
Routledge 2013.
Research Interests & Research Agenda

- The politics of language planning in multilingual settings
- Special focus: Morocco’s recent (2001) language policy
- In 2010-2011, I was interested in the role that language academies and government agencies play in the planning and implementation process of top-down language decisions
- 2010-2011 was projected as the target date for full implementation of the policy
The Arab Spring and its effect on the Berber Language (and my research agenda)

0 2010 - 2011: The Arab Spring
0 20 February 2011: Birth of the Moroccan Pro-democracy Movement – 20 Fevrier.
0 9 March 2011: The Regime reacts – TYPICAL.
  0 King nominates a commission to draft a new constitution
  0 King’s speech to the nation
0 17 June 2011: a draft of the new constitution is released
0 1 July 2011: the new constitution is approved by 98.49% of voters. (Berber is an official language along Arabic)
Linguistic Landscape of Morocco

- Languages of Morocco: Roles & Status
- a linguistic patchwork
  - Code-switching; Diglossia / Triglossia
Important dates in the Berber Movement

- 1956: Morocco becomes independent
- Arabization
- 1994: First time King Hassan II calls for the maintenance and revival of Berber
- 1999: Introduction of the National Charter of Education
- 2009-2012: The Emergency Program
Change in the Status of Berber

- Berber is an Official Language (along Arabic)
- The state had no choice but to recognize Berber
- The Secret of the Berber Cultural Movement’s Success
Berber in the last decade...

- Outburst of research on the Berber language, culture, arts, literature and history

- Research & Publications

- Pace of developments surrounding Berber
Implementing the teaching of Berber in Morocco: the Stumbling blocks

- Lack of human and material resources, (qualified teachers)
- Lack of initial and continuous teacher training and development
- Poor and outdated teaching methodologies: translation method
- The Tifinagh script
- People’s negative attitudes and perceptions towards Berber
- A top-down language policy that did not take into account the views of those affected by the policy
- Political pressures and demands for immediate and tangible results → improvisation and intuition in the implementation process.
More Obstacles...

- Lack of institutional support

- Fall 2006, the Ministry of Education finally acknowledged that it did not have the material or human resources to go about implementing this language policy

- While the number of students expected to learn Berber continues to grow, the number of teachers has remained static
Conclusions

- Language policy: a means to manage social and political conflict
- First, it was Arabization: a necessary course to guarantee social justice, equality and unity.
- The regime acts only when faced with destabilizing forces
Final Thoughts

0 To genuinely change the status of Berber ...

0 People’s attitudes towards a minority language are not easy to change

0 The potential for implementing any language policy requires congruity between the policy and people’s attitudes, beliefs and practices