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Managing the Language Policy for the Unification of Scientific Terminology

Descriptive Analytical Approach

تسيير السياسة اللغوية لتوحيد المصطلح العلمي - مقارنة وصفية تحليلية-

د. ربيعة حمادي ، جامعة المسيلة ، الجزائر
rabia.hammad@univ-msila.dz

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ملخص:

اخترت الخوض في هذا الموضوع إيمانا بالدور الذي تلعبه السياسة اللغوية في عملية توحيد المصطلحات في البلاد العربية، والذي أصبح أمر توحيد أكثر من ضرورة في ظل المجتمع المعاصر الذي بات ينعت "بمجتمع المعلومات" أو "مجتمع المعرفة".

وقد ركزت في دراستي على سبل تسيير تخطيط السياسة اللغوية في مجال التوحيد المصطلحي.

أما النتائج فأكثرها مع الرأي القائل بأن التوحيد المصطلحي وإن تحقق نظريا، فلن يكتب له الحياة، ويصبح واقعا إلا عندما يشيع استعماله في قاعات الدرس ومخبرات البحوث والكتب ووسائل الإعلام. الكلمات المفتاحية: السياسة اللغوية، التخطيط، المجامع اللغوية، التوحيد المصطلحي.

Abstract

I chose this topic because of my belief in the role that language policy plays in the process of terminology unification in Arab countries. Indeed, its unification has become a necessity in contemporary society, which is qualified as "Information Society" or "Knowledge Society".

Also, I have shed light in my study on ways of managing language policy planning in the field of terminology unification.

The majority of the results lean towards the opinion that the terminological unification once achieved theoretically will not see the light of day and becomes a reality until its use spreads in study rooms, research laboratories, books and the mass media.

Key words: Language Policy – planning – language academies - terminology unification..

Introduction:

Language is no longer just a communication tool through which we express concepts, ideas and values, and preserve the cultural and scientific heritage, but it has begun to play a major role in the process of comprehensive human development, and has become a means of unifying the nation intellectually and politically, as language is an essential element of culture and thought that exceeds its importance of expression to change, and perhaps this is what prompted contemporary and developed societies to accelerate the development of their national language and dust off the issues that hinder its development.

Because the Arabic language is a national and national language, a spokesperson for a universal and heavenly message, and the owner of a civilisational project, with its linguistic repertoire and knowledge stock, its people, especially those specialised in linguistic policy and planning, have had to rearrange the Arab linguistic scene in Arab countries, consider what has been achieved in the development and promotion of the Arabic language, and what will be achieved in the future, and identify the obstacles that may hinder this achievement.

Perhaps one of the main tributaries driving the comprehensive development of the Arabic language is the standardisation of its scientific, technical and even literary terms in order to create a common Arabic scientific language that is understood by all scientists, technologists and writers in different Arab countries, which enhances the performance and effectiveness of many sectors, most notably education, scientific research, translation, media and other sectors.

However, on a simple extrapolation of the reality of language development in our Arab country, we find that the project of unifying scientific and literary terms is proceeding at a lagging pace, if not closer to chaos and lack of coordination between the institutions concerned with this project, as they are directly responsible for developing terms, deciding on their standardisation, and implementing their use and circulation in all fields.

Accordingly, this research will attempt to monitor the reality of Arabic language policy and linguistic planning concerned with implementing and deciding on the standardisation of terminology and its implementation and use in order to promote the Arabic language to keep pace with the rapid development of terminology and expressions witnessed by the world today.

In this context, we raise the following questions: Does the project of unifying scientific terms fall within the core concern of Arab linguistic policy? If yes, to what extent have Arab linguistic councils and scientific institutions succeeded in achieving the desired benefit, which is to reach a common Arabic scientific language?

1- Language policy and language planning is a relationship of influence and impact:

The concept of language policy from the perspective of sociolinguists enters within the legal framework of the language defined by the authority through which binding decisions are formulated and implemented for the benefit of society, and it is a multidisciplinary field that intersects with several sciences such as education, sociology, psychology, geography, and social linguistics its true birthplace, it is a

mosaic of intersecting factors, of which language is an integral part, carrying cultural, sovereign and economic values, at the individual, international and global levels, in addition to it - the language - a tool of communication and a symbol of identity.

Ali Al-Qasimi's comprehensive definition of language policy answers the question: Who makes the linguistic decision and determines his choices? He presents his point of view based on defining the concept of linguistic policy, which for him means "the activity undertaken by the state that results in a plan approved by its legislative councils, according to which the linguistic landscape in the country is organised..."¹. It is the politicians and power holders in the country who practice linguistic policy and formulate its articles, whether it is stipulated in constitutions, legislative laws, or linguistic decisions that concern linguistic and scientific institutions and centres, or not. Here comes the role of linguistic planning, which undertakes the task of implementing the linguistic decision, the implementation of which is not limited to the work of the authority only, but in which state agencies, institutions, scientific and literary centres and councils participate, as linguistic planning means all conscious efforts to influence the structure or function of linguistic variations². It is characterised by formulating and evaluating alternatives to solve language issues and providing the best and most effective potential options³.

Based on the above, the following question arises: Is language policy part of language planning, or vice versa, or is language policy part of language planning, or vice versa?

The relationship between linguistic policy and linguistic planning is one of

dependency, despite the different origins of the two general sciences, they are two specialised branches in the linguistic issue, and this relationship leads to the fact that linguistic planning is subordinate to linguistic policy, as linguistic policy has precedence and causality in relation to linguistic planning, and it serves as a guide and determinant of its movement, because linguistic policy is a theoretical and legal framework for linguistic planning.

2- Components of Arabic language policy planning:

Language policy planning is like any other economic, political or scientific planning, as it begins with an inventory of needs and survey of priorities, then determines the near goals and distant objectives, and then chooses the appropriate means to achieve these goals and objectives. Of course, every planning has its components, and every policy has its pillars, and among the main components of Arabic language policy planning we mention the following⁴:

- 1- Developing the classical Arabic language and popularising its use throughout the Arab world.
- 2- Spreading the fluent Arabic language in the world and facilitating its teaching to speakers of other languages.
- 3- Teaching foreign languages in the nation's schools and institutes to provide us with tools of knowledge, communication and co-operation with other nations.
- 4- Organising translation from and into the national language.
- 5-Developing non-Arabic national languages and defining the relationship between them and the national language, in light of the nation's intellectual and political unity and the preservation of cultural heritage.

6- Unifying scientific and technical terminology in Arab countries to ensure a unified scientific language.

The last component, the standardisation of scientific and technical terminology, is at the heart of the attention and care of a scientific institution affiliated with the Union of Arab Linguistic Councils, namely the Arab League Coordination Office in Rabat of the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation, which built its work on what was achieved by the scientific linguistic councils in Damascus, Cairo, Baghdad, Amman and other scientific and university institutions in the Arab world.

However, in the absence of a clear national strategy for Arab linguistic policy concerned with the materialisation of the project of terminological uniformity in all sciences, the implementation of the linguistic decision has stagnated, and here we raise more than one question about who directs and draws the linguistic landscape, who implements it, what is the implementation mechanism, and what are the objectives of both linguistic policy and linguistic planning?

3- Obstacles to terminological standardisation in the Arab countries:

It is agreed that the preparation and development of scientific and technical terminology is the responsibility of Arab linguistic councils such as the Arabic Language Academy in Cairo, the Scientific Academy in Damascus, the Jordanian Arabic Language Academy, and the Arabic Coordination Office in Rabat. However, despite the efforts made in publishing and standardising scientific terms by the linguistic councils, as well as automated terminology banks such as the Moroccan Lexar Bank at the Institute for Studies

and Research for Arabisation, the Saudi Automated Terminology Bank (Basem), and the Jordanian Arabic Language Academy's Terminology Bank. However, their popularity remained far from the general Arab masses, and it can even be said that this group found a vacuum for the names of modern inventions, so they liked the foreign term and stuck to their tongues, and it will be impossible to eradicate it, and all this was "...due to the absence of effective terminological dissemination means...". When some good or even standardised terms are available, they do not find their way to effective dissemination, so that some of them hardly get out of the authoring body of a complex or a private institution, which hinders people's knowledge even of their existence, let alone their use, so how many translators and researchers, and even more so how many scientific and educational institutions reach them, for example the product of the Arabisation Coordination Office and all the Arabic language councils?"⁵

It is no exaggeration to say that the terminology produced by all scientific bodies has remained confined to specialised councils, which has made their use limited to some scientists, researchers and specialists, but the majority are unaware of these terms because "the Arabisation Coordination Office only prints a few thousand copies of its unified magazines and dictionaries. This limited number does not meet the needs of higher education institutions and other beneficiary institutions in the Arab world, so the standardised terminology remains confined to a narrow range and is not popular, widespread and used, resulting in the failure of the standardised scientific terminology to play its desired role."⁶

In addition to the absence of the teaching of terminology in Arab universities and its role in unifying terms and establishing their popularity and use, or rather the absence of the role of students in contributing to the adoption of terms, despite the many calls and appeals about the need to pay attention to this science and teach it in universities and specialised scientific institutes, in order to activate it in practical life to measure the extent of its quality or poor quality, but the research on terminology became confined to the corridors of councils and bodies without moving to classrooms to test its ability to settle and become popular.⁷

As Ahmed Shafiq Al-Khatib emphasises: "Terminology has become an important part of the Arabic language, as well as all contemporary languages, as keys to human knowledge in its various branches, and the means of understanding and communication between people in various scientific and practical fields."⁸

4-Causes of the multiplicity of Arabic scientific terms:

The multiplicity of scientific terms is an issue that weighs heavily on the shoulders of terminologists and linguists alike, and it is natural for it to be an issue. How not? The content is not of our creativity, and the term is not of our language, and this is undoubtedly due to the absence of a precise methodology in terminological translation, along with spontaneity and innate fanaticism that led to much chaos and confusion.

The linguistic terminology in its various entanglements with its incubator translation is still floating in confusion and chaos, and all this arose because "..... the absence of renewable and unified sources, or due to their scarcity

or difficulty of availability, each translator resorts to developing terms of his own randomly, unaware of what others have done, resulting in a multiplicity and divergence of interests⁹." Ali Al-Qasimi has listed a number of reasons behind the multiplicity of Arab scientific terminology, as follows:

- The multiplicity of institutions that develop Arabic terminology, such as linguistic and scientific councils, universities, and translation and Arabisation committees.

- Different translations of terms depending on the source language, such as English and French.

- Duplication of the term in the source language, so it is transferred to Arabic when two synonymous terms are translated.

- Lack of effective means of terminological dissemination.

- Lack of effective Arab coordination in the field of terminology.

- Lack of strict and accurate adherence by authors and translators.¹⁰

5- Terminological standardisation is the fruit of linguistic planning:

As long as the reasons for the multiplicity of Arabic scientific terms are known, it is inevitable to adopt remedial solutions to avoid these reasons, and to achieve the normative standardisation, as advocated by Ali Al-Qasimi for terminology, which means "... unifying synonymous terms that express a single concept, and selecting one of them to be the approved term, provided that this selection is made according to pre-agreed criteria, and the standardisation is carried out ... Within a country or within a number of countries that use a single language, a body responsible for or entrusted with the authority to disseminate standardised terminology, including scientific specialists, linguists,

terminologists and information specialists."¹¹ This task was entrusted to a scientific institution concerned with developing and controlling terminology, namely the Arabisation Coordination Office in Rabat, which, although it made significant steps towards achieving this goal - namely the terminological standardisation of all sciences - has been lacking in the terminological aspect. However, it lacks the effective procedural aspect of disseminating and popularising the standardised terms that have failed to make their way to their users among the Arab masses.

Synonymous terminology has become the most common and widespread terminology used by the Arab public, and even by researchers and specialists.

The process of standardising terminology does not take place in a random manner, such as choosing a term from a group of multiple terms, but it requires subjecting them to certain measurements, and then preferring to use the appropriate term that is common, light in pronunciation, and derivable, and Rashad Al-Hamzawi presents the foundations and principles of terminological standardisation as follows ¹²:

- Regularity or commonness of the term in several sources and references.

- Ease of circulation, i.e. the term should be pronounced with as few letters as possible.

- Relevance, i.e. the term should be limited to one field.

- Optimising the means of publishing and distributing scientific terms.

- Establishing an Arabic network for terminological information and data.

- Governmental intervention in the use and standardisation of terminology at the level of a single country.

- Institutional intervention in the process of transferring and translating terms.

Achieving the spread and popularity of standardised scientific terms is undoubtedly dependent on the initiatives of linguistic institutions, especially linguistic and scientific councils, which are slow to respond to such an urgent need.

This opens the door wide for the foreign term or the wrong term to make its way into the tongues of the general public, and we respond to it voluntarily and unconsciously until it becomes palatable and difficult to replace or correct. This portends the absence of a language strategy that addresses language activity in our Arab nation in a comprehensive and integrated manner that sets priorities and defines the means and requirements for action, and refers here to the guardians of Arab language policy that has become lacking in change and achieving the national goals of the Arab nation, considering the future of the Arabic language and offering adaptable alternatives to various social conditions targeted by today's world.

The absence of a national strategy for Arab linguistic policy in the linguistic field, especially terminological standardisation, has made the linguistic term itself stumble into randomness and chaos in handling and circulation.

Officials in the Arab world have forgotten that scientific research in language is like any other scientific work, which is one of the reasons for the slow pace of terminological research that specialises in the study of language, as well as the reason for the lack of popularity of many of the words developed by international bodies.

6- The problem of standardisation left by linguistic institutions and ways to overcome it:

The issue, or rather the crisis of standardisation of Arabic scientific

terminology, is not a new phenomenon, but rather the result of long-standing accumulations that many researchers have talked about, exposed its causes and consequences, and then tried to formulate suggestions and solutions in order to overcome it.

The Arabic linguistic councils, scientific bodies and institutions working on the development of terminology are the best representatives of this crisis and what has become of the chaotic, multiple, shared and synonymous conditions of Arabic terminology in the Arab countries in the East and West.

Thanks to the efforts of its scholars in providing their services to the Arabic language on the one hand and the various tributaries of scientific and cultural knowledge on the other, the most prominent of these efforts are those represented in the work of the Arabisation Coordination Office in Rabat within its main cause of unifying the words and terms of civilisation by creating Arabic equivalents, and working hard to enrich the Arabic dictionary with modern terms and unify them, in addition to preparing specialised lexical projects and publishing dozens of unified, bilingual and multilingual dictionaries, as well as issuing a regular biannual magazine, the Arabic Language Magazine. It also publishes dozens of unified, dual and multilingual dictionaries, and issues a regular biannual magazine, *Al-Lusan Al-Arabi*.

Despite the impressive achievements made, the aspirations of the Arab nation for its scientific renaissance and unity exceed all that has been achieved, and the crisis of unifying Arabic terminology continues to present itself in the form of criticism directed at the institutions working to develop and unify terms, as well as the language policy in Arab

countries that are absent from the material or moral activation of those initiatives or efforts that remain individual efforts stemming from jealousy for the conditions of the Arabic language and its weakening and abandonment, but the glimmer of hope to overcome the crisis remains, especially among the jealous sons of this nation who dedicate themselves to the service of the Arabic language. However, the glimmer of hope to overcome the crisis still exists, especially among the jealous sons of this nation who dedicate themselves to the service of the Arabic language, including the President of the Higher Council for the Arabic Language in Algeria, Professor Saleh Belaid*, who has acknowledged with action and embodiment and not with words what serves Arabic affairs, and these are some of his suggestions and recommendations that he has worked hard to achieve on the ground:

- Opening the borders to the entry of Arabic books and magazines and facilitating their circulation.

- Supporting the efforts of the Arabisation Coordination Office to ensure the continuity of its work in harmonising terminology.

- Establishing university committees that work on the development of linguistic terminology, and do not work until they receive legitimacy from Arab academies and the Coordination Office to ensure the standardisation of linguistic terminology.

- Supporting language intensification institutes at the level of national universities.

- Encouraging linguistic research and terminological research in particular to serve the scientific Arabic language.

7- The reality of the linguistic policy in the Arab world:

If we want to identify the specifications of the language policy and its trends in the Arab world, we look for those specifications in each of the Arab countries, and in this case, the research and exploration will lead us to three facts, namely¹³:

1- The mismatch between the national aspirations expressed by leaders of opinion and thought, and the practical applications and actual procedures.¹⁶

2- A vast difference between the Arab countries in their practices related to various aspects of language policy.

3- Weak material and moral commitment to the national decisions that deal with some of the components of language policy.

This is the linguistic policy currently being pursued in the Arab world, which is a shameful reality due to the absence of clear implementation mechanisms and a rational policy for the process of standardising and publishing terminology, which undoubtedly contributes to the reliance on foreign formulas and their continued dominance and proliferation. Zuhair Ghazi Zahid explains that the lack of standardisation of terminology in the Arab world is due to two things¹⁴ :

The first one is the existing problem in the field of Arabisation, which indicates the failure of linguistic institutions on the one hand, and the lack of linguistic planning on the other hand, which relates to the time of developing the term and the failure to take effective means to popularise it, before it becomes common on the tongues of people and scholars, we find the names of foreign machines and novelties or scientific, literary or critical terms, for which equivalents are proposed after they become common, and the proposed equivalents are sometimes multiple, not

unified or not sufficient for the purpose, causing confusion or sometimes mockery of some others, such as the following names: (al-Marnah) for television, (al-Khayyalah) for cinema, (al-Tarmah) for kiosk, (al-Ma'ariyah) for radio, (al-Hilal) for telephone, and others, which were developed after their foreign names became common.

The second is the lack of agreement by linguistic councils and institutions to standardise the terms for use in Arab countries, and this issue makes the use of the foreign name closer to understanding than the use of the marna, the television for television, the cinema for cinema and others.

According to Dr Zuhair Ghazi Zahid, this has contributed to confirming the absence of political authority in making the political decision, which determines the language plan at the level of the Arab world, through scientific institutions concerned with implementation affairs after addressing the terminology through the Federation of Scientific Councils and the Arabisation Coordination Office.

Conclusion:

To summarise, reorganising the linguistic landscape in Arab countries is everyone's responsibility, not limited to certain parties. Indeed, once Arab societies are aware of the value of their terminology, they are able to participate with state agencies and institutions in making decisions and implementing them on the ground, only then can we say that we have achieved a successful language policy.

As for the recommendations he proposed as an approach to the solutions that offer ways for the intellectual, political, economic and social prosperity of Arabic, I summarise them as follows:

- 1- Entrusting the work of linguistic councils as well as bodies and offices to sovereign decisions to develop the project of standardising scientific and literary terms.
- 2- Activating national and national linguistic decisions and laws and addressing the imbalance in the Arab linguistic policy.
- 3- Participation of politicians, elites, economists and others in linguistic decision-making and determining its course.
- 4- Promoting and strengthening the Arabic language in practice in various fields by materialising the standardisation of its scientific and literary terms, publishing them and using them by its people.

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