

THE DECIDED DIRECTIONALITY OF SCRIPT-REPLACEMENT POLICIES

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ملخص:

" سياسات استبدال الخطوط "

تؤثر السياسات اللغوية على تنظيم الكتابة. وتهدف بعض السياسات إلى استبدال الخطوط أو تقييد استعمالها الوظيفي المتعدد، ولكن ليست كل السياسات تتجح في ذلك، كما هو الحال في الإصلاح التربوي عموماً. يبحث هذا المقال الأثر البعيد لعدد من حالات استبدال الخط ويقدم مجموعة من الاقتراحات حول اتجاه السياسات الخطية عموماً ومكانة الخطوط المتأثرة بتلك السياسات ويخلص إلى أن اتجاه الاستبدال هو قضية قرار حول اختيار الخط.

ABSTRACT

The Decided Directionality of Script-Replacement Policies.

Language policies comprising a component pertinent to writing affect writing systemes in one or more of a variety of ways depending on the nature and goal of the individual policy. Some policies aim at replacing scripts or restricting their hitherto multi-functional use. However, as in writing reform in general, some policies succeed while others do not. Little attention in script research has been devoted to postulating hypotheses or generalizations on the status of scripts affected by policies of replacement. This paper examines the final outcome of a number of cases involving script replacement and abstracts a set of propositions concerning the directionality of script policies in general and the status of scripts thus affected by the replacement policies. It concludes that the directionality of replacement is a decided matter as far as script choice is concerned.

The decided Directionality of Script-Replacement Policies

I. Introduction:

A recent survey article on language planning questions the unbalanced orientation in the discipline toward description rather than toward theory-building. The literature on the discipline is also criticized for dealing with corpus planning more than with status planning.¹ Although it is not the intention in this paper to react to this criticism in any form, the issue addressed in this paper has a direct bearing on status planning of scripts. A language policy leading to the substitution of one script² by another practically changes the status of the scripts affected by the implementation of the policy in the community targeted by the replacement process.

Researchers on language planning agree that script policies³ invariably have to contend with both linguistic and non-linguistic

- 1) E. Jahr. Sociolinguistics: Language planning. In International Encyclopedia of Linguistics, vol. 4, edited by W. Bright, New York: OUP, 1992, P. 14.
- 2) Because the terms "writing system", "script", and "orthography" are often used interchangeably in the literature, I have tried to reserve the use of the term "script" to any and every set of graphic symbols used to produce written language for multi-functional purposes, whether such a system is alphabetic syllabic, or ideographic. How a script is used for a particular language is the orthography for that language in that script.
- 3) The concern here is only with actions of political administrations that result in enforced use on collective-community bases.

dimensions. Where conflicts between the two dimensions arise, non-linguistic considerations take precedence over linguistic considerations.⁴ The preferential weighting of non-linguistic values in script policies partially relates to the scripts themselves. A script may have been devised specifically for the language subject of the policy or, more frequently, it is foreign to that language but was adopted and adapted for that language. In this way, scripts assume different kinds of status in different communities. More languages are written in scripts non-native to them than languages written in their native scripts. Furthermore, different scripts exhibit varying levels of linguistic excellence for different functions and different users. By the same token, different scripts have different levels of weakness and drawbacks, depending on the demands placed on

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- 4) As far as it concerns issues related to access to written heritage, it is not easy to separate the linguistic from the nonlinguistic dimensions. See G. Sampson. Writing systems, London: Hutchinson, 1985; F. Coulmas. The Writing system of the World, Oxford: Blackwell, 1989, p. 53; R. Cooper. Language Planning and social change, Cambridge: CUP, 1989, p.128. On the conflict of criteria developed or desired by theoreticians, J. Berry's two classics and Venezky's can be cited. Berry's first work is "The making of alphabets," in Readings in the sociology of languages, edited by J. Fishman, The Hague: Mouton, 1968, pp. 737 - 53; the other is "The making of alphabets revisited, " in Advances in the Creation and revision of writing systems, edited by J. Fishman, The Hague: Mouton, 1977, pp. 1-6 ; Venezky's is in Advances op.cit. pp. 35 - 54 .

them by users and functions.⁵ Attention to strengths and weaknesses of scripts has been most prominent in research on literacy and reading. Investigations of the nature of literacy, its requirements, constituents, consequences, and goals have raised serious questions and cast legitimate doubts against formerly held views on the overall superiority of certain scripts and script types.⁶ However, the findings and implications of such investigations have not been duly absorbed into the literature on scripts and script policies within language planning.⁷

II. Hypotheses on Script Reform Conditions:

Despite the plethora of descriptive research on script types, orthography planning, and script policies, neither summative propositions nor hypotheses on the directionality of script replacement policies have been forthcoming. Considering script reform in general, Fishman⁸ appraises a suggestion concerning the

5) W. Hass. "Determining the level of a script", in Writing in Focus, edited by F. Coulmas and K. Ehlich, The Hague: Mouton, 1983, pp. 15-29; see also the collection edited by L. Henderson, Orthographies and Reading, London: Erlbaum, 1984.

6) Such concept permeates many works, e. g., J. Goody, The Domestication of the Savage Mind, Cambridge: CUP, 1977.

7) R. Scollon. "Literacy: Writing systems and literacy" in Encyclopedia op. cit. vol 2, pp.349 - 50.

8) J. Fishman. "preface" in Advances, op. cit. p. xvi.

conditions under which script reform in general succeeds or fails. The suggested hypothesis links the success of reform to prevailing societal revolutionary change, and the absence of success to the absence of such change. To Fishman, the link is not tight enough to account for the failure of some reform cases despite planned social change, nor for the success of some reform cases in default of social upheaval. While it is of little value for the focus of this paper to argue Fishman's position, it seems that social change in Fishman's view is restricted to change brought about by grass roots mobilization; thus he excludes change brought about by authoritarian decree. In addition, Fishman leaves out of consideration the potential influence of the nativity or non-nativity of the scripts targeted by reform policies. the status of the script in a particular community could influence the direction of the policy outcome.

In a survey essay published in 1988, Fishman proposes that the success of reform is conditional on the presence of a "compelling force". Such force, he elaborates; is compelling in the sense that it warrants and justifies the intended or consequential relocation of groups and the (re)distribution of power and rewards.⁹ We understand from this that reform does have macro-social effects

9) J. Fishman. " The development and reform of writing systems" in sociolinguistics: an international Handbook, edited by U. Ammon, et al . Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988, pp. 1643 - 49 .

and/or goals, whether it concerns script or orthography adjustments or script replacement. In other word, changing the status of a script not only results from but also leads to community-wide changes.

III - A Moratorium on Hypotheses on Script Policies:

Apart from the above explicit propositions made in Fishman's work, the literature on scripts surveyed for this paper does not reveal a direct interest devoted to probing script policies for the purpose of drawing conclusions from the totality of the cases studies pervasive in the literature. Works of general nature on language planning¹⁰ somehow evade the issue altogether, reiterate the suggestion made in Fishman's earlier work, or seem to take the issue as common sense. Writers of individual case studies make conclusions that are pertinent only to the script or country studied.

Apparently, this abstinence on hypotheses or generalizations could be indicative of too serious a heeding of cautions concerning general fomulations with theroretical orientations. Fishman once poited out that "the relations between language and society are a little

10) E.G. , Sampson, op. cit: Coulmas, op. cit. ; C. Eastman, Language Planning: an introduction, San Francisco: Chandler, 1983; Cooper, op. cit . Two readers of and earlier version of this paper expressed the view that such conclusions or generalizations are not actually needed; another reader dismissed the script issue altogether from the "real" concerns" of language planning specialists.

more complicated than that, whatever that may be." ¹¹ In the same vein, but not on language issues, Moore warns that "for every generalization about structural relationships in social systems there is an exception, known to the objector, in a suitably obscure corner of the world." Moore, however emphasizes the need for proposing hypotheses and making generalizations to the community of interested researchers, for the opposite¹² is the loss of information. Therefore, however imperfect or less than exhaustive this paper's conclusions may be, they are presented to those interested in script policies in particular or language planning in general for further assessment, refinement, and validation. This should not be taken as being apologetic, but as a reaffirmation of the spirit of the scientific enterprise.

IV. Circumventing the Deadlock - Directionality of

Script Replacement:

The closed circuit on abstracting from the collectivity of script policies can be relieved or broken by ascertaining a general

11) Fishman, 1977, op. cit., p. xiv.

12) W. Moore. "The social framework of economic development" in Traditional Values and Economic Development, Durham: Duke University Press, 1961, p.58 quoted by J. Fishman, "National languages and languages of wider communication in the developing nations," in Language Use and Social Change, edited by W. Whiteley, Oxford: OUP, 1971, pp. 29 - 30 .

pattern of directionality that script replacement policies take. When a script is relinquished (at least in a majority of functions) in a community targeted by a script policy, whether the policy is internally or externally motivated and implemented, what scripts exchange status in that community? When replacement is considered or proposed, are there really open options for choice? Or is the choice of the incoming script largely an already decided issue? If it is a decided issue, what factor or factors predetermine it?

Addressing the issues subsumed by these questions, this paper approaches script replacement policies in several world regions over the past on hundred years or so. It identifies what scripts have changed status in what communities, noting the replaced and replacing scripts in each of these policies. Each script status in the respective community is identified as native or non-native to the language of that community. Policies that led to the introduction of first scripts into non-literate or pre-literate communities are not considered because they do not involve the switch from the use of one script to another. In aggregating script policies often cited in the literature, the investigation of the directionality of script replacement does not deal with the debates, controversies, merits, or demerits of the policies; nor does it deal with the groups or agencies proposing or rejecting replacement. Rather, policies are compressed to their final outcome: either the (re) instatement of a script replacing an

incumbent one in all or most of its erstwhile functions or the rejection of the replacement proposals or policies.

V. A Sample of Script Policies:

A . East, Central, and West Africa

In Africa, scores of languages were alphabetized in the Roman script during the colonial period by missionaries and other specialists of the administrations. Many of those languages, e.g., Buganda, Ewe, Fulani, Ga, Hausa, Ibo, Kanuri, Malagasey, Swahili, Yoruba, Wolof (in alphabetical order), had been written in the Arabic script - the Ajami orthography in most cases.¹³ By the end of the nineteenth century, the Roman script was universally used in Africa for multi-functional purposes, including literacy and education in the local languages.¹⁴ In addition, the appeal of its use was furthered by the varying demand for education in the colonial

13) First catholic missionaries reached the mouth of the Congo river in 1491 and the first protestant missionaries in 1732, according to W. Welmers "Christian missions and language policies in Africa," In Advances in language planning, edited by J. Fishman, The Hague: Mouton, 1974, p. 192; see also in the same collection the contributions by G. Ansre, pp. 369-90, by J. Spencer, pp. 163 - 76; and two contributions in The Major Languages of South Asia, The Middle East, and Africa, edited by B. Comrie, London: Routledge, the first by P. Newman, pp.211 - 29 and the second by D. Pulleyblank, pp. 264 - 84.

14) E. Polome. "Standardization of Swahili in Language Reform vol. 3, ed. by I. Fodor and C. Hagege, Hamburg: Buske, 1983, pp. 53-78; A. Mazrui "Islam and English language in East Africa," in Whiteley, op.cit., pp. 179 - 97.

languages, English, French, German, Italian, and Portuguese.¹⁵ By promoting the use of the Roman script and their languages (in varying levels of restrictive education), colonial administrations were serving both their own interests as well as those of the local populations.¹⁶ In the twentieth century, as evident in the reports of the Phelps-Stokes Commission and the establishment and work of the International Africa Institute, the Roman script became the dominant script in all Africa.¹⁷ The use of this script was practically confirmed by the new, independent governments in the territories; it was a de facto confirmation since no policies to the contrary were declared.¹⁸

15) The impact of the colonial languages is still evident in their being official or co-official in over one hundred countries, as R. Wardaugh says in Languages in Competition, Oxford: Blackwell, 1987, p. 135; see also pp. 6-19, and 134; see also J. Fishman, et al., "English the world over," in Bilingualism, ed. by P. Hornby, London: Academic Press, 1977, pp. 106/7.

16) The International African Institute was set up so that efforts could be pooled and integrated. One of the recommendations of the institute was made to the British Secretary of State for the Colonies asking him to set up an advisory committee on the language issue. See also P. Zima, "Hausa in West Africa" in Language Problems of Developing Nations, ed. by J. Fishman, et al. New York: Wiley, 1968, pp. 366 - 67; Cooper, op. cit., p. 144; Wardaugh, op. cit. p. 8.

17) Ansre, op. cit., Spencer, op. cit. p. 165/6; Mazrui, op. cit.

18) The orthographies of these languages still reflect the orthographic differences between the orthographies of the colonial languages - the reference languages. Many conferences and meetings were convened for the purpose of bringing more harmony among the various orthographies.

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