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Arabization in Tunisia: The Tug of War[1]

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This study presents the policy of Arabization in Tunisia as an example of language planning which has been used to pursue and maintain power. It argues that Arabization has been promoted only to the extent that it served the interests of the politico-economic ruling elite. After reviewing the relevant literature, the study evaluates the language situation in Tunisia in terms of the degree of implementation of Arabization in three domains: 1) education; 2) government administration; 3) the media and general use. The study shows that the official authorities have been quite inconsistent in promoting Arabization, and that they have encouraged bilingualism (Arabic and French) and biculturalism (Arab-Islamic and Western European, mainly French) much more consistently. In this light, the study analyzes the attitudes and objectives of the authorities, who represent the influential elites, as they interact with other competing elites in order to maintain power.

INTRODUCTION

Arabization is the process of promoting Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) to the level of a fully functional language in educational, administrative, and mass-media domains, to replace the language of the former European colonial powers. Historically, Arabization was viewed throughout the Arab World as a fundamental component of the struggle for independence. The maintenance of Arabic was proclaimed by the leaders of the various Arab independence movements as the means to assert their countries' national character vis a vis the colonial powers, to retrieve their people's Arab-Islamic cultural identity, and to preserve their national unity as a community speaking one language: Arabic, rather than French, English, Berber, or any regional dialect. Since the various Arab countries achieved their independence, Arabization has been considered an essential means to remove the vestiges of colonialism which still permeate the governmental and educational systems as well as the cultural and social environment.

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Thus, Arabization is not merely an issue that concerns only linguists and educationalists; it is rather a language policy issue closely tied to the political, social, and cultural situation prevailing in each Arab country and to the ruling elites' objectives in establishing and maintaining power. This paper presents Arabization in Tunisia as a case study within the theoretical framework of *language planning as the pursuit and maintenance of power* (Cooper, 1990).

During the struggle for independence from the late 19th century till 1956, Tunisian leaders proclaimed Arabization as the means to assert the national character of Tunisia vis a vis colonialist France, to retrieve the country's Arab-Islamic cultural identity, and to preserve its national unity as a community speaking one language: Arabic. However, some thirty years after Tunisia became independent in 1956, these same leaders, who still hold the reins of power, now claim that the Arabization campaign has been successfully completed in line with national goals. The following statement, from the news magazine *Dialogue,* the mouthpiece of the ruling Destour party, represents this view:

> While the first two decades of independence were devoted to the spread of education [1960s] then to Arabization and Tunisification [1970s], the present decade is that of making choices for the future. The key issue is how to form the generation of the year 2000. (Hechmi, 1984, p. 16; author's translation from the original French)

What is interesting in such a statement is not only the claim that Arabization has been successfully achieved, but the implication that it is no longer a matter of public debate. The following study will show that this form of censorship imposed on the issue of Arabization has often been resorted to for different but essentially non-language-related reasons. Moreover, in surveying the present language situation in Tunisia, this paper will argue that Arabization was promoted only to the extent that it served the interests of the politico-economic ruling elite. It will maintain that the official authorities have been quite inconsistent in implementing Arabization, and that it is bilingualism and biculturalism[2] which they have promoted much more consistently. The paper will also analyze the attitudes and objectives of the ruling elite as it interacts with other competing elites in order to maintain power.

BACKGROUND

To appreciate the complexity of the Arabization question and identify the various actors involved in it, some general background information is in order before proceeding to an evaluation of the current language situation in Tunisia.

The Varieties of Arabic

Classical Arabic (CA), the language of the Qur'an, was established as the national language of Tunisia and the whole of North Africa when Islam spread to that part of the world more than twelve centuries ago. The indigenous language, Berber, which had already been affected by Phoenician and then Latin over the centuries, was eventually almost entirely supplanted by an oral dialect of Arabic spoken by all Tunisians. Unlike Morocco and Algeria, Tunisia today has no more than 1% Berber speakers (Garmadi, 1968). Arabic, therefore, survived in Tunisia in two distinct varieties: the first, CA, was preserved by literary writers and mainly by theologians and teachers in the Quranic schools, and the second, an oral dialect known as Tunisian Arabic (TA), was and still remains the language of everyday conversation.

During their colonial rule over Tunisia (1881-1956), the French established a number of schools to promote their language as the object and the means of instruction. They also established an administrative system which functioned almost totally in French, with the occasional use of TA in certain legal cases and other dealings with the local people. Thus, CA was used only within the confines of al-Zaytuna, a traditional theological university where reading, writing, and Arabic grammar were taught, and in al-Sadiqiyya, a bilingual high school (founded in 1875 by the reformer Khayr al-Diyn Pacha al-Tunusi) where a few Tunisians went for their education, among whom were the leaders of the ruling elite in independent Tunisia (Garmadi, 1968; Maamouri, 1973; Murphy, 1977). The majority of the ruling elite, however, received their higher education in France, several among them even marrying French women before returning to Tunisia.

In the first years of independence, the bilingually educated leaders of the country undertook the task of founding a nation, one essential characteristic of which had to be the Arabic language. Indeed, Arabic was the most significant element around which they could unite the people:

> If language is a potential point of national pride, then it may be a focus to rally a nation and is an ideal choice for uniting a people because few other things are so present in their daily lives and affect them all so equally, unless they are bilingual and divided over language status. (Murphy, 1977, p. 8)

In this spirit, the Tunisian constitution stipulated that *"Tunisia is a republic; its language is Arabic and its religion Islam"* [emphasis mine; author's translation from the original Arabic]. But which variety of Arabic is meant to be preserved or promoted? Because of the sacred view people have of Arabic as the language of the Qur'an, Tunisians, like all other Arabs, consider CA their mother tongue and TA, the oral dialect, a "degraded form" rather than a characteristically different variety of Arabic. This view is confirmed in a recent appraisal of the issue (Al-Baccouche, 1990).

The political leaders who shared this view encouraged CA to spread "out of the mosques and schools into the street" (Maamouri, 1973, p. 57), which increased its use and enhanced its social function. This led to the development of MSA, an intermediate variety of Arabic which evolved out of the close contact between CA and TA, and which is described as "the language of the mass media and of some political speeches, modern plays, novels, and literary magazines and lectures" (Maamouri, 1973, p. 57). Garmadi (1968) also notes that, in its written form, MSA is a kind of modern literary Arabic, highly influenced by French in its style and structure, while in its oral form, it is an intermediate register between CA and TA. Garmadi's definition is clearly specific to MSA as practiced in Tunisia, as opposed to MSA as a cover term for "educated" Arabic throughout the Arab World, but the definition is valid given that there are regional varieties of MSA which have arisen out of the interaction between CA, French or English, and the local spoken dialect (cf., Maamouri, 1973; Al-Shalabi, 1984; Benikhalef, 1987).

Arabization: A Complex Issue

Grandguillaume (1983) points out that Arabization is still a matter of current debate. Drawing on a number of references and a series of official statements relevant to three Maghreb (North African) countries (Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco), he argues that

> the question of Arabization is indeed deeply set in the field of internal oppositions, class conflicts, ideological tensions, and group competition; it is at the center of the struggle for power

> at its different levels, from the ability to find a job—one speaks of "bread language"—to the strategies of regenerating elites that will maintain power. (p. 35; author's translation from the original French)

Grandguillaume shows that the problem of Arabization has three dimensions: 1) linguistic, 2) sociological or socio-political, and 3) anthropological. While briefly reviewing his argument, I will highlight the significant attitudes of the various participants in the discussion of this problem, for it is these attitudes which help us uncover the participants' underlying objectives for pursuing and maintaining power.

At the linguistic level, the problem of Arabization has to do with the conflictual status of CA and TA, on the one hand, and CA and French, on the other. As noted by both Maamouri (1973) and Garmadi (1968), Arabization entailed a reduction of the gap between CA and TA. This conflict was acknowledged by R. Hamzaoui, an Arabic linguist and author, who wrote in 1966 that "because of its vitality, the dialect [TA] constitutes a permanent threat to the foundations of the Arabic language [CA]" (cited in Grandguillaume, 1983, p. 172; author's translation from the original French).

Arabization also required the massive introduction of a new vocabulary so that Arabic could replace French as a means of expression in the modern world. However, creating a modern Arabic lexicon proved to be a difficult and slow process. For instance, specialists from the Maghreb countries (Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco) managed to create only a basic lexicon for the first three years in elementary school, which was published in 1976 as a manual entitled *L'Arabe Fonctionnel —al-rasid al-lughawi* in Arabic—under the auspices of the Maghrebi Consultative Committee for Education and Instruction. However, the influence of French can still be seen in this new lexicon. While many words could be derived from Arabic roots (e.g., *Haasuub* or *Haasib* for 'computer,' derived from the trilateral root *H-s-b*, meaning 'to count'), many others were direct transliterations of Greco-Latin words (e.g., *jiyulujiya* for 'geology').

The lexicographical process has been very slow mainly because of a lack of coordination between the different Arab countries on a unified modern lexicon. Such agencies as The Maghrebi Consultative Committee (created in 1966) or The Permanent Bureau of Arabization (created in 1961 to coordinate Arabization in the Arab World, but activated only in 1973) began operation only after the different countries had already started

developing their own lexicons (Grandguillaume, 1983; Al-Shalabi, 1984).

However, besides the practical problems of creating a modern lexicon and incorporating it in teaching materials, along with political pressure from the different Arab governments, Arabists (i.e., proponents of Arabic, who include Arab nationalists, Muslim activists, Arabic linguists, and teachers) all share in the responsibility of slowing down the process. For, like R. Hamzaoui, their seeing TA, and French for that matter, as "a permanent threat" to CA, belies a concern for the purity of CA. Such concern may be seen as a form of resistance to change, which is ironic since modernizing CA would increase its use and ultimately benefit the Arabists. But this resistance is more likely an effort on the part of this group to retain their social prestige and privileges as a professional intellectual elite that aspires to participation in the decision-making process, at least at the level of language policy, which explains, in part, why many Arabists are active in the different Arabization agencies.

At the sociological level, the issue of Arabization can be viewed from two perspectives. One perspective is that the degree of freedom in discussing the issue can be considered a measure of the democratization of public life. More often than not, the Arabization debate was censored, whether to prevent harsh criticism of the ruling elite or to forestall major conflicts between the "traditionalists" and "modernists."

S. Hamzaoui (1976) describes the ideology of the traditionalists as oscillating between Arab nationalism and Muslim fundamentalism. As he explains it, because of the purist conception they have of Arabic, because of their glorification of the past and their indignation about the degradation of moral values, for which they blame the ruling elite, and because of their Pan-Arabist ideas, the traditionalists constitute a rival or counter elite to the rulers. The modernists, on the other hand, are essentially bilingual and partake, to varying degrees, in the official ideology of the ruling elite. They have Western values and do not really identify with the Pan-Arabist ideology.

The second perspective is that Arabization was used as a means of social selection for the maintenance of elites, because, as it turned out, a higher level of proficiency in Arabic did not really increase an individual's opportunities for academic achievement or professional promotion. This was, in fact, what the first high school graduates from Section A[3] discovered after they had passed the Arabic baccalaureate (secondary school examinations). Having

been taught all school subjects in Arabic, these students could neither go to a university, except to the Arabic and Religious Studies departments, nor find jobs that matched their qualifications. This must have been all the more frustrating to them since many of the bilingual baccalaureate certificate holders were being recruited as school teachers and administration clerks at a time when the country needed Tunisians to replace the French personnel. Thus, while implementing Arabization, the influential elites made sure their children were proficient in French to guarantee them access to the best schools in France (hautes écoles) or in Tunisia (schools of the French Mission followed by science and technology departments at the Tunisian university).

At the anthropological level, Arabization has raised other issues related to language as a factor of national unity vis a vis the French culture and value system which is, in fact, preserved in Tunisia thanks to the spread of French in administrative bodies, commerce, the media, and in general use. As will be seen below, both the decision of the ruling elite to keep the French language as a means of instruction in the scientific and technical fields and the preservation of the French administrative system strengthened the Western value system which the authorities set out to rid the country of. The lingering question was asked by Grandguillaume: "Which societal model are we aiming for [not only] from the linguistic, but also the cultural and ideological point of view?" (Grandguillaume, 1983, p. 44; author's translation from the original French).

The System of Values in Education

In a study of elementary school Arabic textbooks, Bchir (1980a, 1980b) analyzed the readings in these books in terms of thematic content and cultural orientation. She focused on the perceptions that the passages convey of such topics as the seasons, the family, work, great men, modernity, and culture as well as of the notions of social involvement and social conservatism. She noted, for example, that the family presented in the readings was typically the model bourgeois Western-oriented family sitting around the fireplace, celebrating birthdays, etc. But such a depiction of a family, Bchir points out, stands in stark contrast to the typical Tunisian family that does not have a fireplace nor celebrates birthdays.

Bchir's study reveals that the textbooks are characterized by two fundamental tendencies. The first is the depreciation of national identity, because the authors overlook the cultural reality of the

country, depreciate all that is traditional, and perceive the Tunisian heritage and social reality as static. The second tendency has to do with a dazzled admiration of the West and uncritical acceptance of modernity: the elementary school textbooks present Western modernity in terms of positiveness, progress, and the miraculous solution of problems, while they equate traditionalism with negativity, failure, ignorance, and carelessness.

For instance, in the course of six years of elementary school students learn about twenty great men, but they are all from the West. Famous medieval Arab scientists, like Ibn Battuta, an explorer and geographer, and Ibn Khaldoun, a social scientist, are never mentioned. Students learn about the genius behind scientific inventions but never read about the problems of modern science (e.g., the destructive power of Nobel's dynamite) or the disadvantages of modern technology (e.g., pollution, accidents). The only Third World celebrity mentioned in the readings is Pele, a Brazilian soccer player.

Such attitudes as the uncritical admiration of what is Western and the disparagement of what is local or Arab are, therefore, developed from a very young age and later reinforced by the media, films, etc. What is more, they are coupled with a lack of confidence in the ability of the Arabic language to meet the communicative needs of the young student who finds Arabic used only in Arabic grammar and literature classes, while French is used in mathematics and science classes.

EVALUATION OF THE CURRENT LANGUAGE SITUATION

Language in Education

In order to appreciate the extent to which Arabization has been sometimes promoted, sometimes retarded, we will review the series of official language policy decisions that have been made since Tunisia became independent in 1956 regarding the use of both Arabic and French in education. Appendix A presents the chronology of these decisions.

The chronological survey reveals that the decision makers have been rather inconsistent in promoting Arabization in Tunisian schools. While it is true that there was a consistent effort to implement the Arabization process during the 1970s and up to 1982,

the effort was discontinued and the process seems to have been reversed by 1986. Indeed, in 1989, French was reintroduced in the second year of elementary school and five French-medium pilot schools were created in the major Tunisian cities in 1989.

Originally, on June 25, 1958, former President Bourguiba declared in a speech at al-Sadiqiyya High School:

> Education in the secondary schools will be oriented toward Arabization and the use of Arabic so that it can serve to teach all the subjects unless necessity and circumstances force us, for a limited period, to use French to take advantage of the possibilities that are available to us until the teacher-training schools provide us with the necessary staff who will ensure the teaching of all subjects in Arabic. (*l'Action*, June 26, 1958; author's translation from the French)

However, many more statements were made later by the President and other officials, which indicated that the country simply could not afford *not* to maintain French as the language for teaching the sciences and for gaining access to the "modern world" (see Bourguiba's statement on June 30, 1986 in Appendix A, and then-Prime Minister Mzali's references to the importance of French, in the final section on Francophonie below). This ambivalent attitude toward the French language and the value system it represents is much clearer in the domains of the administration, the media, and the general environment, which we will now consider.

Arabic and French in Government Administration

The Tunisian government has 19 ministries (as of October, 1989; see Appendix B), but only three have been totally Arabized (i.e., all their documents, reports, and publications are in Arabic): the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Justice. That the latter two ministries deal with the problems of the common people encouraged their Arabization. However, another factor was that the Ministry of Justice started with a sizable number of legal texts from Islamic Law, concerning personal status (marriage, divorce, adoption) and land ownership (inheritance, *Hubus*), all of which had been left from the colonial period and were in Arabic. In addition, the country had several qualified practitioners and students of Islamic law who were more competent in Arabic (R. Hamzaoui, 1970) than in French. Officially, the Office of the Prime Minister is said to be totally

Arabized, presumably to set an example, but in fact it still circulates some documents in both Arabic and French.

Of the remaining ministries, the Ministry of Education functions primarily in Arabic but still uses French, especially with respect to mathematics, science, and technology. The Ministry of Defense is also largely Arabized, at least as far as can be determined from the documents addressed to the general public concerning compulsory military service. It is likely, however, that the literature related to military management, training, and research is in French. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is considered to be only half-Arabized, despite the 1989 presidential decree mandating its Arabization, because it has to deal with non-Arabic speaking governments. Four other ministries occasionally issue publications or decrees in Arabic, but the bulk of their literature, correspondence, etc. is in French: the ministries of Information, Culture, Social Affairs, and Youth & Sports. The remaining ministries operate almost exclusively in French, yet it should be noted that these French-medium ministries fall within the domains of science, technology, and business, which were domains originally targeted, in principle, for Arabization.

The official view would probably disagree with this assessment of the extent of Arabization in the government ministries and their affiliate agencies, since every ministry has Arabic translators on hand who could translate any document.[4] However, the assessment is based on observation of the day-to-day communication between the various ministries and the general public as reflected in their publications, correspondence, and formal paperwork as well as on personal, informal contact that I had with personnel at different levels of the Tunisian administrative bureaucracy.

Indeed, I would argue that the following observation made by R. Hamzaoui (1970) is still valid today:

> Although the constitution stipulates that the official language [of Tunisia] is Arabic, there is not one official text which obliges each administrator to apply it immediately . . . . The first text available to us is Article 1 of a decree dated September 8, 1955 . . . relative to the publication of all the decrees, decisions, legal and regulatory texts as well as notices and information published in *Le Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne* [the Official Journal of the Tunisian Republic] which must be written in the two languages [i.e., Arabic and French]. (p. 217; author's translation from the original French)

Language in the Media and the General Environment

Appendix C shows that the number of French-medium newspapers and magazines available to the Tunisian public is greater than that of publications in Arabic. If special-interest magazines (e.g., fashion, hobbies, etc.) were included, they would even more strongly tip the balance in favor of French. The ruling party has two daily newspapers (*al-Hurriyya* and *Le Renouveau*, formerly named *al-'amel* and *l'Action*, respectively) and a weekly magazine (*Dialogue*, renamed *7 Novembre*), but only *al-Hurriyya* is published in Arabic.

The eight Tunisian weekly newspapers in Arabic actually appear on different days of the week so that, between the Arabic and French-medium publications (including magazines), a reader has at his or her disposal approximately an equal number of publications in each language every day. As for the foreign publications, the score is clearly better for French.

Considering the attitudes of readers, it is important to note that the better-educated generally prefer French-medium news publications due to their better quality, variety of information, and commentary. Furthermore, the overall poor quality of the Tunisian newspapers and magazines in both languages provides bilingual readers with a stronger incentive to read non-Tunisian papers, like *Le Monde*, which appear in major Tunisian cities on the same day as in France. Educated readers also have access to international publications, such as *Jeune Afrique*, a news magazine concerned with African/Middle-Eastern issues, which is published in French.

This situation further supports the idea that Tunisian language planning, as a means of social selection, serves to maintain or regenerate elites. Readers, who prefer to read in French and who are usually either closer to or actually part of the influential elites, always manage to keep an edge on the rest of the population by being better informed and by gaining a better understanding of the world around them.

As for the spread of French in the general environment, it will suffice to make the following observations: first, with respect to literacy as well as everyday conversation, French is used quite extensively by many middle- and upper-class people in urban Tunisia. It is also more commonly used by educated Tunisian women as opposed to men, regardless of their socio-economic status, as it is believed to confer upon them a degree of sophistication and prestige. Second, it is not at all uncommon for educated Tunisians to initiate and hold a conversation in French,

whether among friends or while conducting official business (Bachouch, 1987). Third, Tunisia has two radio stations and two television channels, with one channel or station in each medium broadcasting in French. Furthermore, the French television channel is a mere hook-up to *Antenne 2*, which broadcasts directly from France for many more hours a day than the Arabic channel. Finally, French is often preferred to Arabic in the publications of various organizations or associations.

It should be clear from this survey of the language situation in Tunisia that the Arabization effort has been somewhat successful in education but not in the other domains affecting the socio-political structure and the population at large. Although Arabic has been promoted, French still has a firm foothold at the level of individuals, groups, and institutions. What is more important, however, is that most Tunisians seem to have adopted a French, or more generally, a Western value system as a result of the ruling elite's policy of maintaining French at such a high level of functional use in the country.

This is borne out by some of the points mentioned above such as the attitudes reflected in the elementary school textbooks studied by Bchir (1980a, 1980b) and the prestige associated with the use of French by certain social groups in conversation, correspondence, and so forth. Additional support for this claim can be found in social customs that have been adopted from the West (perhaps an extreme example of which is purchasing Christmas decorations, chocolate, and pastry as part of the New Year celebrations in some urban areas). A Western orientation is also evident in certain intellectual circles which associate the Arabic language and Arab traditions with obscurantism, regression, and backwardness, while anything French or Western is associated with openness, progress, and forward-looking thought.

THE RULING ELITE

In this section, we will focus on the ruling elite in Tunisia and shed some light on its attitudes and goals in view of the contradictory positions it has taken in the last ten years with respect to Arabization and Francophonie (see discussion below).

Arabization as a Tool in Domestic and Foreign Policy

The official Tunisian policy of promoting Arabization has been championed since 1956 by a small group of intellectuals within the political elite led by Mohamed Mzali, who headed several ministries, especially the Ministry of Education, for ten years and then served as Prime Minister from April, 1980 to July, 1986. The members of this group are, for the most part, former students of al-Sadiqiyya High School, but they are also graduates of French universities. They are, therefore, perfectly bilingual, fully aware of their country's Arab-Islamic heritage, and, at the same time, highly influenced by Western system of values. While these people initially presented Arabization as a means for consolidating Tunisia's Arab-Islamic cultural character and for confirming its national identity (the latter notion is referred to as *Tunisification* [5]), the facts suggest that, by and large, Arabization was variously encouraged or halted for other reasons.

At the level of domestic policy, and particularly in education, Arabization was encouraged by the government in the mid-1970s in order to contain the expansion among university students of "destructive Marxist thought," which was believed to have been introduced through exposure to French. At that time, philosophy, a subject taken in the final year of secondary school, was taught in French, and hundreds of students, who passed their baccalaureate exams and went to university, had been influenced by the ideas of Marx and Lenin, whose works constituted the bulk of the philosophy course. At the start of the 1976-77 academic year, therefore, a decision was made to teach philosophy in Arabic.

The critics of this decision were quick to uncover the government's real intentions and did not hide their fear of its implications. Youssef Seddik, a philosophy inspector for the Ministry of Education and a journalist, wrote that the French-speaking Tunisian philosophy teachers "refuse this rush to the past or to missionary thinking upheld by those who have misunderstood Arabization or misled it by imposing a theologizing view on it." Seddik added that "the content of the arabized philosophy syllabus is below the requirements for modernity. Worse: it is attached to the old tenets of obscurantism, and no Tunisian would accept this regression" (cited in Grandguillaume, 1983, p. 61; author's translation from the original French).

This criticism was justified, in part, because the Arabization of philosophy entailed shifting the focus from certain topics to others in the syllabus. Thus, Marxist thought received less

attention, as did topics such as work, society, and psychoanalysis, while Arab-Islamic thought, together with topics such as epistemology, the philosophy of language, and morality, received more attention. The shift in focus was, of course, enhanced by the scarcity of Arabic-language sources for the former set of topics and the relative abundance of such sources for the latter set.

But the Arabization of the teaching of philosophy is just one example of how the policy of Arabization was affected either negatively or positively for the sake of controlling student unrest and preempting the development of rival political elites. For, one should note that, on the political scene in the early 1970s, the tension between the government and the Marxist/Leninist/Maoist student movement was at its highest point. Many who were in this movement maintain that the ruling elite in power at the time, the Destour Socialist Party, encouraged the formation of an Islamist student group to counter the leftist movement. Tracing the development of the Islamist movement in Tunisia to the late 1960s, when the official socialist policies failed and high school students took to the streets shouting, "schooled or not, we have no future," Zghal (1979) writes that "starting in 1975, Islam as a mobilizing ideological discourse entered for the first time since independence the inviolate territory of the Left; i.e., the University" (p. 62; author's translation from the original French).

However, subsequently, Arabization was blamed for the spread of "the destructive ideas of Islamic fundamentalism."[6] Indeed, the close association between Arabic and Islam as well as the force the language lends to the Muslim fundamentalist message make Arabization a threat to the ruling elite's grip on power. For Bourguiba, the leader of this elite, building a nation out of Tunisia was a matter of separating religion from politics, a matter of "Tunisifying" and modernizing a country where religion is still capable of rivaling politics for power (Larif-Béatrix, 1988). Taking a similar view, Zghal (1979) notes that "at the ideological level, the most radical opposition in Tunisia is that between 'Bourguibism' and the Islamic Movement" (p. 50; author's translation from the original French).

At the foreign policy level, Arabization was used to attract foreign investments from the Gulf countries. Promoting Arabization helped to legitimize Tunisia as part of the Arab World in the eyes of the Gulf financiers, who consequently considered the country worthy of harboring Arab banking institutions and of receiving development aid. Arab money was of course necessary to implement the five-year economic development plan of 1981-86.

By the same token, more Arabization was deemed necessary to train Tunisians to deal with Arab investors in their language.

Francophonie: The Tunisian Perspective

Francophonie is a movement whose purpose is to maintain and promote the use of French in the countries that have economic and cultural ties to France, keeping in mind that these countries were French colonies at one time or another. Given the changing policies of language policy in Tunisia, Francophonie is relevant to this study because the ruling elite's position regarding the French language necessarily affects their attitude and decisions concerning Arabization.

Tunisia participated in the first Francophonie summit meeting held on February 17-18, 1986, in Paris, France. This participation is particularly interesting because the Tunisian representative to the summit was Mzali himself, then Prime Minister and long-time proponent of Arabization. In his summit speech, Mzali hailed "the Tunisian President's action of promoting French as that of a pioneer of Francophonie." He maintained that Tunisia had already retrieved its Arab-Islamic identity, successfully promoted Arabic as its national language, and was using French as "an auxiliary language" to gain access to modernity and scientific and technological progress, as well as to broaden the cultural scope of its people. He noted "the common cultural affinities, which form strong ties between the Francophone countries," adding that "it is vital for the Francophone peoples to constitute an economic, scientific, and technological community." Finally, Mzali considered the creation of an economic organization of Francophone countries "a civilizational contract."[7]

The entire speech belies a clear attachment to the French language and French cultural values and provides evidence, after more than thirty years of independence, that the political elite made a consistent effort to promote bilingualism and biculturalism. Commenting on this ruling elite, Leveau (1986) says, "The Maghreb nationalists are, for the most part, intellectual products of the French School. [They are] shaped by its system of values . . . They see French education and culture as dissociated from the colonial machine" (p. 120; author's translation from the original French).

CONCLUSION: THE TUG OF WAR

The goals of this paper were to reconsider the issue of Arabization in Tunisia at a time when it is no longer considered a matter of public debate and to investigate the reasons behind the promotion or retardation of Arabization as a language policy. The issue was addressed within the theoretical framework of language planning as a means to pursue and maintain power. Consequently, the discussion was focused on the Tunisian political elite, that is, on the actors who make decisions and who choose when and how to implement and when and how *not* to implement these decisions.

This study has argued that it is really bilingualism and biculturalism which have been promoted in Tunisia. Arabization per se was promoted only to the extent that it solved the problems of the ruling elite when its hold on power was weak or threatened. This was true during the struggle for independence against the French and later when internal unrest rose to a dangerous level among university students. On the whole, the ruling elite in Tunisia has mostly favored a policy of non-implementation because Arabization constitutes a threat to their grip on power, as it did to the French colonialists before them. This is borne out by the observation that the Arabization effort has always been measured. Some researchers (e.g., Payne, 1983) wonder why the ruling elite has not appointed an official body--a language planning agency--to implement or at least to monitor Arabization. The answer seems clear: promoting full-scale Arabization is not compatible with the value system and the cultural model adhered to by the elite. Garmadi (1968) hinted at this answer twenty years ago. He saw a "striking paradox" in that the elite, which is greatly influenced by the French language and culture, was the one implementing Arabization. But if Garmadi were to analyze the language situation in Tunisia today, he would find it much more complex.

During the early years of Tunisian independence, there were mainly two opposing forces arguing over language. On one side, were the Classical Arabists and other intellectuals who shared their concern about the purity of Arabic; on the other were the modernists, bilingual, for the most part, who wanted to promote Arabic to the level where it could fulfill the social, educational, and cultural functions of a modern language. The "tug of war" was, therefore, between well-meaning nationalists on both sides, and only the status of the language was at stake.

Later on, when it became clear that French was going to be maintained indefinitely, the forces at both ends of the rope came to

be seen as supporters either of Arabic, the national language, or French, the foreign language. Thus, a cultural dimension complicated the situation, because each language is not only the symbol but the vehicle of a cultural model. And thus Tunisia once again has had to face the question of which societal model it was aiming for, not only from the linguistic, but also the cultural and ideological point of view.

The outcome of the present situation is difficult to predict, as is the direction in which Arabic is evolving in terms of policy, use, and even structure. One thing is noticeable though: the ruling elite's legitimacy is now being challenged partly as a result of what counter-elites perceive as its sustained but covert effort to preserve the French language and cultural model, otherwise known as the "modernist model." Tunisia is thus undergoing a transitional phase in which power may be transferred to a counter-elite. But whatever the ultimate outcome, language planning with respect to Arabic will play a decisive role in legitimizing the future ruling elite.

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NOTES

[1] This paper evolved out of a term project at UCLA in Spring 1987. It was then revised on the basis of supplementary data I gathered in Tunisia during the summer of 1989 through a formal investigation of the language situation in education and the media, and through informal contact and observation of language use in the government administration and among the public. Several observations about language use in these areas are also drawn from my professional experience in Tunisia as a language teacher and administrator in secondary school. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Middle-Eastern Studies Association (MESA) Conference, Toronto, Canada, November 15-18, 1989.

[2] The term 'bilingualism' is used together with 'biculturalism' to convey the notion that the implementation of a bilingual language policy in Tunisia is not merely focused on encouraging the learning of French as a foreign language to broaden the student's horizon, as it is the case with English language teaching, for example. While cultural enrichment is of course part of official policy, I will argue that there is a desire and a deliberate effort on the part of the ruling elite to exercise political control through language planning, and that this desire is combined with a

lack of confidence in Arabic as a language capable of fulfilling the communicative needs of a modern Tunisia.

[3] Section A (A for Arabic) was an experimental section at the secondary school level where instruction was given in Arabic only. It was instituted in 1958 as part of the first educational reform in Tunisia under the direction of Mahmoud Messaadi, then Minister of National Education. The reform was announced by President Bourguiba on June 25, 1958 at al-Sadiqiyya High School. Section A was dropped after the first group of students had graduated in 1964 and was never reinstituted (Grandguillaume, 1983, 47, 172).

[4] Salem Ghazali, Institut Bourguiba des Langues Vivantes, Tunis, personal communication.

[5] Tunisification, according to Mzali, means that Tunisia has its own personality as a nation in view of its geographical position, national history, civilization, heritage, religion, and language. Tunisification means neither a split from Arabism nor the suppression of foreign languages (Grandguillaume, 1983, pp. 54-55). Bechir Ben Slama, a close colleague of Mzali, who directed the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, wrote: "It has never been possible to separate the issue of Tunisification from the issue of Arabization or vice versa, on condition that the term Arabization does not carry any connotations of specific political tendencies contrary to the will of the Tunisian people to remain Tunisian; in other words, in control of. . . their destiny and not melted into another people whoever they may be" (cited in Salem, 1984, p. 188).

[6] *Impact International,* London, 3/27-4/9 1987.

[7] Text of Mzali's speech printed in *L'Action*, Tunis, February 18, 1986; author's translation from the original French.

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APPENDIX A

Chronology of Decisions Concerning Arabization
in Tunisian Schools
(Updated from Grandguillaume, 1983)

June 25, 1958: First reform of the educational system
- Closing of the Qur'anic schools and laicization of education
- Arabization of 1st and 2nd years of elementary school (i.e., all subjects taught in Arabic; French dropped as subject of instruction)
- Creation of Section A, a high school section in which all subjects were taught in Arabic

September 16, 1969
- Reintroduction of French as a subject of instruction in 1st and 2nd years of elementary school

March 21, 1970
- Mzali, Minister of National Education, declares that the government is considering dropping French in 1st year of elementary school

October 1, 1971
- French dropped in 1st year of elementary school

October 1, 1976
- French dropped in 2nd year of elementary school
- Arabization of history and geography in secondary school
- Arabization of philosophy in 7th (final) year of secondary school

October 1, 1977
- Arabization of 3rd year, elementary school
- Mzali declares he is in favor of maintaining French as a subject in 4th-6th years of elementary school

September 16, 1979
- Arabization of 4th year, elementary school
- French maintained as a subject and taught 3 hours/week in 4th year, elementary school

September 16, 1980
- Arabization of 5th year, elementary school; French maintained as in 4th year

September 16, 1981
- Arabization of 6th (final) year, elementary school; French maintained as in 4th and 5th years
- Arabization of 1st year, secondary school; French maintained as a subject taught 5 hours/week as the medium of instruction for mathematics

September 16, 1982
- Arabization of 2nd and 3rd years, secondary school; French maintained as in 1st year of secondary school

September 16, 1986

- Reintroduction of French as a subject in 2nd and 3rd years, elementary school taught 5 hours/week
- Increase in French instruction from 3 to 5 hours/week in 4th-6th years, elementary school

June 30, 1986

- Former President Bourguiba declares that poor achievement in mathematics in elementary and secondary school is due to lack of proficiency in French

September 15, 1988

- French dropped in 2nd year, elementary school

September 15, 1989

- French reintroduced in 2nd year, elementary school
- Creation of 5 pilot secondary schools (Lycée Bourguiba[1], Ariana[2], Sfax, Le Kef, Gafsa) where French is the medium of instruction in mathematics, science, and technology.

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[1] Lycée Bourguiba actually started as a French-medium pilot school on September 16, 1983.

[2] Lycée Ariana also started in 1983, but it was an English-medium pilot school. As of September 16, 1989, it became a French-medium school.

APPENDIX B

Arabization in Tunisian Administration[1]

Ministry[2]	Arabic	French
1. Prime	++	-
2. Interior	++	-
3. Justice	++	-
4. Education	+	?
5. Defense	+	?
6. Foreign Affairs	+	+
7. Information	?	+
8. Culture	?	+
9. Social Affairs	?	+
10. Youth & Sports	?	+
11. Public Health	-	++
12. Housing & Infrastructure	-	++
13. Transportation	-	++
14. Tourism & Crafts	-	++
15. Communication	-	++
16. Agriculture	-	++
17. Planning &Finance	-	++
18. Energy & Mining	-.	++
19. Commerce & Industry	-	++

[1]Key: (++...-) = monolingual (Arabic)
(-...++) = monolingual (French)
(+...+) = bilingual
(+...?) = arabized with occasional use of French
(?...+) = French-medium with occasional use of Arabic.

[2]Nineteen ministries, constituting the basic governmental departments, were counted; however, the reader should keep in mind that there may be more or fewer ministries at any point in time. For instance, in the latest government (formed in October, 1989) the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Information were joined into one ministry. In the government of July, 1988, there were 21 ministries, with separate Ministries of Commerce and Industry as well as a Ministry of Education (National Education for elementary and secondary separate from a Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research for higher education).

APPENDIX C

Newspapers and Magazines[1,2]
in Tunisia

	Arabic		Bilingual		French	
Tunisian newspapers						
	al-Hurriyya[3]	(D)			Le Renouveau[4]	(D)
	al-Sabah	(D)			La Presse	(D)
	al-Shuruq	(D)			Le Temps	(D)
	al-Anwar	(W)			Le Temps Hebdo	(W)
	al-Bayan	(W)			Tunis Hebdo	(W)
	al-Sada	(W)				
	al-Ayyam	(W)				
	al-Sahafa	(W)				
	al-I'lan	(W)				
	al-Riyadhi	(W)				
	Sabah al-Khayr	(W)				
Tunisian magazines						
			Realités	(W)	7 Novembre[5]	(W)
			Le Maghreb	(W)	Conjoncture Economique	(M)
Foreign newspapers						
	al-Ahram	(D)			Le Monde	(D)
	al-Sharq al-Awsat	(D)			France-Soir	(D)
					Le Figaro	(D)
					Le Canard Enchainé	(D)
Foreign magazines						
	al-Majallah	(W)			Jeune Afrique	(W)
	al-Mustaqbal	(W)			Afrique Asie	(W)
	al-Watan al-Arabi	(W)			L'Express	(W)
					Le Point	(W)
					Jeune Afrique Magazine	(M)
					Jeune Afrique Economique	(M)

[1]Data compiled in Summer 1989. (D) = daily, (W) = weekly, (M) = monthly.

[2]The newspapers and magazines listed carry political, economic, and general news. They do not include special-interest publications such as fashion magazines, hobby magazines, etc.

[3]Formerly *al-'amal*.

[4]Formerly *l'Action*.

[5]Formerly *Dialogue*.