

Language Education Policy in Arab Schools in Israel

Authors : Fatin Mansour Daas

Abstract : Language education responds to and is reflective of emerging social and political trends. Language policies and practices are shaped by political, economic, social and cultural considerations. Following this, Israeli language education policy as implemented in Arab schools in Israel is influenced by the particular political and social situation of Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel. This national group remained in their homeland following the war in 1948 between Israel and its Arab neighbors and became Israeli citizens following the establishment of the State of Israel. This study examines language policy in Arab schools in Israel from 1948 until the present time in light of the unique experience of the Palestinian Arab homeland minority in Israel with a particular focus on questions of politics and identity. The establishment of the State of Israel triggered far-reaching political, social and educational transformations within Arab Palestinian society in Israel, including in the area of language and language studies. Since 1948, the linguistic repertoire of Palestinian Arabs in Israel has become more complex and diverse, while the place and status of different languages have changed. Following the establishment of the State of Israel, only Hebrew and Arabic were retained as the official languages, and Israeli policy reflected this in schools as well: with the advent of the Jewish state, Hebrew language education among Palestinians in Israel has increased. Similarly, in Arab Palestinian schools in Israel, English is taught as a third language, Hebrew as a second language, and Arabic as a first language - even though it has become less important to native Arabic speakers. This research focuses on language studies and language policy in the Arab school system in Israel from 1948 onwards. It will analyze the relative focus of language education between the different languages, the rationale of various language education policies, and the pedagogic approach used to teach each language and student achievements vis-à-vis language skills. This study seeks to understand the extent to which Arab schools in Israel are multi-lingual by examining successes, challenges and difficulties in acquiring the respective languages. This qualitative study will analyze five different components of language education policy: (1) curriculum, (2) learning materials; (3) assessment; (4) interviews and (5) archives. Firstly, it consists of an analysis examining language education curricula, learning materials and assessments used in Arab schools in Israel from 1948-2018 including a selection of language textbooks for the compulsory years of study and the final matriculation (Bagrut) examinations. The findings will also be based on archival material which traces the evolution of language education policy in Arabic schools in Israel from the years 1948-2018. This archival research, furthermore, will reveal power relations and general decision-making in the field of the Arabic education system in Israel. The research will also include interviews with Ministry of Education staff who provide instructional oversight in the instruction of the three languages in the Arabic education system in Israel. These interviews will shed light on the goals of language education as understood by those who are in charge of implementing policy.

Keywords : language education policy, languages, multilingualism, language education, educational policy, identity, Palestinian-Arabs, Arabs in Israel, educational school system

Conference Title : ICLPP 2023 : International Conference on Language Policy and Planning

Conference Location : Washington, United States

Conference Dates : February 20-21, 2023