



Mohamed Khider University of Biskra
ISILC Laboratory
POLICA Research Unit
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Multilingualism and the Question of Social Security in Algeria

GHEDEIR BRAHIM Mohammed

Abstract

Language arises, exists and possesses meaning only within a speech community. It is the basis of all human communication and can be a great unifier and sociocultural assimilation agent. This study aims at investigating language diversity and its impact on the social security and stability in Algeria. It also attempts to shed light on the Algerian political decisions to maintain social harmony via implementing effective language planning. The issue of language diversity and social stability is crucial in multilingual societies, as the case of Algeria. The sociolinguistic situation in Algeria is a complex domain of research because of the coexistence of many languages: the standard Arabic in addition to Tamazight are the official languages of the country. Besides, Algerian colloquial Arabic is the language of everyday life and is the mother tongue of a great proportion of the Algerian community. Berber and its different varieties Mzabi, Chaouia, Touareg, and Kabyle are spoken in the Berber community in addition to French, the heritage of French colonization to Algeria. Bilingualism, switching, mixing, and style shifting are part of common linguistic behavior among Algerians. The significance of this study stems from its attempt to approach the issue of linguistic diversity in Algeria and its impact on social stability from different perspectives: language in use, language in abstraction, and language in the eye of the beholder. The study adopts a qualitative research method. The participants in this study were sixty (60) university teachers from the University of El-Oued, Algeria. A questionnaire was used as a data gathering tool to investigate teachers' perceptions of the issue of linguistic diversity and its

influence on the social stability in Algeria. The study has found that there is a high level of language change in the different languages and dialects due to the linguistic contact although each linguistic community attempts to preserve its linguistic identity. The findings of the study also revealed that linguistic compromise accompanied with constructive linguistic policies are inevitable to guarantee social security in Algeria.

Key words: Algeria, Language diversity, Multilingualism, Social security, Social stability.

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