

## A Sociolinguistic Perspective on the Arab Spring and Its Impact on Language Planning Policy: the Case of Libya

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### Abstract

This paper examines the impact of the democratic trend on language planning policy in Libya, where the official language policy was long used by policy makers as a mechanism for not only suppressing the ethnic identity of Libyan Amazigh, but also to strongly resist the introduction of foreign languages such as English for merely political and pan-Arabic objectives. The paper is based on the hypothesis that the current geopolitical changes in Libya are likely to exert certain impacts on the sociolinguistic landscape and provide new opportunities to linguistic, cultural and political reforms. The study attempts to achieve three inter-related objectives. The first objective is to draw a comprehensive image of the sociolinguistic situation of Libya where languages compete with each other for their space; Classical Arabic CA, employed in religious discourse and literary writing, Modern Standard Arabic MSA in the sphere of education and public administration, colloquial Arabic – largely, but not exclusively oral, Berber and recently English as the language of science and technology. The second objective is to account for the growing economic and political changes and the emergence of democratic trends (the ‘Arab Spring’) in the country and their foreseen impact on future overall development in infrastructure related to language planning and policy (LPP). Finally, the paper seeks to identify and review LPP models that have been previously implemented and suggests the limitation of these models, and finally proposes an integrative model that accommodates some measure of coordination between various decision makers and implementations. In order to achieve these objectives, the methodology utilized is based on situation analysis within the framework of linguistic and political changes. The principle difficulty encountered in this regard is that materials are not easily obtained due to decades of UN and Western backed-sanctions, as well as decades of public sector dominance and government control. Furthermore, many of recent materials regarding current geopolitical reforms in the Arab World have not yet been categorized nor collected. Therefore, the study relies mainly on information that is available on the World Wide Web and, wherever possible, informal conversation with individual linguists, institutional language specialists and officials.

**Key Words:** Language Planning, Language Policy, Arabic, Arab Spring and sociolinguistics.