Chapter 7
Policy and Teaching English to Palestinian Students in Israel: An Ecological Perspective to Language Education Policies

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Abstract The chapter examines policy and teaching English among Palestinian schoolchildren in Israel, relating them to their complex linguistic repertoire, the Israeli context, and English as a global language. Today, Arabic is the language of instruction in Palestinian schools in Israel. Hebrew is learned as a second language by all the Palestinian pupils from the third grade on. English is then added on, a third language for the Arabic speaking pupils, or a fourth considering the spoken language used as the home language and for on-going communicative needs.

Palestinian language education serves different purposes: Arabic is the language of personal, cultural and national identity; Hebrew is an important language for social mobility, for higher education, and for shared citizenship; English is a global language, and a window on the wider world.

English is as important to Israeli Palestinians as to other Israelis because of its status as international language. Many English words have been borrowed into Arabic by way of Hebrew. There is no distinct English curriculum for the Palestinian students, and they study it like other Israelis in all streams of the Hebrew education.

Keywords Language policy • Language education policy • Ecological perspective • Linguistic repertoire • Curriculum • Identity • Arabic • English • Hebrew

7.1 Introduction

The results of 1948 war between Israel and the Arab countries, the defeat of the latter, and the establishment of Israel led to far-reaching political transformations among the Palestinian people. A majority under Ottoman and British rule, the

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Palestinians who remained within the State of Israel and were granted citizenship became a marginal minority (Amara 1999). Today Palestinians[1] in Israel comprise about one-fifth of the population, numbering 1,600,000. They belong to three religions: Muslims (83 %), Christians (9 %), and Druze (8 %) (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics 2011).

The political upheavals brought about far-reaching structural and functional changes in various domains of life, including language. The linguistic repertoire of the Palestinians citizens of Israel became progressively more complex and diverse, and the status of language in it changed. Hebrew and Arabic became the two official languages of the state, and English took on the status of a foreign language (Amara and Mari 2002). Language education is an important part of the curriculum at all stages of education. The languages learnt are Arabic, Hebrew and English; French is learnt as well, in several private schools (Amara 2001).

The purpose of this article is to highlight the forces affecting policy and teaching English to Palestinian students in Israel and to examine the new English curriculum, textbooks, and achievements. We will relate these issues to the complex Palestinian linguistic repertoire, the Israeli context, and English as a global language, drawing on an ecological perspective to language education policies. First, an overview to an ecological perspective to language policy is given. Second, language education policies in Israel are briefly described. This is followed by a section on English in Palestinian schools in Israel. Finally, the major factors influencing and shaping English policy and teaching are described and discussed.

7.2 An Ecological Perspective to Language Policy

Language policy has recently reoriented towards an expanded framework characterized by language hybridity and diffusion where intersecting global and local forces shape discourse communities (Canagarajah 2005; Kaplan and Baldauf 2008). This growing recognition of the intricacies involved in interactions among individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds has led to utilizing an ecological perspective for determining, discussing and researching language policy issues (Hornberger and Hult 2007; Mühlhäusler 1996). The ecological metaphor (first introduced by Haugen 1972), refers to an interaction between the organism and its environment, and was borrowed to describe interactions among languages and speech communities, and to enable a comprehensive analysis of all the variables which constitute the language-speaking environment.

To adopt an ecological perspective involves the realization that "language policy exists in the wider social, political, economic, cultural, religious and ideological

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[1] Many identity labels are given to Palestinians who became citizens of Israel: Israeli Arabs, Arab citizens of Israel, Israeli Palestinians, and Palestinians in Israel. I prefer the last label because it is widely used by Palestinians themselves, and more and more used by Israeli Jews.

context that makes up human society" (Spolsky 2004: 218). Therefore, when adopting an ecological approach to language policy, one needs to venture beyond the linguistic data and examine how all the other relevant factors in the particular habitat – social, political, ethnic and others – interact with linguistic issues. Only an understanding of the complex interplay among these factors will make it possible to comprehend the forces at play. However, local forces do not function independently of global ones, and therefore local considerations which shape language policies need to be deliberated within a wider framework of global developments in a given time period (Kaplan and Baldauf 2008).

Having identified these conditions, language policy theory examines the language practices of nations, communities and organizations in different domains, the language varieties used and how other local factors interact with the language/ s used. Of no less importance is the process of identifying the beliefs people hold about the language varieties spoken and their functional and symbolic value. Only then, after having established language practices and beliefs, can national or social groups attempt to establish a policy for managing language use in a particular domain or sociolinguistic context, which may be a family, a school, a workplace or a nation (Spolsky 2004).

7.3   Language Education Policies in Israel

The government of the British Mandate[2] recognized three official languages in Palestine: English, Arabic and Hebrew, in that order. After the establishment of the State of Israel, English was eliminated as an official language, and Hebrew and Arabic were retained as the official languages of the State (Amara 2002, Saban and Amara 2002; Pinto 2007, 2009; Yitzhaki 2008).

Though Hebrew and Arabic are both recognized as official languages in Israel, the status of the two languages is not at all equal. The use of Arabic under Israeli law is quite limited, so that for all intents and purposes Hebrew is the language of public life. Hebrew is the common language of bureaucracy, the medium of instruction in higher education (excluding Palestinian colleges), the dominant language of the electronic media, and most importantly, it is the language of those sectors of the labor market that are open to the Arabic-speaking minority. Although Arabic is recognized as an official language, it has no significance for society as a whole, but only in the degree of protection it affords to the internal life of the minority, especially in regard to the right to education in the minority tongue (Saban and Amara 2002; Yitzhaki 2008). Due to the dominance of Hebrew in the

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[2] Following the end of World War I, Palestine was placed for an interim period under a British Mandate, which formally began in 1922. The British Mandate was a turbulent period marked by continual violence between Arabs and Jews, both of whom opposed it. The Mandate over Palestine ended on May 15, 1948 and the establishment of Israel ensued (see Amara 1999: 21).

public sphere, it is extremely difficult for Palestinians in Israel to function outside their home villages and towns without sufficient competence in Hebrew.

During the British Mandate, the Palestinian community and Jewish colonies were expected to run their own education systems. Most Palestinian schools used Arabic, and most Jewish schools taught in Hebrew. Some Arabic was taught in Jewish schools. English was used as a language of instruction in the high schools of the Palestinian and Jewish communities. However, Hebrew was not taught in Palestinian schools (Spolsky and Shohamy 1999; Amara and Mari 2002).

For some months before the time set by the United Nations for the partition of Palestine in 1948, an education committee set up by the Jewish Agency debated language policy for the new state. Various alternatives were proposed, including the use of English, but the final decision, reached a few days before the proclamation of Israeli independence, echoed the policy laid down for former enemy territories under the Treaty of Versailles (1919): each school should use the language of the majority of its students as the medium of instruction, and should also teach the other language (Spolsky and Shohamy 1999). This far-reaching decision meant that schools with native speakers of Arabic would continue to use Arabic as the medium of instruction, but should also teach Hebrew, the dominant language of the State.[3]

Today, generally speaking, Jewish and Palestinian students in Israel study in separate schools. Hebrew is the language of instruction in Jewish schools (except in some ultra-orthodox schools, where Yiddish or other languages are used). Arabic is the language of instruction in Palestinian schools. Hebrew is learned as a second language by all the Palestinian students from the third grade on. Arabic is studied by tens of thousands of Hebrew speakers, mostly in junior high school (Donitsa-Schmidt et al. 2004). English is learned as a foreign language by both Jews and Palestinians (Amara and Mari 2002).

Hebrew is required by the Palestinian minority for instrumental purposes. The extent to which Hebrew is taught to Arabic speakers far surpasses attempts to introduce Arabic in Hebrew-speaking schools. In terms of age, Hebrew teaching in the Palestinian schools starts in third grade while Hebrew speakers who study Arabic usually commence their studies in seventh grade (age 12), with quite a number of schools allowing another language choice (French or Spanish) instead of Arabic. Hence there is an imbalance, for in the Hebrew speaking schools, the additional language introduced in primary school is English (in grade three or earlier). English is then added on as a third language for the Arabic speaking students (Abu-Rabi'a 1996).

To put it in a nutshell, Palestinian language education in Israel serves different purposes: Arabic is the language of personal, cultural and national identity of the Palestinian students; Hebrew is an important language for social mobility, for higher education, and for shared citizenship; English is a global language, and a window to the wider world.

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[3] For additional details regarding the work of this committee, see Amara and Mari 2002: 64–5.

7.4   English in the Palestinian Schools in Israel

English has become a global language, and its importance is evident worldwide, even in remote places (Crystal 2003). Globalization and the rapid diffusion of electronic media in recent decades have greatly contributed to enhancing the status of English.

English is the most commonly used foreign language in Israel; it is vitally important in both the public and the private domain, in the media, in academic scholarship, for access to knowledge in various fields, and as a lingua franca with other countries (Spolsky and Shohamy 1999). In addition, the country's laws are also published in English translation, after some delay.

English is the second most important language in Israel, and is formally the first foreign language taught in both Jewish and Palestinian schools. The study of English is subject to the same national curriculum for both Jewish and Palestinian communities, which come under the same chief inspector advised by the same professional advisory committee.

In recent years English has begun to be taught at an early age at Hebrew schools: 50 % of the schools start teaching English either in the first or the second grade (Inbar-Lourei 2010). In the Palestinian schools in Israel English is taught from third grade.

English is as important to Israeli Palestinians as to Israeli Jews because of its status as the international language of science, technology, commerce and communications and its usefulness in tourism. Just as among other Israelis, there is constant pressure from Palestinian parents to teach their children English, and they are prepared to spend considerable sums to pay for private lessons. The pressure comes particularly in neighborhoods where there are Church-related schools which begin to teach English in first grade. Parents believe that proficiency in English will advance their children, especially those who are interested in pursuing their studies in institutions of higher education (Amara and Mari 2002: 104).

There are, however, unique problems in the implementation of English teaching for Palestinian students. While many Israelis have regular contact with English-speakers – with English-speaking immigrants in the neighbourhood, with English-speaking relatives in the Diaspora, or with English-speaking tourists who come to the cities, Palestinians, citizens of Israel, generally lack direct contact with English-speaking communities. The English language is foreign, then, to many Palestinian students. It is the third language they study. Fewer members of the adult community do not know English, nor do the Palestinian schools have a high proportion of English native- or near-native-speaking teachers. Hebrew poses another challenge for Palestinian learners. For most Palestinians in Israel, Hebrew is the most important second language, even more important than English, and at times and in some domains even more than Arabic (Shohamy and Donitsa-Schmidt 1998; Amara and Mari 2002). Not knowing Hebrew limits the Palestinian citizen in contact with government offices, in employment and in higher education. Hebrew is now the

main source of loanwords in Palestinian Arabic in Israel (Amara 1999; Amara and Spolsky 1986).

All the above conditions make the learning of English more difficult for Palestinian students.[4] However, in recent years through the internet, television, movies, and music Palestinian students in Israel have become more exposed to English, and have more opportunities to use it. Besides, the Palestinian landscape in Israel encompasses many English names and words, reflecting the increasing importance of English in their linguistic repertoire (Amara 2010).

English constitutes an integral part of the educational system in Israel and is defined as a foreign language. Acquisition of English is not among the main interests of the Palestinian students despite their awareness of its importance. English is relegated to secondary preference because Palestinian students must first of all contend with their own Arabic mother tongue, in which there is an immense difference between the spoken and the written language. Then they must become familiar with Hebrew, which is vital to them in daily life, and finally they come to English, a language whose study is teacher-centered and frontal for the most part, and spoken by students only infrequently. These facts show that students must master a number of unique skills at one-and-the-same time in order to be able to absorb the languages taught in the schools, which are so different from each other. Are these factors taken into account in the curriculum and textbooks? What can we learn from the achievements of Palestinians schoolchildren in English? The following sections will answer these questions.

7.4.1   The New English Curriculum

In the curriculum used after the establishment of the State of Israel (1948–1969), English was perceived and taught in Israeli schools as a cultural and literary subject, emphasizing linguistic competence rather than the language's communicative functions.

Major changes took place in the English curriculum in Israeli schools since the 1970s. There was a shift of emphasis from teaching English as a cultural and literary subject to communicative competence (Spolsky and Shohamy 1999: 174).

In 1998, a new English curriculum was approved in Israeli schools. Spolsky and Shohamy argue (1999: 181) that

> The circumstances today, and even more in the foreseeable future, are quite different. More and more pupils have extensive contact with English before beginning formal English instruction or outside of school, whether through radio, television, computers, family, travel, or meeting overseas visitors. Most pupils, at whatever age they start learning English in school, have already learned words and phrases of the language.

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[4] Similar handicaps are faced, it must be noted, by new immigrants and by socioeconomically disadvantaged Israeli Jews.

Considering these changes, curriculum designers set new standards for English. These standards are extremely flexible, giving schools and teachers freedom, for instance, to determine the appropriate methodology to be used and the order of the elements of the curriculum.

The new curriculum differs from its predecessors in important ways. Whereas previous curricula were taught according to the four language skills, the new curriculum puts more emphasis on what should be achieved, along with how the language should be acquired. In the new curriculum, teachers are encouraged to focus on domains rather than skills. Domains are defined as 'areas of language ability or knowledge'. Four major domains are proposed: Social interaction, access to information, presentation, and appreciation of literature, culture and language. Moreover, the domains are viewed as a tapestry of interwoven areas of language learning. That means that the four domains are interrelated and do not operate in isolation.

The English curricula in Israel were uniform in the first two periods, and the sociolinguistic and cultural needs of the Palestinian students were not taken into consideration. This is also true of other disadvantaged Israeli socio-economic groups.

In the new curriculum, there is hope that various groups will adapt English teaching for their unique sociolinguistic and cultural needs. However, this may be a vain hope, since the English matriculation examination is uniform for all students in Israel. This may lead Palestinians and others as well, to adopt the methodology of teaching and the textbooks used by the more established groups in Israel.

7.4.2 Textbooks

Language learning and teaching are of course connected with power. If language teaching is ideologically influenced, as reflected by goals of the curricula and contents of the textbooks, it can be labeled ideological language teaching. Rahman defines it as 'the transmission of ideas, values, and perceptions of reality that create or influence one's world view through language-teaching, especially language texts' (Rahman 2001: 55).

The textbooks of English are the same for Palestinians and Jews in Israel. There are no texts in the readers which are devoted to the Palestinians in Israel, and this upsets the balance that exists in the curriculum. The Palestinian students learn about Jews and Western culture, but they do not learn about their own culture.

The English textbooks are well-designed and produced. However, the Palestinian students are invisible in these textbooks. We barely find a picture or two of Arabs. And while literary texts from various cultures do occur in the readers, there are no Palestinian or Arab ones (Abu-Salih 2011).

Examination of the English textbooks reveals that there is a culturally insensitive socio-cultural-faith-based defect in the learning materials (Abu-Salih 2011). Research (e.g. Valdes 1987; Ellis 1997) has shown that if the learner accepts the

target culture, s/he may accept its language. It has also shown that the reflection of students' culture in various texts in the studied language facilitates the learning process (e.g. Cortazzi and Lixian 1999).

Clearly the first domains mentioned in the curriculum earlier are not reflected in the textbooks when it comes to the Palestinian students.

The curriculum explains the basic principles for choosing contents, which should be unbiased and prejudice-free and take into account different religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, in addition to being stimulating (English Curriculum for All Grades 2001: 15). Contents should also be related to previous students' experiences and knowledge in order to interact with these tasks more effectively. These principles are not reflected in the various textbooks in relation to the Palestinian students.

Opinions are divided on the desirability of writing special English textbooks for Palestinians. Some teachers are in favor and others reject the idea out of hand. The latter believe that such books would have a deleterious effect on the level and quality of teaching. They suggest as a solution to set up a committee of Palestinians and Jews would rewrite neutral contents relevant to both Arabs and Jews in the same reader (Amara and Mari 2002: 113).

7.4.3   Achievements

Having examined the curriculum and the textbooks, we turn now to briefly note students' achievements in English as reflected in various tests, comparing that with the Jewish students' achievements.

According to national tests administered to all students in the Israeli school system, such as Meitzav (intended for grades five and eight in mother tongue and English), Bagrut (the matriculation exams), and psychometric exam (the university entrance exam) achievements of Palestinian students in English are extremely low (Fig. 7.1). (For more details, see Amara and Mari 2002; Ministry of Education, Final Report – Recommendations of the Committee Examining Achievements in the Palestinian Education 2008).

The above figure shows that Hebrew speakers have results that are higher than those of Arabic speakers. We also see that the gap has slightly widened in favour of the Hebrew speakers: from 28 points in 2007 to 38 in 2010, although both groups share the same school system, the same curriculum and the same textbooks.

This is also true of the matriculation examination for students in twelfth grade. Students may take the English exams at three levels: 3, 4 and 5 units. There is gap of almost one unit and a difference of 10 points on average between Palestinian and Jewish students, again in favour of the latter (Weisblai 2006: 20).

Results for the verbal section of the university entrance exam show that Hebrew speakers score 109–110 points, while the scores for speakers of Arabic in Arabic are 88–91. In the English section, the scores for Hebrew speakers range between 110 and 112, versus 84–87 for speakers of Arabic (Mustafa 2009).
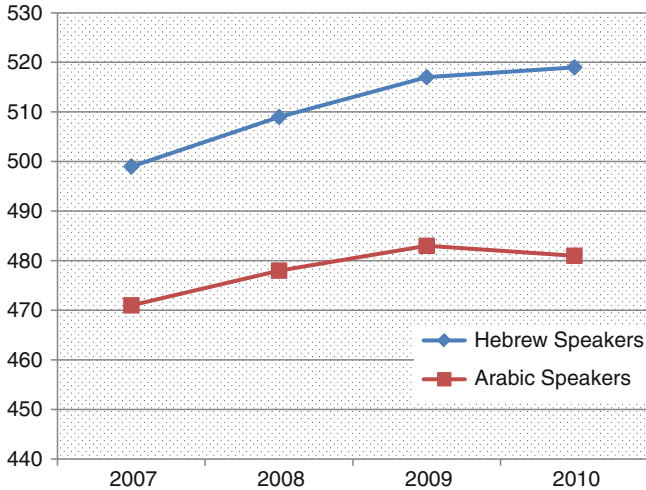
Fig. 7.1 Average results of METSAV examinations in English for grade five from 2007 to 2010 according national groups. (Taken from RAMA (The National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education) 2010: 14)

In short, the achievements of the Arabic speakers in English are much lower than those of their Jewish counterparts in all stages of education.

7.5 Discussion and Conclusions

Though the English curriculum is uniform in all Israeli schools, there are crucial differences between the Palestinian and Jewish communities in terms of contact and exposure to English language and culture, with Jews possessing numerous opportunities for English input outside school. The various tests reveal much lower achievement levels by Palestinian in comparison with those of Jewish students.

In light of the above, an in-depth understanding of the policy and teaching of English among Palestinian students in the Israeli context requires that the complex linguistic repertoire of the Palestinian students, and the diglossic nature of Arabic and its impact on other languages in their repertoire be taken into consideration. For understanding these issues, we draw on recent developments in language policy utilizing an ecological perspective.

Drawing on the ecological perspective on language education policies, we introduce the following contexts and reasons for the current situation of English and the difficulties that Palestinian students encounter in learning the language.

There are many factors that have been noted to impact Palestinian language education in Israel. We will now consider the major ones.

The first factor is bound up with an existing state of diglossia[5] which is influenced by linguistic and social factors. Diglossia, as many researches have shown (Amara and Abu-Akel 1998), is a heavy burden on the Palestinian learner. Standard Arabic is a different language – in grammar and lexicon – than spoken Arabic.

The continuing struggle between the standard and the spoken languages is bound up to a great extent in the ideological principle that the purity of the Arabic language must be maintained.[6] As a result, all the linguistic reforms that have been proposed by linguists and scholars in the Arab world have totally failed (Amara and Spolsky 1986).

The diglossia for Arabic speakers in Israel is more complicated than in other Arab countries and constitutes a heavier burden on its speakers. Despite the fact that Arabic is an official language alongside Hebrew, it is so only in name (Spolsky and Shohamy 1999). The absolute distinction between Standard Arabic and the local dialect limits the use of Standard Arabic to formal areas, such as school, the media, courts, mosques, churches, etc. In other words, the use of Standard Arabic is limited to the public sphere. In Israel, for the most part, Hebrew is the language used in the public sphere. From this, it can be concluded that the Arabic used in Israel is different from the Arabic in the Arab world, since the use of Arabic in the public sphere is quite limited in the former. It is useful mainly in the educational system (and even in education, there are other languages which compete with it), and in places of worship. In other places, Hebrew is the principal language.

The second factor is the socio-political environment. The socio-political circumstances, which changed after the establishment of the State of Israel, turned the Palestinians in Israel into a marginalized minority. Since the necessities of life and preferences have a considerable influence on the knowledge and use of language among the Palestinians in Israel, Hebrew has become a vital language in their linguistic repertoire.

Hebrew is used not only to fill the gaps of parallel elements that are lacking in Arabic, but also "to brag." (See Amara 1986, 1995, 1999; Ben-Rafael 1994; Koplewitz 1990). Hebrew fulfills an important symbolic function among the Palestinians in Israel, as a mark of their will and aspiration to connect to the outside modern world.

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[5] Arabic is considered a diglossic language (Ferguson 1959; Brosh 1996). One of the principal characteristics of a diglossic situation is that the functional division between the literary (high variety, according to Ferguson) and the local dialect (low variety) is absolute. That is to say, the literary language is intended for certain functions and the spoken form is used for the others. The use of one of the variants in the functions of the other is considered artificial and unacceptable.

[6] This principle arose quite likely in the wake of the spread of Islam. The teaching of Arabic to non-Arabs, and the threat of growing differences in varieties of Arabic contributed to the formation of the distinction. Another reason is that the Koran was written in the literary language and thus became a holy language and not just a means of communication. Therefore, all Muslims seek to preserve the language of the Koran, which they see as a religious spiritual asset.

It is important to emphasize that despite the fact that Hebrew is the most important language among the Palestinians in Israel because of the contact with Israeli Jews in diverse areas of life and its role as an agent of change for modernization, there are still sociolinguistic constraints on language convergence. On this Ben-Rafael (1994: 176) has made the following comment:

> However, a barrier impedes this convergence, as expressed in retention of Arabic. The limits each case imposes on the convergence towards the dominant culture respond to the nature and degree of the commitment to the dominant culture. For the Muslim and Christians Arabs, the legitimate language remains Arabic, as expression of their fundamental identity. The penetration of Hebrew as a dominant language does not subtract anything from Arabic, though its deeper influence comes out in borrowings and substitution.

The third factor is the training of teachers and their status. In the three main languages that are learned in the Palestinian school system in Israel, there is a problem involving training of teachers and their status. Many of the graduates of the departments of Arabic language and literature receive their higher training in Israeli universities, where Arabic is studied as a second language (or even as a foreign language), and the training of teachers is not designed for Arabic as a mother tongue. This is also true to a certain extent in the case of teaching Hebrew, since most of the Palestinian teachers of Hebrew receive their higher education in the Israeli universities, like their Jewish colleagues. That is to say, their training in Hebrew is designed for mother tongue rather than second language purposes. In the case of English, the gap is even greater. A considerable percentage of the Jewish teachers for English are native speakers of the language or have spent a number of years in an English-speaking country. In addition to all this, the appointment of teachers in the Palestinian schools is done, for the most part, by the general inspectors, not as in the Jewish schools where it is done by the language inspectors: that is to say, the appointments are not made according to objective qualifications and considerations alone (Rouhana 1997: 86).

The fourth factor concerns educational goals, the study programs and the textbooks. One of the principal goals of Israeli education in Palestinian society is to empty Arabic education of all national content (Peres and Davis 1968; Mar'i 1978; Lustick 1980; Amara and Mari 2002). In this context, Al-Haj (1996: 98) explains, "Instead of the Arab-national component, the policy makers sought to strengthen the religious-cultural component and the Israeli citizenship component."

This policy confirms the definition of Israel as a Zionist-Jewish State, and is applied throughout the curricula. First of all, the old curricula and textbooks that were used during the Mandate period were removed. Second, the new curricula and textbooks strove to tighten the control of the State over the content of Arabic education (Al-Haj 1996). An analysis of the goals of Arabic education, curricula and textbooks shows clearly that the State strove to weaken the Palestinian Arab identity among the Arabs (Peres and Davis 1968; Mar'i 1978; Lustick 1980; Amara and Mari 2002).

The above discussion reveals that English education policy is better understood when considered in relation to the linguistic repertoire of the Palestinians in Israel and the diglossic situation, the Israeli context and the dominance of Hebrew, and

English as a global language. Spolsky (2004) identifies the conditions which help to shape a language education policy: the sociolinguistic situation which will reveal the languages spoken and their speakers; the national or ethnic identity in the community which will have implications on the language or languages chosen for official and educational purposes; the global changes which have occurred world-wide, such as the spread of English and its inherent instrumental value, and a growing awareness of linguistic rights (May 2001).

The issues involved in teaching English to Palestinian students cannot be understood without considering the socio-political contexts. In Israel, learning Arabic, Hebrew, and English are directly related to the dominance of Hebrew and reflect the socio-political context, the status of and different roles that Israelis and Palestinians play in Israeli society, and the wider political conflict in the Middle East (Shohamy and Donitsa-Schmidt 1998) As Arraf explains:

> language in this setting [Israeli Palestinian] cannot be separated from its political context
> . . . politics and national priorities have determined the policy-guidelines of most, if not all,
> the state's institutions towards the minority in question. (Arraf 2003: 254)

In a nutshell, the problems of English teaching in the Palestinian schools are evident in many aspects. The current policy of teaching English, as reflected also in the new curriculum, does not consider the special needs of the Palestinian students. The new curriculum needs to give hope that the striking failure of Palestinian students in learning the language can be remedied. A curriculum that may lead to considerable change of the situation should consider major issues related to their language repertoire: Diglossia and its burden on the Palestinian students; the Latin alphabet as the third writing system learnt; priority among Palestinians given to learning Hebrew; the fact that the majority of Arabs live in villages and are less exposed to English; teacher qualifications; and the texts, which are full of Jewish and Western contents. In other words, adopting an ecological perspective to teaching English among the Palestinian schoolchildren in Israel may provide useful insights and better understanding, and possibly be able to provide more effective ways for learning the language.

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