



ASSESSMENT OF THE MANAGEMENT OF THE LINGUISTIC HERITAGE FROM THE INDEPENDENT UPPER VOLTA TO BURKINA FASO IN 2021: LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FOR THE REVITALIZATION OF NATIONAL LANGUAGES

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Summary : Pre-colonial Upper Volta was multilingual before its encounter with the West. Despite the linguistic colonization epitomized by Pierre FONCIN (HARDY, 1917), the country remains rich in its linguistic heritage. The French language, imposed with all its prestige and enchanting linguasphere, has not eradicated the diversity of languages. Several political regimes have succeeded one another. While some have praised FONCIN's policy, others have tried to promote Burkinabe languages. Rural education, commando literacy, imposed or negotiated bilingual education, translation, interpretation, linguistic laws covering all aspects of Burkinabe citizens' lives, and laws on the modalities of officialization and promotion of national languages, supported by language structures, have marked the linguistic landscape of the country. After more than half a century of political independence, where do we stand? What lessons can we draw for a real revitalization of languages? To answer these questions, a qualitative study supported by documentary analysis was necessary to collect the data analyzed within the framework of sociolinguistics. Our objectives were to determine, after describing and interpreting the different language policies, the lessons that could establish a revitalization of these languages. We hypothesize that synthesizing these experiences would make the country's language-cultures more vital the country's language-cultures which are factors of sustainable participatory endogenous development

Keywords: language policies, revitalization, sustainable development

BILAN DE LA GESTION DU PATRIMOINE LINGUISTIQUE DE LA HAUTE- VOLTA INDÉPENDANTE AU BURKINA FASO DE 2021 : LES LEÇONS À TIRER POUR LA REVITALISATION DES LANGUES NATIONALES

Résumé : La Haute-Volta précoloniale était multilingue avant sa rencontre avec l'Occident. Malgré la colonisation linguistique dont Pierre FONCIN (HARDY, 1917) est le visage emblématique, le pays demeure riche de son patrimoine linguistique. La langue française qui y a été imposée, avec tous les prestiges qui sont les siens et son envoûtante linguasphère, n'a pas eu raison de la diversité des langues. Plusieurs régimes politiques se sont succédé. Si certains d'entre eux ont fait l'apologie de la politique de FONCIN, d'autres, en revanche, ont essayé de promouvoir les langues burkinabè. Éducation rurale, alphabétisation commando, éducation bilingue imposée ou négociée, traduction, interprétation, lois linguistiques couvrant tous les domaines de la vie du citoyen burkinabè, loi portant sur les modalités d'officialisation et de promotion des langues nationales, soutenues par des structures en charge des langues, ont émaillé le paysage linguistique du pays. Après plus d'un demi-siècle d'indépendance politique, où en sommes-nous ? Quelles leçons pouvons-nous tirer pour une réelle revitalisation des langues ? Pour répondre à ces questions, une étude qualitative soutenue par une analyse documentaire a été nécessaire à la collecte des données analysées dans le cadre de la sociolinguistique. Nos objectifs étant de déterminer, après une description et interprétation des différentes politiques de langues, les leçons à même d'asseoir une revitalisation de celles-ci, nous fondons l'hypothèse selon laquelle la synthèse de ces expériences rendrait plus vitales les langues-cultures du pays, facteurs de développement endogène participatif durable.

Mots-clés : politiques linguistiques, revitalisation, développement durable

Introduction

More than sixty years after independence, Burkina Faso is still in search of a linguistic policy. Language is not only a heritage and a cultural wealth but also a right, as recognized by NICKIEMA (2003), RICENTO (2013), and KREMnitz (2014). After several attempts, where do we stand with the issue of language management in Burkina Faso? What lessons can we draw from all the actions taken in favor of languages in this country? We strive to analyze the linguistic legislations of Burkina Faso from 1960 to 2021 before projecting perspectives with the hypothesis that the linguistic laws adopted, even if so far they are only superficial, would have more promising prospects when considered together, taking into account linguistic rights, proportionality, and functionality criteria of languages. Our research is situated within the macrosociolinguistic framework, specifically that of managing multilingualism resulting from language planning. According to Stacy CHURCHILL (2011), linguistic policy falls under applied linguistics. Here, we align with the *in vitro* and *in vivo* management of CALVET (2017), the top-down or *de jure* policy which is formal and explicit, and the bottom-up or *de facto* policy which is informal and implicit, as discussed by RICENTO (2009) and Cassels Johnson (2013). The data were collected through a documentary study. Our study is both descriptive and interpretative. It is a diachronic approach to managing the country's linguistic heritage that leads to perspectives. Before highlighting the lessons in both form and substance from the different language managements that this country has experienced, a definitional outline is necessary.

1. Terminological Framework: Theories of Language Management

In the current state of research, to better understand language management in a multilingual country like Burkina Faso, it is important to grasp the different theories and schools of thought related to it. It is therefore necessary to elucidate the concepts of policy, planning, (linguistic) planning, and glottopolitics by taking into account the different schools.

1.1. Policy, Linguistic Planning, and Glottopolitics

Language policy is the "determination of major choices regarding the relationship between languages and society," and linguistic planning is its "implementation" according to CALVET (1996: 3) and BOYER (1996: 23). What distinguishes CALVET (op.cit.) from BLANCHET (2000) is that the former tends to combine or relate language policy and linguistic planning, while the latter argues that linguistic planning can result from several other factors besides language policy. Language policy encompasses "interventions on the language or on the relationships between languages" (CALVET, 2017: 17) that can come from government bodies and/or civil society. Besides top-down actions or *in vitro* or *de jure* language policy, generally the prerogative of political decision-makers (CALVET, 1997: 179 and 1993: 112-113), bottom-up, *in vivo*, and *de facto* actions, which involve often spontaneous



social interventions affecting languages (CALVET, 1996: 3; ROBILLARD, 1997: 36), must also be evaluated according to D. Robillard, 1997: 20) who groups them under the term linguistic actions. According to SPOLSKY (2004), language planning initially aimed at solving economic problems, but it now takes into account other issues such as the dynamics between different social strata or the variety of communication situations. This leads to language management encompassing simple management by individuals, micro-management (family and community), and macro-management at the supra-national level. SPOLSKY (2009) lists and explains these areas of application: family, religion, work, public space, medical care, legal services, military, etc. According to Cassels Johnson (2013: 9), a language policy is a political mechanism that impacts the structure, function, use, or acquisition of language and includes:

1. Official regulations (De Jure) - often promulgated in the form of written documents, intended to bring about a change in the form, function, use, or acquisition of language - which can influence economic, political, and educational opportunities;
2. Unofficial, secret, De facto, and implicit mechanisms related to linguistic beliefs and practices, which have a regulatory power over language use and interaction within communities, workplaces, and schools.

2. Terminological Framework: Theories of Language Management

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2.1. *Policy, Linguistic Planning, and Glottopolitics*

Language policy is designated as a “synonym for linguistic planning” or “the most abstract phase of a linguistic planning operation, consisting of the formulation of objectives,” according to writings reported by D. Robillard, (1997: 229), who himself argues that linguistic planning is “a conscious, scientific, and professional form of interventions aimed at modifying languages concerning their status and corpus” (ROBILLARD, 1997: 36). For him, the demarcation between policy and (linguistic) planning is a very thin line (op.cit.). As for linguistic planning, CALVET (2017: 6) and Louis-Jean ROUSSEAU (2005: 95) define it as:

Any intervention by a national or international body, or a social actor, aimed at defining the functions or status of one or more competing languages in a given territory or space (status planning), or at standardizing or instrumentalizing one or more languages to make them capable of fulfilling the functions assigned to them (corpus planning) within the framework of a previously defined language policy.

However, for L. GUESPIN (1985: 21), “language policy” and “glottopolitics” are two interchangeable terms that designate any “management of language practices” (1985:

23). This concept finds its legitimacy in the dual determination that “every human society is linguistic, and every linguistic practice is social” (GUESPIN and MARCELLESI, 1986: 9).

This overview of the definitional acceptations of these concepts shows the link and dependence between policy, linguistic planning, and glottopolitics. All refer to actions on languages within a given space or group.

2.2. Components of Language Policy

According to KLOSS (1969), language policy includes the following components: Corpus planning or the normalization of language forms (spelling, grammar, dictionaries) which aims at the structure of the language, and status planning which is the allocation of functions to different languages within a community (national languages, official languages, international language, language of education). Status planning focuses on the uses of the language(s).

Additionally, COOPER (1989) identifies a component called acquisition planning, which encompasses efforts to promote one or more languages through education, whether traditional or modern. This component targets the users of the language(s), i.e., the strategies for acquiring and transmitting languages.

2.3. Facets and Options of Language Policy

Regarding the facets of language policy, HALAOUI (op.cit.) proposes three: minimal (technical and scientific), targeted (political and legislative), and broad (multiple actions). For him, minimal language policy only concerns the relationships between languages (CALVET, 1996), reasoned decision-making (CHAUDENSON, 1989), and the results on human life (HALAOUI, 1990; 1991) and can be defined as “the theoretical conception that guides the implementation of linguistic planning actions” (HALAOUI, 2001, p. 146). The targeted acceptance refers to linguistic laws and legal facts. The broad acceptance of language policy is very generalizing and refers to any action on a language, whether theoretical or legal/legislative, justifying a motivated choice on the functions, uses, and statuses of languages (NGALASSO, 1986).

2.4. Perspectives of Language Policy

NGALASSO (1989) identifies three main perspectives of a language policy:

- The management of language institutions (assessment, conception, strategy, planning, and budget);
- The management of language teaching (principles of use in the school system, monitoring, and evaluation);
- The management of language use (territoriality, individuality, officiality, etc.).

Georges KREMINITZ (1974: 77) outlined a typology of language policy as follows: A symmetrical language policy where all languages enjoy the same rights and



limitations, and an asymmetrical language policy where there is a dominant language and dominated (and/or persecuted) languages.

3. Overview of Language Policies from Upper Volta to Burkina Faso

3.1. Pre-colonial Language Management

Before the encounter with the West, Upper Volta was a country composed of several ethnicities and cultures. Where there are cultures, there is also a multiplicity of languages. For instance, the kingdom of Ouagadougou, the current capital city, was invaded by the Moose, a people who is said to have come from Ghana according to several historical writings. This conquering people experienced exponential expansion and subdued several other linguistic communities, including the first inhabitants they annexed, to whom the Moore language was imposed de facto. Language management was endoglossic and respected the principle of territoriality, which imposes the use of the local language. Thus, the naming of communities (ethnonym) mostly included the language spoken by the community. For example, the Moose speak Moore, the Dioulas practice Dioula, the Bissas speak Bissa, the Gurunsi speak Gurunsi, the Gourmantché speak Gulmacema, etc. Commercial flows, conquests, annexations of entire populations as well as the massification of agricultural and/or commercial areas imposed regional bilingualism without the populations experiencing any linguistic irredentism. This is why CREISSEL (2018) states that bilingualism in Burkina Faso is historical and secular. However, the emergence of a dominant regional language is often observed, as in the case of the Sahel and the Center of the country. This leads KABORÉ (2004: 30) to say that “the linguistic counterpart is the emergence of a lingua franca-Dioula-for communication between the different ethno-linguistic communities” of the West. Thus, a non-institutional, implicit, bottom-up bilingualism develops in each region with the emergence of one or more languages covering a significant part of the regional or provincial territory.

The language was an identity marker in addition to the physiognomy, activities, and scarifications practiced by the multiplicity of ethnic groups in the country. This allows KI-ZERBO (2004: 81) to affirm that “the problem of languages is fundamental because it touches on the identity of peoples. And identity is necessary for development as well as for democracy.” Each ethnic group lived its culture in its language, which it transmitted orally from generation to generation. Education was both popular, community-based, and familial, but the language, while serving as a cement for community members, contained oral genres from which educational content was drawn according to the cultural practices of each community. This includes songs, tales, proverbs, riddles, charades, etc., which conveyed, under the palaver tree, during ceremonies or in initiation camps, the cultural, human, and social values of the community in an accepted and respected linguistic heterogeneity at the territorial level. Therefore, there was no centralized linguistic management except that the subjugated peoples were forced to practice the language of the dominant masters. For HALAOUI (1991, 2001, and 2011), this management falls within the broad language policy that concerns any unstructured action of language management. This

corresponds to the *in vivo* or bottom-up policy (NGALASSO, 1986) as defined above. As for targeted management, it only concerns the language chosen and used in legal instances and traditional education. This was not formally regulated, and no law framed them. However, since the language of the strongest emerged from each kingdom, it was also the language of the instances. This does not perfectly correspond to the *in vitro* language policy of CALVET (1996) or the *de jure* policy of ROBILLARD (1997), which claims that the State should develop clear linguistic laws defining the statuses and functions of languages. However, a micro-language policy imposed on the conquered peoples to learn, without being formally obliged, the language of the invaders for social integration, as this Moaaga proverb says: “F sãn ta tẽngẽ n mik tu nebã kẽnd ne zut, bɪ f me sulg f zug n kẽne.” This literally means that when a person finds themselves in a locality where the inhabitants walk on their heads, they must conform to this way of moving rather than using their feet if they were used to it. This means that language, culture, and customs must be learned by foreigners wishing or forced to live outside their home for better social cohesion. This is the principle of territoriality.

We see then that language management before the encounter with the West in Upper Volta was broad, *in vivo*, with the main component being Cooper’s acquisition planning (op.cit.). Indeed, acquisition planning here refers to the oral transmission from father to son through oral texts, and status planning was the prerogative of the elders, authorized to confer terminology to each new situation based on their experiences and consultations with the ancestors.

3.2. Language Management During Colonization

The encounter of Upper Volta with the West dates back to the 1880s. Missionaries and colonizers promoted the French language, which formally became the language of education, administration, and political institutions. As mentioned earlier, Pierre FONCIN (1900), Albert Sarraut (1923), and many others decided to dominate the indigenous people by depriving them of their languages and cultures. This is the linguistic homogenization policy that tends to make people believe in the unifying and civilizing power of the French language. Gérard KEDREBEOGO (1996: 122) explains that “Among the various factors which determined that important choice, the linguistic diversity of the country, the prejudice against indigenous languages [...] are those which prevailed.” This policy is top-down, as it was decided by the authorities with the principle of linguistic centrality. It was explicit and included corpus planning, status planning, and acquisition planning to some extent, as education was reserved for an elite and was not accessible to everyone.

The language management by the colonizer in Upper Volta embraced the three perspectives of Ngalasso (op.cit.). Indeed, the command was the first institution responsible for monitoring the use of French, which was also the language and the only language of schooling. COMPAORÉ (1995) notes that all the first colonial schools



in Bobo and Boromo (1898), Ouagadougou (1899), Léo and Koury (1900), Dori (1901), Gaoua (1902), and Tenkodogo (1903) were French-speaking.

Moreover, this linguistic management was both symmetrical in the sense that it classified all the linguistic heritage of Upper Volta as barbaric and savage languages, and asymmetrical in that it elevated French above all other languages. The colonizer's language was thus imposed around 1900, and this lasted for more than half a century. Then came political independence, where the elite of Upper Volta had to take the reins of governance, not without the oversight of France.

3.3. Post-colonial Language Management

In the aftermath of independence, Upper Volta initiated rural schools, which experimented national languages in education for the first time in 1961. These schools eventually changed into training centers for young farmers. This transformation reinforced the opinions of those opposed to the use of national languages in schools, viewing it as a ruralization of education designed for the children of farmers in their own languages. In 1967, literacy programs in national languages were introduced. The planning of language education marked the end of the monopolization of education by the French language. Thus, in 1978, the use of three national languages – Mooré, Fulfuldé, and Dioula – was experimented with in formal education, particularly in primary education, until the revolution's leaders halted the experiment in 1984 and introduced the Zanu operation and commando literacy. It was also during this period that the country changed its name to Burkina Faso, a composite name created from three national languages: Burkina in Mooré, Faso in Dioula, and the "bè" of Burkinabè in Fulfuldé, reflecting an effort towards a linguistic policy that, although partial, was inclusive and endogenous. After the revolution's rectification and under the Popular Front, the Mooré, Dioula, and Fulfuldé languages were introduced in secondary schools as optional subjects in the baccalaureate exam in 1991. This was followed by the publication of newspapers in national languages in 1993 and the experimentation with other forms of using national languages in both non-formal and formal education (satellite schools, non-formal basic education centers, and bilingual schools). It should be noted that the experimentation with bilingual schools was conducted by the non-governmental organization SOLIDAR Suisse from 1994 to 2007, which handed over the bilingual schools to the Burkinabè state for generalization and management of the model. All of this falls under acquisition planning.

4. Formal and Language Education Planning

However, the planning of institutions, which took effect with the creation in 1969 of a national commission for Voltaic languages with the mission to study and revalue national languages, had to wait for five years to see the creation of the first state bodies. Thus, in 1974, a state service supporting literacy in national languages called the National Office for Permanent Education and Functional and Selective Literacy (ONEPAFS) and the Department of Linguistics at the University of Ouagadougou were established to enable the instrumentalization of national

languages. Without corpus planning, which involves describing languages and providing them with orthographic codes, any action affecting usage and status would be in vain.

It was then that all the languages of the territory were considered national languages in 1978 by the Constitution. After a study on the linguistic situation of the country, a linguistic atlas was developed in 1983. Thus, official documents and the national anthem were translated into national languages between 1985 and 1987, and in 1995, Burkinabè languages were granted the status of “languages of education” in addition to French a year later.

In 2019, a law established the modalities for the promotion and officialization of Burkinabè national languages, and a linguistic policy was developed. This is likely the first formal linguistic policy based on the 2019 law, which recognizes all languages as national languages, unlike Niger and Senegal, which have granted this status to a few languages based on clear criteria.

Linguistic laws exist and touch on various aspects of life, as supported by SPOSKY (2009). For example, the Code of Persons and Family (1989) in its articles 80 and 926 recommends drafting civil acts (birth certificates, wills, etc.) in French, providing a loophole for illiterates in this language regarding wills, which must still be translated into French for legalization. The Law on Judicial Organization (1993) in its article 5 specifies that members of the departmental court must possess competencies in the official language and, “if possible,” in the national languages of the area. Thus, the working language is French. Articles 12 and 13 of the Labor Code (1992) recognize the validity of apprenticeship contracts, which must be written in the official language and, if possible, also in the apprentice’s language. The assessors of the labor court must be able to read and write in the official language.

The Decree on the Management of Mining Authorizations and Titles (2005), which governs a key sector of the Burkinabè economy, stipulates in Article 5 that “Correspondence and requests must, under penalty of inadmissibility, be written in French.” Article 6 clearly states that “Any document produced by an applicant in any other language must be accompanied by a translation duly certified by the competent services.” Thus, French is made the language of choice for the mining industry. It appears that no one is admitted to a mining job without proficiency in French.

If “the development of any people goes hand in hand with that of their language”, Gnamba, (1981: 235-240), Ouédraogo R. M, (2000: 7) warns that “economic imperialism and linguistic imperialism appear as two facets of the same problem” and is surprised “by the lack of progress in the policies promoting African languages” (Ibidem). However, the Competition Law (1994) makes French mandatory in documents related to commercial activities, while allowing the use of national languages. But common practice shows designations in national languages and/or French, with the user’s manuals, invoices, and receipts always provided in French. Even the Advertising Code (2001) does not specify the language(s) of publication but taxes any reprint in a foreign language (without specifying what “foreign language” refers to).



In the media sector, the Information Code (1993) requires a written declaration (in the official language) specifying, among other things, the languages of publication, which can be different from French. Finally, the Decree on the terms of reference for private radio and television broadcasting (1995) shows that the media are obliged to promote national languages without specifying how. In this regard, Sawadogo and Palé, (2019; 2020) noted that the percentage of national languages used in the media is not only low but also occupies the least favorable time slots and only concerns cultural and entertainment programs. News is relayed in French, which is also the language of major ceremonies and nationally significant interviews. However, “there are also languages that it is normal to use in almost all circumstances”, Denis Creissels, (2018: 4) and “moreover, all significant West African languages have an officially codified Latin alphabet, but its use remains very marginal, even for the most dynamic languages” (Creissels, *ibidem*). The same author states that: Most West African countries recognize some of their languages as national languages, but this term does not correspond to any precise legal status. Generally, this recognition is purely symbolic and has no notable practical effect. The more or less significant importance that a language may have at the regional or even national level is the result of a sociological dynamic, not a systematically implemented policy, and the fact that a language is qualified as ‘national’ does not indicate its real status. West African states do nothing that could be interpreted as deliberately aiming to restrict the use of indigenous languages, but they also do nothing (or very little) to promote or plan their development, and to allow their use to extend to areas other than their traditional domains of use, Denis Creissels, (2018: 3).

5. Evaluations of Language Policies from Upper Volta to Burkina Faso

5.1. Why Evaluate Language Policies?

Although necessary and important (D. ROBILLARD, 1997: 151), evaluating language policies is not an easy task. For BLANCHET (2007), who recognizes the complexity of this exercise, evaluating a language policy involves assessing the initial situation of languages, the scope of decisions from a futuristic perspective, the implementation of decisions, the consequences or results of this intervention, and the final situation which, like a narrative scheme, constitutes a starting point for other actions (BLANCHET 2009). It seems wise to us to project ourselves into the future to anticipate certain repercussions of our decisions at any scale to establish, if not infinitely stable, at least durable and solid foundations that guide choices in language interventions. This is not the case regarding language policies in African countries, especially those called Francophone, which navigate based on the client’s needs and struggle to decide the fate of their linguistic heritage. It is from this observation that we deemed it important to look in the rearview mirror to better project ourselves into the future.

This part allows us to take a critical look at the management of Burkina Faso’s linguistic heritage, which we have exposed above in light of the critical review of linguistic theories.

5.2. Analysis of Language Management in Burkina Faso

Examining the aforementioned linguistic laws, SAWADOGO (2021) notes that the top-down approach has failed and that the bottom-up approach has favored historical linguistic territorialization. Thus, bilingualism is secular and historical in Burkina Faso and can be attributed to the imposition of the French language, which has so far been inaccessible to all, and whose success has been favored by the “imbalance of language weights”, Gérard Kedrebeogo, (2003: 68), the illiteracy of leaders and intellectuals in the country’s languages, and linguistic irredentism. Thus, the constitution declares that French is the language of administration. Similarly, linguistic laws related to justice recommend the recruitment of officials and assessors based on their linguistic competencies in French. This means that so-called national languages have no place in justice since even civil status acts and those governing work advocate the use of French. For public media, the place that texts allocate to national languages is for advertising, just to increase revenue and attract the illiterate public. However, like the previous domains, *in vivo* linguistic action has allowed private media to make extensive use of national languages to ensure linguistic vitality, as SAWADOGO and PALE (2020) claim that private media are the first to promote national languages. But in 2021, public media improved the place of national languages by presenting news and the conclusions of ministerial councils in Mooré, Jula, and Fulfuldé, although this is not regulated by any legal instrument and always summarized in French.

However, legislative texts in favor of the use of national languages in the education system are numerous, but there were only 273 bilingual primary schools in Burkina Faso in 2021. This indicates that the generalization of this sub-system proposed since 2007 is struggling to take shape. Moreover, those who pass the laws have not succeeded in using national languages in parliament, as is the case in Senegal and Tanzania. Thus, the National Assembly of multilingual Burkina Faso, after more than sixty years of independence, remains monolingual, and all the work carried out there is in French. Implicitly, to be elected by the people, one must master the language of Molière. While KABORÉ (2004: 38) explains the exclusive teaching in French in Burkinabè schools by the prestige it enjoys in the country, which would be the cause of its domination over other languages, we believe that it is rather its teaching that determines its position and the converging interest of the population towards both institutional and informal learning of this language.

5.3. Types of Language Management in Burkina Faso

Awa 2e Jumelle SAWADOGO (2021) believes that there is no language policy from Upper Volta to Burkina Faso other than the sectoral one in education, which is poorly understood and suffers in its implementation. This means that the management of the country’s languages is of the exoglossic type which tends to explicitly promote the use of a foreign language made official while displaying an “uncommitted will” to promote the country’s languages in the sense of HALAOUI (2011), who distinguishes



between the policy of colonial languages from that of African languages. For the author, if the former includes the policy of confirmation or modification of colonial policy, the latter includes policies of expectation, contribution, and commitment.

This means that Burkinabè language policy is neither clear nor formal and is based on unfulfilled promises. Unfulfilled promises regarding languages have marked the country's history since 1961 when bilingual education turned into farmer training, continuing in 1984, the year the linguistic reform of the revolutionaries (1979-1984) ended without any formal explanation. Since then, the revitalization of linguistic heritage has always been the subject of speeches, scientific research, ministerial workshops, and international seminars, from which recommendations for officialization and even definition are mentioned but never followed up.

Thus, each official contributes as best they can to solving a language problem for which their ministry or structure is responsible. For example, the current Minister in charge of the structure, whose mission includes promoting national languages, stated at the National Assembly during his accountability exercise to the television news at 8 p.m. on November 17, 2021 that he would work to promote all national languages, but not to officialize one or a few of them due to the complexity of the issue. This means that there will be no decisive language policy but rather circumvention, accommodation, contribution, and expectation. This raises the legitimate question of why a law was voted and promulgated on the modalities of promotion and officialization of national languages, within which the criteria for promotion and officialization were clearly defined. Moreover, the motive for the costly drafting of a language policy remains a question. Furthermore, as noted earlier, the actors of this language policy have done no better than to rely on research from the 1980s regarding the number of languages till now controversial. A language policy that would determine the present and future life of a nation based on data challenged by many investigations, a language policy entrusted to a few actors whose work needs to be updated and who rely on it as holy truths can only remain misunderstood by the authorities who would not take the risk of experimenting with it.

Indeed, in light of NGALASSO's (1989) aspects of language policy, for Burkina Faso, the management of language institutions has allowed the determination of 59 languages since 1983, a number still controversial but on which all linguistic intervention is based. For language education management, about ten languages are used in formal education, and two are being experimented with by SOLIDAR SUISSE. As for the management of language use, officiality is assigned to French according to the country's constitution, which allows Burkinabè languages to be used in education alongside French. The principle of personality is only effective in justice, with the obligation to translate statements into French. But de facto, the principle of territoriality is historical, as languages share the Burkinabè territory even if they travel everywhere due to the vehicularity at the national level of some of them.

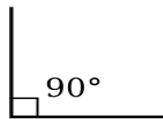
Referring to the typology of Georges KREMINITZ, (1974:77), Burkinabè language policy is both symmetrical and asymmetrical. The constitution distinguishes French from "other languages" and grants it all rights in the most prestigious areas of life.

From this asymmetry, which we note as vertical, French is positioned on the y-axis and national languages on the x-axis. The verticality of French lies in the fact that it enjoys constitutional coverage, although inaccessible to most Burkinabè. The constitution thus organizes the linguistic life of the country in a right angle where the intersection of the French language and national languages seems possible but minimal in official instances as follows:

French language
National Languages

In communication, French, although less known, is more prestigious and lends many linguistic signs to other communication mediums in daily use. However, in administration, it is the only official language. Only bilingual education, an alternative formula formalized for nearly twenty years, accepts a few national languages in only a few schools.

French Language



National Languages

In education, the angle is much narrower as French and national languages coexist up to a certain level, with the upper summit reserved for the official language and the base for national languages. This path dependency does not allow for the revitalization of national languages. This is why it is necessary to learn from past actions to project into a future where national languages will enjoy a more prominent status.

5.4. Lessons to Learn

In Burkina Faso, the formal language policy document, the first, was the result of the work of eight personalities, four of whom are teachers-researchers (one retired, one deceased), two researchers (one retired), an expert in policy development and an expert in statistics and economics, both from the Ministry of Economy, Finance, and Development. This work was coordinated by the permanent secretariat for the promotion of national languages (headed by a basic education inspector) through the department of linguistic planning, led by a basic education inspector. This department is composed of two services: the service for the promotion of national languages, headed by a certified teacher, and the service for the instrumentation of languages, assigned to a basic education inspector. One could criticize this document for limiting the actors to only two ministerial departments under the coordination of officials inexperienced in language planning. Moreover, the practical organization of the work consisted of a sociological survey conducted by three descriptive linguists and two sociolinguists. In this regard, Wright (2004) identified as a problem in language management that language policies have been dominated by (socio)linguists, without



regard for other related fields (political science, administration, management, business, sociology, law, education, history, geography, etc.).

As M. Cissé, (2005: 110) points out for Senegal, the postcolonial language policy of Upper Volta is merely a continuation of the colonial practice of Frenchification of the country through the monopoly that French holds in the school system, public administration, justice, and parliament. Earlier, Thomas SANKARA said in his political orientation speech that one must remember from colonial school "its content of enslavement and exploitation of man by man designed to exalt the superiority of French culture and to train local subordinate cadres to facilitate and perpetuate the colonial order" (Sankara DOP 25, 1984: 5). Similarly, at the 22nd ordinary session held in Addis Ababa from July 28 to 30, 1986, the Organization of African Unity, in its linguistic action plan, prescribed: "each member state must develop as soon as possible a language policy that places one or more widely used local African Language(s) at the center of socio-economic development."

More recently, the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance, adopted in Khartoum, Sudan, on January 24, 2006, during the sixth ordinary session of the conference of heads of state and government of the African Union, states in its Article 18 that "African states recognize the necessity to develop African languages to ensure their cultural promotion and accelerate their economic and social development (...) will strive to develop and implement appropriate national language policies." This led to the creation of ACALAN, a specialized institution of the AU responsible for its implementation. UNESCO advocates for the protection of mother tongues and minority languages through explicit language policies.

This lack of courageous and revolutionary political will to depart from the current practice of working "in the service of their own interests and the exploiting classes" by opting to serve "the popular masses" (DOP 26, 1984: 5), legitimizes the conclusion of the UNESCO seminar held from November 22 to 25, 2002, in Tokyo, which stated that "a language can be endangered by external forces, such as military, economic, religious, cultural, or educational domination, or by internal forces, such as the negative perception a community has of its own language." A linguistic and cultural turning point that would break with the policy of path dependency, circumvention, contribution, and expectation is necessary.

5.5. Perspectives

The examination of the treatment of Burkina Faso's linguistic heritage clearly indicates deficiencies that need to be addressed. At the current stage, the country has just adopted a language policy that is already controversial due to the restrictive choice of stakeholders and data that still need to be updated. Indeed, preliminary work was lacking. In the future, dialectological and dialectometric surveys would indicate the exact number of languages, those in emergence and those in extinction. This would be followed by a historical study of the languages to understand why there is so much fragmentation and a comparative study of cross-border dialects to show the differences, similarities, and historical connections between the cultures of the

speakers of these languages, with the aim of developing a normative, cross-border, and universal grammar of these dialects. Furthermore, it would have been wise to conduct sociological, ethnolinguistic, anthropological, and geographical studies of the languages to map linguistic territories and the representations of languages in each territory. From this study on language contact, the proportionality and functionality of languages according to usage and representations would emerge. This work requires the involvement of jurists, geographers, historians, and administrators who would decide on the distribution of languages according to the functions of C.A. Ferguson (1959) and J.A. Fishman (1967). Based on the criteria defined above, as well as demographic weight, vehicularity, state of instrumentation, and cross-border representativeness, the languages to be officialized with all the rights and prestige that this confers according to regional and provincial territories would be identified. This would then require a bi- or multilingual administration, leading to the development of informal and formal learning strategies for official languages. It is also necessary to rethink the codification of major language groups and another classification, preparing languages to convey the scientific aspects of general, scientific, and technical knowledge.

It is urgent to consider a study on the digitization of languages by incorporating them into the design of keyboards, phones (digital tools), and automatic translation and transcription tools to facilitate both informal and hybrid learning of national languages that would be promoted to the rank of official languages. A psychological and pedagogical effort to prepare the population for the acceptance of languages and to demystify French is more than necessary, hence the contribution of educational psychologists, sociologists, and computer scientists.

A redefinition of the notion of national language that would focus on the vehicular nature of the territory's dialects, taking into account the principles of functionality and proportionality, is essential. Language policy, being more general than sectoral policy, cannot be the prerogative of a single ministry, even if it is one of the key pillars of its implementation. This is why, finally, the creation of a ministry or institute in charge of language planning, as well as frameworks for certifying national languages, would allow for the construction of a bi- or multilingual administration, a national, regional, and/or provincial bilingual education, according to linguistic territories. T. Ricento, (2006: 3-23) advocates that language policy research be conducted "in the best interest of those concerned...", that is, the populations, to resolve conflicts, problems, or correct an injustice. For him, there is no neutral approach in language policy, as there are necessarily "winners" and "losers," and both the actors and the rulers are called to assume their choices, which must be reasoned. While the practical aspect of language policy is as important as its theoretical research phase, Burkina Faso is still path-dependent, as no strong action is emerging in the management of the country's languages, with the main officials seeking to avoid the responsibility of the difficulty related to the implementation of any policy. However, language policy is an integral part of public policies and must be decisive.



Conclusion

Since the independent Upper Volta to Burkina Faso in 2021, public policies have overlooked language policy, managing it according to the urgency of the moment. This is explained by the illiteracy of the main officials in Burkinabè languages, which they all qualify as national, a status that, according to Denis Creissels, (2018), “makes no sense.” In this context, R.M. Ouédraogo (2000: 7) is surprised that policies aimed at promoting local languages have not evolved further in modern Africa. However, according to Creissels (op.cit.), this could have been a perfectly viable project, as all major communication languages West Africa are officially instrumented using the Latin alphabet and are commonly used in all areas of life. Considering the different practices exposed here as restrictive and sectarian, for us, the principles of territoriality and personality should be based on linguistic rights, and a serious consideration of social representations should allow the country to establish a language policy. The development of this framework document would include, in addition to linguists, other sensitivities such as jurists, geographers, sociologists, administrators, historians, and many others. The number of languages, in our opinion, should be reviewed, taking into account well-thought-out dialectometric calculations to determine the exact number of languages and the reference dialectal variants to be considered in literacy, bilingual education, and administration. Thus, in addition to NGALASSO's status and corpus planning, the asymmetrical language policy of Georges KREMINITZ and the decisive policy of RICENTO should be called a reasoned and responsible language policy.

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