

# Morocco : Alecso's Bureau of Arabization Coordination

by: Sue Buret (\*)

The Bureau of Coordination of Arabization in the Arab world was created in 1961. At that time, King Mohammed V of Morocco recognized a need to bring North Africa in closer touch with the Middle East and make the language used by various countries in the Arab world more uniform. Abdelaziz Benabdallah, a well-known scholar, was named Director, and he formed an Executive Council of representatives from all the Arab countries. In 1967, after six years of support from the Moroccan government, the Executive Council was able to gain support from the Arab League, which allocated budget to the Bureau. In 1969, it became a part of the Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization (ALECSO).

The Bureau's objective is to develop a standard scientific and technological terminology in Arabic, and thus achieve complete Arabization in three areas: general education (including primary and secondary), vocational education, and higher education. It first undertook to compile dictionaries of terminologies for disciplines taught in primary and secondary schools such as chemistry, mathematics, zoology, history, geography, and physics. These were reviewed and accepted by participants at the Second and Third Pan-Arab Conferences of 1973 and 1977.

Presently, the Bureau is coordinating terminologies used in vocational education and higher education. Seven glossaries in mechanics, printing, architecture, electronics, carpentry, commerce, accountancy, and the technology of production were reviewed at the Fourth Pan-Arab Conference in Tangier (April, 1980). Higher education terminologies will be approved at the Fifth Pan-Arab Conference on Arabization in 1983, after which the Bureau will begin incorporating all scientific and technical terminologies into a polytechnic dictionary.

According to Professor Benabdallah, the Bureau has been largely concerned with practical applications of its research and has made efforts to encourage textbook writers to adopt the standardized terminology. However, the multiplicity of terms already in use by writers and educators in the Arab World renders this objective difficult. The Scientific Division of ALECSO in Tunis is publishing a series of textbooks using the standardized terminologies and hopes that many Arab countries will adopt these new books in their educational systems.

Coordinating Arabic terminology in any field is a complex task. Not only are different dialects used in each Arab country, but even Classical Arabic, the common literary language of the Arab World, differs substantially from one Arab country to another. In addition to difficulties inherent in the diversity of the Arabic language itself, there is also the problem of the source languages. Since French is the second language in the North African Arab countries and English the second language in the Middle East, translating scientific words from different source languages often results in more than one term for the same concept.

There has also been a lack of cooperation among the Arab countries. After gaining independence from European colonizers, each nation had its individual plan for Arabization of its educational system. Today, however, Arabization efforts are being carried on cooperatively. The Bureau has managed, to date, to publish 80 trilingual glossaries, using English as the source language, French as the second language, and Arabic as the target language.

The ALECSO bureau, in cooperation with national Arabization bureaus and Arab academies, goes through a rather lengthy and arduous process in developing a particular stan-

standard terminology. The initial step is to research all existing terms. Researchers review French and English textbooks and compile a glossary of terms in each language relating to the particular field. Then they draw up a list of Arabic terms currently used in a variety of Arabic language sources. These Arabic terms are then classified and compared with equivalent terms in the other languages. In an effort to designate the single most precise Arabic term for each scientific concept, linguists regularly confer with technical specialists in each field. Once terminologies are selected, a trilingual glossary is compiled and published in the Bureau's quarterly journal, *AL-Lisan Al-Arabi* (The Arabic Tongue), which is then widely circulated for comments and suggestions before the terminology is published

in official form.

Thus far, all the lexicographical processes have been accomplished manually, though according to Dr. Ali Kacimi, an expert with the Bureau, plans have been approved to computerize the task. This will aid enormously in completing the standardization of technical terminology, as well as in the continuous updating and modifying of the terminology, an important aspect of the Bureau's work.

The editors would like to thank Dr. Ali Kacimi, expert, and Dr. Abdelaziz Benabdallah, Director, Bureau of Coordination of Arabization, ALECSO, for their assistance and interviews for the preparation of this article.

---

(\*) Sue Buret is Director, AMHDIAS1, Rabat.  
Reprinted with permission from  
World Higher Education Communique volume 3  
No 3 (1981) p. 12.

## ERRATA

We regret that the following printing errors occurred in Professor M.A. Saleem Khan's article «Arabs, Arabic, and the future» published in vol. 17, part 1 of our journal

page	Column	Line from above	Correction
XXIV	2	20 after word «culture»	the following line to be added
		and intellectual systems and values which can continue	
XXVI	2	24 after the word «along»	the following line to be added
		with many languages of the developing world.	
XXXIV	2	14 after the word «originality»	the following line to be added
		because of the language. He argues that as long as the British used Latin as their medium of expression they lacked originality.	
XXXVII	1	10 «Arabic» instead of Arab	
XXXVII	1	37 «pour» and not «poor»	
XXXVII	2	9 the correct word is «absorb» and not «abord»	