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ABSTRACT

Why Do Minority Languages Persist?

The Case of Circassian in Jordan

Data-based analysis of the language situation among the Circassian ethnic minority group is presented in this paper. All internal, external, ethnopolitical, sociolinguistic and demographic factors influencing this situation are examined. It is argued that although most empirical evidence indicates a gradual process of ethnic language attrition and ultimate predictable loss at all levels, there are counter motivations that seem to curb this process. At a certain stage in the life of an ethnic group that has acquired some status and prestige, language may become only a symbol of distinction, identification and a carrier of heritage, without having a culture of its own or any pragmatic value; hence members like to talk about it expressing loyalty, but not necessarily to have it.