

Language Attitudes: Amazigh in Morocco

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ABSTRACT

Based on original ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in Morocco during the months of July 2006 and August 2006, I examine the complex interrelationship between Berber-Arab identities with a focus on social attitudes towards the Amazigh language and culture. First, a brief background on the history of Morocco is presented, with highlights on the Arab invasion of the seventh century, and the French colonization period from 1912 to 1956. The thesis then turns to the present situation of Amazigh in Morocco, regarding its economic position, and its official status in the spheres of education and religion. The role of the IRCAM, the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture, located in Rabat, is also presented as an important factor in the shift of language attitudes. I have incorporated two case studies, Bentahila (1992) and Ennaji (1997), that analyze Berber use and attitudes based on questionnaires and interviews conducted in Morocco. The thesis culminates with a report on my fieldwork, where I examine language attitude trends among Moroccans. An extensive selection of quotes is included, where the reader will be able to see vividly Moroccans' language attitudes and reflections on identity issues. This study suggests the complexity of language attitudes. However, a positive trend could be identified among Berbers, and neutral or ambivalent feelings among the non-Berber participants. *

INTRODUCTION

Morocco is a vibrant, multi-linguistically complex country. The official language of Morocco is Modern Standard Arabic¹; however, in 2001 the government recognized

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¹ Throughout the thesis I distinguish between Modern Standard Arabic or Classical Arabic, the written, standardized form, and Moroccan Arabic, the spoken, non-standardized form. It should also be noted that their linguistic differences are significant.

Berber as a national language, the historically original language of the country. In the seventh century, Morocco suffered the Arab invasion, and in the year 1912 the country came under the French dominion. Even though the colonization period ended in 1956, the French language had a surviving influence in domains such as science and technology in the years to follow.

The present thesis analyzes attitudes in Morocco towards the Amazigh (Berber)² language, the language of the first inhabitants of the region of North Africa. In the first section I explore the history of Morocco in terms of the linguistic and cultural influences it has received from numerous civilizations, including the Arab invasion and the French protectorate. The historical background gives light to the present situation of the Amazigh language and Moroccan identity. Current issues of nationalism and religion are also factors of language attitudes among Moroccans.

In the year 2001 the Moroccan government took an important step in creating the IRCAM institute (Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe, Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture) to preserve the Amazigh culture, after recognizing Amazigh as a national language. This institute has as one of its objectives the standardization of the Amazigh language, which is divided into three main dialects in Morocco: Tamazight, Tashlehyt, and Tarifit. The standardization of the Amazigh language is essential in order to introduce it in the school system and into the media. This royal and official support is creating some changes in social perceptions of the language.

² Hereafter I use the terms *Amazigh* and *Berber* interchangeably. Although it is said that the term *Berber* carries a negative connotation, a vast number of scholars use the term extensively. *Imazighen* refers to Berber people.

Although the Berber language competes with Moroccan Arabic and stronger international languages, such as Modern Standard Arabic and French, a positive shift in social attitudes towards Berber is to be observed thanks to the support of official policies in Morocco.

This past summer I conducted 16 interviews in Rabat, Morocco on attitudes towards the Amazigh language and culture. The majority of participants were Berbers, and presented a favorable view of their own heritage. I will examine social perceptions of Amazigh based on my fieldwork in Morocco and on previous existing literature on the topic.

The interviews are incorporated as an analysis of an array of social attitudes. The analysis is not comprehensive due to the limited number of interviews and limited demographic scope of the set of the participants, but it is representative of the diverse opinions of Moroccans on the current status of the Berber language. The extensive excerpted quotes from the interviews portray unique and personal perceptions of Moroccan identity.

SECTION 1: BRIEF HISTORY OF MOROCCO

Geographic and demographic situation

The Berber language belongs to the Hamito-Semitic group. It is a vernacular language used mainly in familiar and informal contexts in Morocco. The Berber language is the original historic and autonomous language of the Imazighen.

Berbers have inhabited North Africa since 7000 BC. Their geographical area extended from west Egypt to the west of Morocco, and from the Mediterranean coast to the south of Niger. Presently, most Imazighen occupy Algeria and Morocco.

According to the literature, the Berber population in Morocco comprises 30 to 50% of the overall population. The vagueness of this figure is due to the fact that language is not a trait recorded in Moroccan censuses. Also, because of intermarriages and centuries of contact, the boundaries between Arabs and Berber have been blurred, therefore precise figures of Berbers are lacking. Some estimates of Berber speakers have been based on geographical data, since Imazighen tend to inhabit rural regions and mountain ranges. Some of the regions Berbers inhabit in big numbers are the Rif Mountains, High Atlas, Anti Atlas, and the Souss Valley. Moha Ennaji (1997) estimates the Berber speaking population in Morocco to be 11 million based on the 1994 census information and on geographical linguistic distribution patterns. Moroccan censuses do not address language directly; however, as mentioned above, most Berbers live in rural areas. Ennaji's estimation was based on this geographical data.

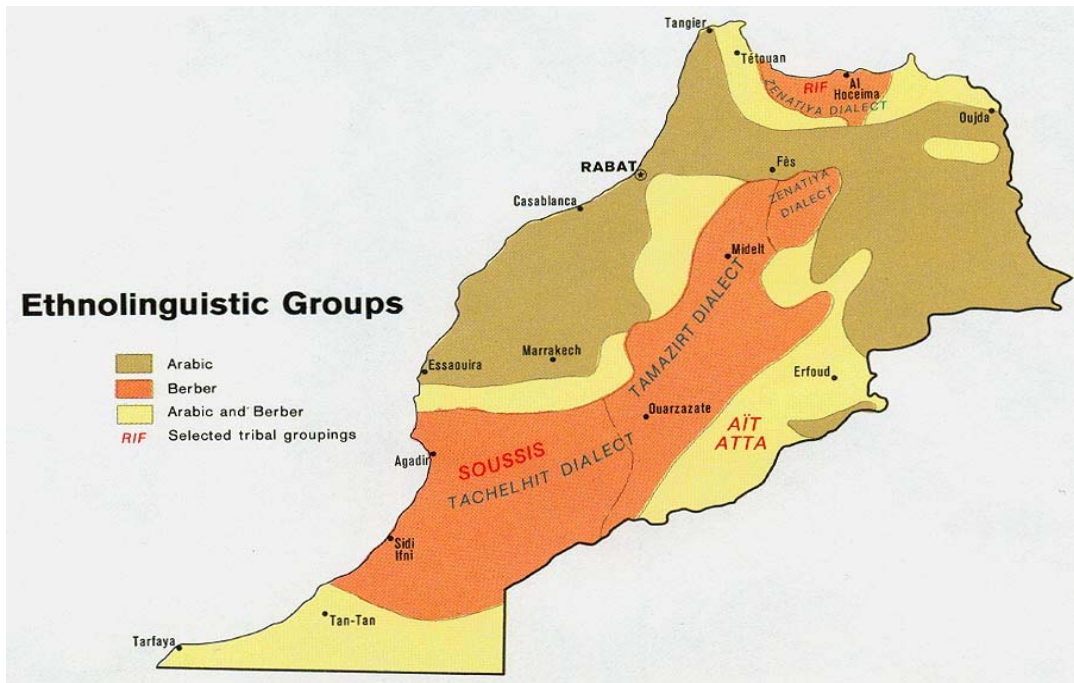


Figure 2: Linguistic distribution in Morocco

http://images.nationmaster.com/images/motw/africa/morocco_ethno_1973.jpg

Retrieved on November 21, 2006

The Amazigh language is composed of at least three varieties in Morocco. The geographic location of these varieties is as follows: Tarifit in the north and in the Rif Mountains; Tamazight in Middle Atlas and east of the High Atlas, Tashlehyt in the High Atlas and in the south of Morocco. Most dialects are mutually unintelligible, more so if they are situated at extreme geographic points, but they share some phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical similarities. Their differences are more accentuated at the phonological level. Tarifit, the northern dialect, presents the greater phonetic evolution of three, while Tashlehyt has undergone the least linguistic evolutionary changes. In the following map, it is to be

observed that Tarifit does not share a geographic boundary with the other two dialects, which would account for its accentuated variation.

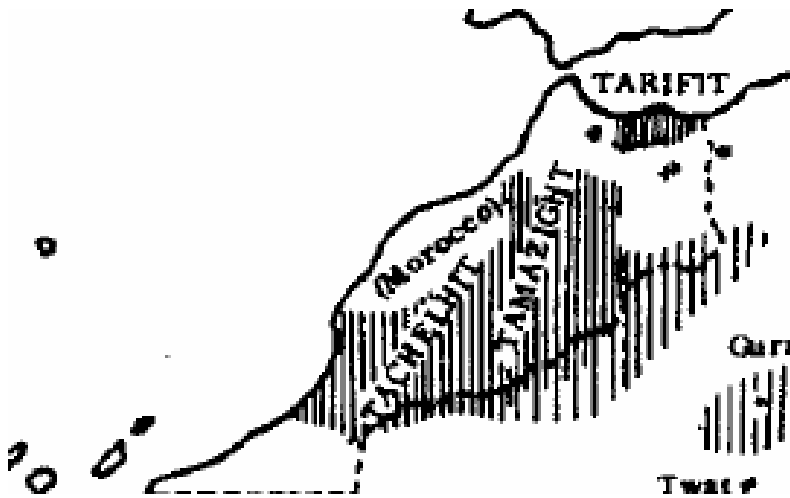


Figure 1: Geographic location of the three Amazigh varieties in Morocco

El Aissati (1993: 94)

The Arab conquest

The Imazighen were the original people of Morocco, until the Arab invasion of the seventh century. The Arabs brought with them Islam and the Arabic language, the language of the Koran.

With the increased influx of Arabs from the region of Andalusia in southern Spain, after the end of the Arab-Muslim rule at the end of the 15th century, the spread of the Arabic language was intensified. Since Berber did not have a standard writing system or a significant literary tradition, Classical Arabic gained ground as a language of scholarship, of administration, and of religion.

However, Berbers also recognize proudly the greatness of early Berber Moroccan dynasties: the Almoravids (1056-1147), the Almohads (1130-1269), and the Marinids (1196-1464). Famous names in history such as Tertarus, Saint Augustin, and Abdelkarim Al Kahttabi also form part of a proud Berber heritage.



Figure 3: Amazigh dynasties of North Africa, 13th–14th century

<http://www.britannica.com/eb/art-2644>. Retrieved on November 2, 2006

Colonization period

The French occupation of 1912, which lasted until Morocco's national independence in 1956, impacted the way the Arabic and Berber languages were perceived. During this period, knowledge of French was indispensable for obtaining power; therefore it was learned by the Moroccan elite. (Marley 2003: 28). French was the language of

prestige, and with its introduction in the curriculum, it became the language of science and modernity.

Before the colonization, the educational system was based on Koranic schools and traditional Muslim education. The study of religion was given prominence, whereas sciences were neglected. As it has been quoted in Benmamoun (2001), the following excerpt from a letter from King Mohammed ben Abdullah (1757-1790) illustrates the arena in which the new French educational system was introduced, which, as we will see later, instigated significant changes.

“Anyone who wants to engage in logic, the sciences of philosophy, and the books of Sufism should do that at home with his friends who do not know what they are talking about. Anyone who engages in those studies in the mosques will be punished and will have only himself to blame.” (99).

The French introduced different schools systems: among others, a European system for the French and Europeans, a Jewish system for the Jewish community, a limited Islamic system, and a Berber system, in which Islam and Arabic studies were not included. The Berber school system was part of the French colonial policy presented in the infamous Berber Decree (Dahir) of 1914, which was enacted in 1930. Its goal was to establish different judicial systems for Berbers and Arabs, guided by the known principle of ‘divide and conquer.’

The intention to lower the prominence of Arabic among Moroccans is reflected on the following statement by Roger Gaudefroy-Demombynes, a high-ranking officer of the colonial administration, as quoted in Benmamoun (2001):

“[It is] dangerous to allow the formation of a united phalanx of Moroccans having one language. We must utilize to our advantage the old dictum ‘divide and rule.’ The presence of a Berber race is a useful instrument for counterbalancing the Arab race.” (100).

The Dahir of 1914 was not welcomed either by the Arab or Berber community. The Berbers saw this as an attack to their Muslim identity, and the Arabs as a threat to their bonds with the greater Arab community. Classical Arabic proved to be crucial to Morocco's Muslim and Arab identity.

Instead of alienating these groups, the French policy had the counter-effect of creating a sense of nationalism and cooperation between Arabs and Berbers. Both Berbers and Arabs protested the Dahir, triggering the nationalist movement. As Bentahila (1992) states, "educational policies and other deliberate manipulation do not succeed if it counters social trends." (203).

This sense of unity and nationalism created during the colonization period fostered a single common language, namely Arabic. This will be reflected on the attitudes of Moroccans in the years following the French governance. Nationalism will prove to be a fundamental argument of opposition to the advancement of the Amazigh language.

Post-colonial period

Gellner (1972) notes that: "In his heart, the North African knows not merely that God speaks Arabic, but also that modernity speaks French." (19). Even though the constitution of independent Morocco establishes Modern Standard Arabic as the official language of the new nation, after the French rule ended in 1956, Morocco inherited the French educational and administrative systems. All subjects in the educational curriculum, apart from religion, were taught in French. In response, a

policy of arabization gained ground among nationalists and religious conservatives, focusing on ideological goals of Arab patriotism, ignoring the multi-linguistic reality of the country. A 1973 letter to the national newspaper *Al-Alam*, addressed to the prime minister, is quoted in Benmamoun (2001): "Using a foreign language to deal with the interests of the Moroccan Muslim citizens is considered an infringement on Islam, the Qu'ran, and the national language decreed by the constitution." (101).

Moroccan historical background explains in part the conflicting role that Amazigh plays in social attitudes. Arabic is the language of tradition and religion; French is an essential language of social and professional success; and Berber represents a glorious past and a rich cultural heritage previous to the Arab invasion. However, Berber may also be seen as a dividing force among Moroccans, who shared a common fate under the French and Spanish occupations. Fighting for a single cause and against a single enemy strengthened Morocco's sentiments of nationalism.

SECTION 2: LINGUISTIC INTERPLAY IN PRESENT MOROCCAN SOCIETY

Theory: Ethnolinguistic Vitality

Abderrahman El Aissati (1993) studied the linguistic situation in Morocco in light of the theory of ethnolinguistic vitality as proposed by Giles et al. (1977). The definition of the vitality of an ethnic group is thus portrayed:

“The vitality of an ethnolinguistic group is that which makes a group more likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations. From this it is argued that ethnolinguistic minorities that have little or no group vitality would eventually cease to exist as distinctive groups.” Giles et al. (1977) [cited in El Aissati (1993: 90)].

The Berber community is diverse in their range of attitudes, their geographical occupancy, and in the varieties of Amazigh spoken. Berbers do not represent a homogenous group; however, they are considered a distinct ethnic group because of their common Amazigh language and common history.

Ethnolinguistic vitality is used as the measurement of the chances of the Berber community in surviving as a distinct group. Giles et al. (1977) proposes an *objective vitality* and a *subjective vitality* measurement. Subjective vitality takes into account cognitive representations and perceptions of individuals, which come forth in questionnaires and statements. Objective vitality is composed of several aspects: status, demography, and institutional support.

The preceding factors of Giles et al.’s ethnolinguistic vitality measurement yield the following evaluating chart for the vitality of the Moroccan Berber community, as shown in El Aissati (1993: 98).

Table 1

Status	Demography	Institutional support	Overall vitality
Low	High	Low	Low-medium

Under demography, it is considered whether the group has a national territory, whether the community is concentrated in the same area, the proportion of

the group to other groups, the number of its members, their birth rate, and rates of migration, among others, according to El Aissati (1993).

Institutional support consists of the language presence in education, media, administration, religion, and cultural events supported by the government. The following section will examine more closely the role of the government in the vitality of the Amazigh language in present-day Morocco.

Government and Institutional Support

Official attitudes towards the Amazigh language are reflected in policies and regulations in spheres such as education, national media, economic developments, and religion. The influence of official stances on social perceptions on the Amazigh culture is analyzed in the next segment.

Education

The official language of instruction in Morocco is Modern Standard Arabic. According to Marley (2003: 31), by the end of the 1980s, the state education system was completely arabized. In primary schools, French is taught as a foreign language, and in secondary schools English, Spanish, German, or Italian are incorporated into the curriculum.

Also, the program of study places emphasis on Arab and Muslim history, with very little consideration on the Berber heritage. El Aissati argues that this may be the reason why Bentahila's study reflects that "there are also claims that Arabic

was the language of their ancestors, even in cases where the immediately ascending generation did not know Arabic." (Bentahila 1992: 201).

Religion

Classical Arabic is the language of the Koran, the sacred book in Islam. Because Islam is the majority religion in Morocco, Classical Arabic has special prominence. Even for Berbers, although they may feel oppression due to the dominance of Arabic, this language is highly valued for its importance in religion. Gellner (1972: 12) states that "the North African folk vision of the world is articulated entirely from within Islam: the limits of Islam are the limits of the world." Although today this may be disputed and seen as an exaggeration by some scholars, religion still plays an important role in Moroccan consciousness. As suggested in Marley (2003), Moroccans tend to identify themselves as Muslims; to see themselves in religious rather than in ethnic terms.

In collective prayers, the imam leads the prayer and preaches in Classical Arabic, but in some Berber monolingual areas, preaching is also done in a local variety of Berber. However, prayers remain in Classical Arabic.

Economic Status

The Berber community is noticeable in small and large businesses in urban Morocco, being successful in the running of cafes, restaurants, and factories to the point of enjoying a "quasi-monopoly of the grocery trade in the cities of northern Morocco."

(El Aissati 1993: 93). However, the economic development that Berbers experience leads to urbanization and to the gradual loss of their mother language.

Following the colonization period, Morocco faced the need of both political and economic development; the establishment of an effective government, and economic expansion. According to Gellner (1972), North Africa has succeeded in its political development, but not in its economic advancement. As a result, Gellner states that “there are now two North African dreams—official employment and labor migration; a job with government, or a job abroad.” (20).

We will see in the following section whether the attitudes of the Berber community and of Moroccans at large are a contribution or a detriment to the maintenance of the language.

Social attitudes

As noted before, the colonization period had a significant impact on Moroccans' views of their national languages. On the one hand, liberation from the French rule created an increased sense of nationalism, which also led to a long practice of arabization in the country; however, the introduction of the French educational system gave the Berber community the tools for a greater appreciation of their own culture. For one, a language other than Arabic enjoyed a high status. French being a language of high prestige in the educational and administrative spheres, showed a powerful alternative to the previous assumptions of Arabic being the most eloquent and most beautiful language.

This new information, together with the study of modern linguistics and the structural analysis of language, gave the Amazigh language legitimacy as a natural language, and a more respectable place among Berbers. This is so especially among university students, which is revealed by the large number of MA theses prepared in Morocco (“Diplome d’études supérieures, DES”), ‘doctorats de 3ème cycle’ (French equivalent of an MA) prepared in France, ‘doctorats d’Etat’ (French and Moroccan equivalent of a Ph. D.) prepared in France, and Ph. D. dissertations prepared in the US, on Berber related topics. A list of theses and dissertations completed by October 1989, are included in appendix 1 in El Aissati (1993). The authors of these works include 30 Moroccans, and 11 Algerians.

Currently there is support for the Amazigh cultural movement at the international level by the Congrès Mondial Amazigh (World Amazigh Congress) and by other organizations. Also, research centers in various universities in North America and Europe contribute to the increased prestige of the language. (Marley 2003: 27).

However, a frequent feature has been the low prominence of Amazigh in the society, and in the administrative, economic and educational system, reflected in statements such as “you cannot earn your bread by speaking Berber” (Bentahila 1992: 199), “Berber is not a language, but a dialect” (El Aissati 1993: 95), stated by Arabs and Berbers alike.

Nationalism is also one the causes of negative attitudes towards Berber. Arguments of disloyalty to the Arabic and Islamic heritage are posed by nationalists and by patriots who resent the French domination and the Dahir of 1914.

Review of the literature

Bentahila's study (1992)

As suggested previously, Modern Standard Arabic is a language of prestige because of its association with the Koran and with Arab nationalism. Also, the French and Spanish occupation from 1912 to 1956 gave Spanish and French a higher status than Moroccan Arabic. French in particular is considered to be the language of science and technology. This contrasts with Arabic, which is the language of the past and religion.

French is perceived as “a ‘langue civilisée’ (‘a civilized language’), seen to be necessary for modernization, economic and technical progress.” (Bentahila 1983: 28). Arabic is the language associated with religion and morality, belonging to the older generation, belonging to “domains of ‘le non-cultivé’ (‘the uncultivated, uneducated person’).” (Bentahila 1983: 28).

If Arabic is considered a low prestige language in Bentahila’s study of 1983, Berber is a language of even lower prestige, reflected by his study conducted in 1992. Based on interviews made to 200 bilinguals fluent in Arabic and Berber, and 57 non-Berbers of Berber parents or grandparents, Bentahila argues for a convergence towards Arabic in Morocco, based on the declining use of Berber in second generations.

Bentahila proposes that Berber is being lost, but this phenomenon is not felt to imply a loss or change of identity. According to Bentahila, Berber and Arab are not distinct categories, but “overlapping components of identity.” (1992: 203). "A

process of language shift is currently underway, whereby the traditional home language is being abandoned." (1992: 197). However, the interviewees showed little sense of regret about the shift. The concern lies more on issues of practicality, rather than on issues of identity. There is affection for the Berber language, but is maintained only as long as it is useful.

Bentahila suggests that there is a Berber cultural and historical awareness, but no racial division based on Berber ancestry. In this respect, 51% of Bentahila's informants declared that they could always detect when someone was Berber. However, an Imazigh, by virtue of being Moroccan and Muslim, also possesses Arab heritage.

In describing their identity using the labels Arab, Berber, Moroccan, a regional term, or other, 53% of Berber speakers described themselves as Moroccans alone, 30% as Berbers alone, 15% used the label Arab in their identity, and 10% declared Arab identity solely. The above numbers show that national identity is as important or more than ethnic identity. To the question of which of the languages the participants knew they considered their own language, 63% declared Berber, while for 27% of the informants, Arabic was considered their own language, even when their parents were Berber monolinguals.

It is remarkable that 21% chose languages that conflicted with their proclaimed identity, claiming Berber identity and Arabic as their language, and vice versa. Language and group identity do not seem to be closely linked, and Berber and Arab identities are not incompatible. It is also to be noted that the ability to speak

Berber is not a necessary condition for self-identification as Berber. 83% of the participants said that it was not necessary to speak Berber to be a Berber.

Some additional figures from Bentahila study of 1992, show telling attitudes towards Arabic and Berber in Morocco:

47% named Berber as their favorite language, for 26% Arabic was their favorite.

38% named Berber as the most beautiful language, 33% were in favor of Arabic.

62% considered Arabic as the most necessary language, for 12% it is Berber.

79% considered Arabic the most practical, for 8% it is Berber.

Bentahila also notes that it is important not to make major generalizations from the figures above presented. The participants were young educated Berber speakers, who have a developed ethnic conscience.

The language shift is only a part of a larger shift towards modernization. For instance, older people live a traditional life style, while their children are used to a more westernized life in the cities, or one generation of women leaves the house only to visit female friends, while the next generation travels around the globe.

Ennaji's study (1997)

Ennaji argues that native speakers are usually proud of their mother tongue, and that the attitudes of officials and Arab speakers range from neutral to favorable.

Even though Berber has been traditionally restricted to home and to conversations with intimate friends, the revival that Amazigh is experiencing is due to the change of attitudes of officials and of Moroccan society, as represented by campaigns

launched by the media, and the greater presence of activists in favor of cultural identity and diversity.

The media coverage in Amazigh is appreciated in the short news bulletins that are transmitted in the different varieties of Berber. The newspaper *Tasafut* and the magazines *Amazigh*, *Tifawt*, and *Amud* are good examples of a greater usage of Berber in the media.

On the whole, there is a large consensus that Berber is the basis for Moroccan society and that it is important to revive it since it represents Moroccan identity and authenticity.

Ennaji administered a questionnaire to 152 students at the University of Fez, a city surrounded by Berber villages. The following are two representative tables of Ennaji's findings:

Are you for the idea of teaching Berber at school? (%)		
Berber native speakers	yes 99	no 1
Nonnative speakers	yes 81	no 19

Table 3
Ennaji (1997: 35)

Will the TV newscast in Berber have a great effect or no effect on the spread of Berber? (%)		
Berber native speakers	great effect 86	no effect 13
Nonnative speakers	great effect 76	no effect 23

Table 4
Ennaji (1997: 35)

Some significant quotes from Ennaji's study (1997) are also included:

"The teaching of Berber will be of use at university, especially in the linguistics option, apart from that, it has no big importance." (35).

"Although I don't speak Berber, I think that it should be taught in all levels of education; if foreign languages are taught in Morocco, why leave out Berber." (35).

"I prefer all Moroccans to know Berber because it is a Moroccan legacy." (36).

"I prefer that Morocco adopts one language, i.e. Arabic, because it is known by everybody, and it is a symbol of national unity." (37).

How Amazigh is being maintained

As depicted above, the Berber community has suffered a low status in Morocco; however, a shift towards a higher status can be seen already by the year 1997 in Ennaji's study, in comparison to the imminent loss of Berber in future generations depicted in Bentahila's study of 1992. The causes of this language shift are the proactive and activist stances by the community and a new identity consciousness. Amazigh is being maintained, showing a marked shift of attitudes in the society towards the positive side. Other factors too have contributed to the maintenance of the language.

Ahmed Boukous (1995) describes external and internal factors for the socio-linguistic situation of Berber. As external factors, Boukous cites the concentration of Berbers in rural areas with exclusive use of the language; such areas include the Rif

and Atlas Mountains, and the migrating familial grouping in certain urban areas, where Amazigh remains the language of home. At the same time, migration and the dissemination of Berber communities are factors of language shift, putting Amazigh at risk.

To counteract the trend of the diminishing number of Berber speakers, Boukous suggests the linguistic normalization of the language, i.e. the standardization of Berber in linguistic domains, which entails the codification of grammar of the three different varieties of Berber, the formation of lexicons, and the adoption of a writing system. This process then leads to the standardization of the three main varieties of Berber, for the standard Amazigh language to have a place of more prominence in Moroccan society. Boukous' proposal has been adopted with the creation of the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture in the year 2001.

Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture (IRCAM)

The proclamation by the late king Hassan II on August 20th, 1994, represented the beginning of a favorable succession of events in recognizing the historical and cultural importance of Berber in Morocco. It was declared that Berber was to be taught in state schools, and that the national TV channel will broadcast programs in Berber. Hassan II's declaration took a more solid form in 2001, when his son, the King Mohammed VI, enacted the Dahir (decree) whereby the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) was created.

The Dahir declares the creation of the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture in the grounds of recognizing

“A plural identity, as it has been constructed on the basis of diverse tributaries: Amazigh, Arabian, African Sub-Saharan and Andalusian, all of them being compounds which, on account of their openness to other cultures and civilizations and by interacting with them, have contributed to refine and enrich our identity.” (Dahir 2001).

The principles of the Royal Institute facilitate “the introduction of the Amazigh language within the educational system and guarantee the dissemination of the Amazigh language throughout the social, cultural and media spheres, at the national, regional and local level.” (Dahir 2001, Article 2).³

IRCAMs stated objectives are:

- To transcribe expressions of Amazigh culture and to safeguard, protect and ensure their diffusion;
- To conduct research on Amazigh culture and to facilitate access to this research by the greatest number of people, distributing the results and encouraging contributions from researchers and experts in related fields;
- To promote artistic creation in Amazigh culture and to contribute to the revival of Morocco’s Amazigh inheritance and of the specificities of its civilization;
- To study the script necessary to facilitate the teaching of Amazigh;
- To contribute to the creation of initial and continuous training methods to help teaching executives charged with the teaching of Tamazight, the civil servant who are expected to use it professionally and generally speaking, any eager person who wants to learn it;
- To help the universities with the development of Amazigh linguistic and cultural research centers and with training trainers;
- To encourage and reinforce the place of Amazigh culture in spaces of communication and information;
- To establish relations of co-operation among national and foreign establishments who are working towards similar ends within the vocational, cultural and scientific spheres. ⁴

³ « En collaboration avec les autorités gouvernementales et les institutions concernées, l’Institut concourt à la mise en œuvre des politiques retenues par Notre Majesté et devant permettre l’introduction de l’Amazigh dans le système éducatif et assurer à l’Amazigh son rayonnement dans l’espace social, culturel et médiatique, national, régional et local.» (Dahir, Article 2).

⁴ Chart from Buckner (2006), appendix C. See IRCAM webpage for original French version.

The IRCAM is composed of seven research centers. The Center for Language Planning, the Center for Didactic Research and Educational Programs, the Center for Historical and Environmental Studies, the Center for Anthropological and Sociological Studies, the Center for Artistic Studies, Literary Expressions and Audiovisual Production, the Center for Translation, Documentation, Edition and Communication, and the Center for Informatics Studies, Information Systems and Communication.

SECTION 3: LANGUAGE ATTITUDES IN RABAT

During the months of July 2006 and August 2006 I conducted a study consisting of semi-structured interviews in the city of Rabat on the perspectives of Moroccans regarding the Amazigh language. The questions asked and selected quotes from the interviews follow in the next section.

Methodology

16 persons participated in the interviews. Three participants did not declare Amazigh background to be present in their immediate family. The rest claimed at least one of their parents to speak Berber, although their own self-proclaimed proficiency ranged from fluency to passive comprehension of the language. The age of the participants ranged from 17 to 48 years old. The participants also came from diverse educational backgrounds.

About half of the participants were friends or acquaintances I had previously met during my SIT study abroad program in Rabat. During my fieldwork this summer I met two of my informants through connections other than those related to my project. I met the rest of the participants through my proactive search for subjects in streets and cafes, and in the British Council in Rabat.

Originally, I wanted to narrow my focus and interview Berbers solely; however, I found three non-Berber speakers who were glad to participate in this project. In selecting my interview subjects, I also took into consideration their ability to speak English, which limited the availability of suitable participants. Knowledge of Modern Standard Arabic or French would have additionally eased my access to the Berber community.

13 interviews were conducted in English, one in Spanish, and with the help of a translator, one interview was conducted in Moroccan Arabic, and one in Modern Standard Arabic. Most of the interviews were conducted at cafes, at the Center for Cross Cultural Learning in Rabat, at the British Council library, or in other semi-private settings.

The interviews were tape-recorded, and ranged from six to 30 minutes each; the total recording time amounts to about 220 minutes. Each interview consisted of 13 questions; however, there was some flexibility depending on the answers of the participants. Additionally, the participants included observations not directly addressed by the original 13 questions. For non-Berber participants, questions 1, 12, and 13 were omitted. The design of the interviews and the methods in conducting them were based on recommendations by Schensul et al. in *Essential Ethnographic*

Methods. A more detailed examination on the transcribing methodology of the data follows in the section of selected quotes.

General trends

In generalizing the responses of the participants, a positive trend is identified in the perceptions of Moroccans towards Amazigh, although some ambivalence and neutrality was also present among some interviewees.

Moroccans earnestly identified Berber as part of their heritage. None of the interviewees ignored the historical importance of Amazigh in the country. However, some also recognized the minute practicality of Berber in their everyday lives. Berber competes with Modern Standard Arabic, Moroccan Arabic, and French, in gaining spheres of usage. Berber is still mostly confined to familiar and informal settings.

Some of the participants noted that learning Berber would be important, but not indispensable. Some regarded it as superfluous knowledge, and considered it more practical to learn foreign languages, such as French, English, and Spanish. For example:

“If you are American, if you are Chinese, or European, you come to Morocco, with who are you going to talk? Where? Airport, hotel, taxi? Do you have a Berber family? You see, those families are not open a lot. Just, you need to speak very well Berber, and just to know it. No study, no school, no Koran.” (Hamza, 30 years old, male).⁵

This resonates Bentahila’s study (1992). There he notes that:

⁵ Selected quotes of the interviews follow in the next section.

“The attitude to the abandoned language [Berber] seems to be highly pragmatic; the languages are considered not as symbols, but simply as tools to be maintained just as long as they are needed.” (210).

Moroccans seem to consider more significant for their children “to be able to manage in many foreign countries” and “to be able to communicate wherever they go in the world.” (Bentahila 1992: 209).

However, it is to be noted that people are not reluctant to let Morocco’s current triglossia expand with the addition of Berber as a prominent language in the country. Most of the interviewees were Berbers, and they all showed positive attitudes towards their own language. The three non-Berber participants exhibited some negative and neutral attitudes towards the language, but also recognized Berber’s cultural importance and heritage in Morocco. Their complex attitudes are represented by ambivalent or sometimes contradictory statements, such as:

“You learn about it, for how many years, and at the end, what are you going to do? There’s not a lot of options there. Just maybe if you have some work, but I don’t know, I don’t see this. Just keep it, keep it. Me, I’m with Berber, that’s all.” (Hamza, 30 years old, male).

“But for me it is not important, I am sorry... I don’t speak Berber, but I like to talk with Berber men to learn more about this, but I have not the chance because I am not looking for this.” (Karim, 27 years old, male).

Some statements reflect explicit pride in the Berber culture. It would seem to me that some participants were eager to promote their culture and behaved as welcoming as possible to the foreign researcher. For example: “They [Berbers] are wonderful, they are patient; they are strict, reliable and hospitable.” (Nabil, 18 years old, male).

Overall, Moroccans perceive the vitality of the language to be increasing thanks to the efforts of the government, especially thanks to the creation of the IRCAM institute, and to the direct royal involvement in promoting Amazigh culture. However, people concerned about the future of Amazigh, demand more to be done in this respect. For instance:

“When we speak of this raising of the Amazigh heritage, most of the Amazigh movement, of the institute itself, IRCAM, are still longing for a lot of development and a lot of progress.” (Jamil, 33 years old, male).

“IRCAM should take big and important steps. Making rules for languages should be done in schools, in teaching; it’s everyone’s job, not of a specific government body. [In reference to the IRCAM research centers].” (Khaled, 48 years old, male).

Moroccan identity is not easy to characterize. Different cultures make up a complex amalgam of identities. Two of the most salient identities that Moroccans ascertain for themselves are Moroccan and Muslim. To be Moroccan entails Berber heritage. To be Muslim means to be deeply connected to the Arabic language, the language of God’s word. However, other foreign languages such as French and English, highly present in the lives of most urban Moroccans, gain importance because of their practicality and high economic status. For most Moroccans, it is more useful to learn French than to learn Berber at school since French would give them practical advantages in their professional lives. This is reflected in statements about learning languages, where participants seem to juggle their cultural heritage consciousness with the desire to be able to be functional and take part in economic opportunities:

“It is good to learn [Berber] in the first school [primary school], but in the second school [secondary school] you must use a language that you use in the future.” (Karim, 27 years old, male).

Q: Would you like your children to learn Amazigh at school?

“Why not. It is part of their tradition. But actually to be honest with you, for me, my children [should learn] Moroccan Arabic, then foreign languages, especially French and English and then if they have time, why not, actually... then study Moroccan dialect; Arabic is very important.” (Tarik, 20 years old, male).

It is noticeable too that some people base their opinions on their personal experiences, on what they see daily in the streets, within their family, while some provide observations that are mostly based on their familiarity with the history of Berbers, and their knowledge of current happenings in the country in relation to Berber issues, such as the steps the government has been taking in promoting the Amazigh culture and the establishment of the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture. Since official undertakings take some time to have an impact on the daily lives of Moroccans, not everyone is aware of them. Imazighen who take an active interest in the future of the Berber language and culture are more informed of these issues.

Issues in methodology

It must be noted that the trends presented here are not comprehensive, since the sample size is small, and the demographics not very varied. The observations made are not ample enough to represent the wide spectrum of opinions by both Berbers and non-Berbers in Morocco. All but one of the participants was literate and all were currently living in the city. Also, all of them spoke either two or more than two

languages fluently, for example Berber and Moroccan Arabic, or Moroccan Standard Arabic and Moroccan Arabic, or Moroccan Arabic and French. All but two of the participants spoke good conversational English.

Interviewing in rural areas, where access to modernity and education is more limited, would present perhaps another view of Morocco's sociolinguistic perceptions; the view of monolingual Berbers who are more concerned with their day-to-day lives and economic struggles, than with issues of a lost national heritage.

SECTION 4: SELECTED QUOTES

I present the data elicited during my fieldwork in Morocco. What follows is an extensive set of excerpted quotes from the conducted interviews, grouped by themes, which in some cases overlap. Most of the following statements are responses to the questions included below. Some statements do not respond directly to questions asked, but present interesting revelations of Moroccan attitudes. Where needed, the prompting question is included for clarity.

After listening to the recorded interviews, self-notes were taken that highlighted trends in opinions. After additional times of listening, I attempted to present a fuller and more faithful transcription of the interviews; however, it was deemed more useful to present quotes in a compacter and more organized arrangement. Also, because of the considerable length of the interviews, a full transcription would be impractical.

With this notion in mind, recurrent grammatical errors were corrected in order to free the reader from confusion. For instance, nouns before adjectives were corrected; the definite article *the* was also deleted or inserted as needed; emphasizeers such as *like* and *really* were omitted in some cases.

One interview was conducted in Spanish, thanks to my fluency in the language. With the collaboration of two Moroccan friends, one interview was run in Moroccan Arabic and one in Modern Standard Arabic. I have not included the original quotes, but only their translations because of my limited knowledge of Modern Standard Arabic and Moroccan Arabic. For consistency, the Spanish translation has been left out as well.

In the following section I present the excerpted quotes under thematic categories and subcategories. A short commentary precedes each segment.

Biographical sketches of the participants appear in appendix A. Gender, age, the Amazigh variety spoken, and sometimes quotes illustrating the participant's identity are included.

Questions

1. Which dialect of Amazigh do you speak?
2. What is your native village or city?
3. Do you perceive Amazigh heritage present in your everyday life? How?
4. Do you see the Amazigh culture reflected on Moroccan society at large? How?
5. Would you like to see more of the Amazigh culture in Moroccan society?
6. Do you perceive the Amazigh culture as being endangered?
7. Should it be protected?

- a. What should be done to protect it?
 - b. What should the government do?
 - c. What should Moroccan society do?
8. Are you aware of what the IRCAM (Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture) is doing in standardizing the Amazigh dialects?
- a. Is this beneficial for the Amazigh people?
9. Would you like your children to learn Amazigh at school?
- a. Which dialect?
 - b. At which educational level?
10. Would you like to see more Amazigh TV or radio programs?
11. Would you like to see more Amazigh cultural events in Rabat?
12. Can you understand any of the other two dialects?
- a. Can you speak any of the other two dialects?
13. Do you speak Amazigh at home?
- a. Do you speak Amazigh with friends?

PERCEPTIONS OF BERBERS AND OF BERBER LANGUAGE

The following quote shows a humanistic outlook at identity, emphasizing universal qualities, and not ethnic differences.

"I have Berber friends but they don't speak Berber... I [care] about his heart, not about his nationality or about his dialect. Me too, I'm Tarifit, for me it's the same." Karim, 27 years old, male.

Q: Do you identify yourself as a Moroccan or as an Imazigh?

"I am Moroccan, I am Berber, I am like the others... When you told me that, it's like you told me I have to be racist. There's no discrimination. It has to do with Islam. Islam is about that... It is not a matter of being white or Berber or foreigner, we are all equal." Nabil, 18 years old, male.

Although most of the participants considered it impractical, the following quotes shows the usefulness of knowing Berber.

Q: Do you speak Amazigh at home?

“No, maybe some words, or maybe to have some fun, like being at the shop... Many shop owners are Berbers, so if you speak their language, they will do some discount for you... like ‘how much’ or ‘how are you’ first, and he knows you are from his city or region.” Zeidan, 17 years old, male.

“[Berber] people live far from the capital... They are isolated, but they take a lot of places in the south, in the east. To communicate with this people, everybody needs to learn [Berber], and also we need not to lose our languages of origin. If you lose your origin, you are going to be just an imitation for other people.” Hamza, 30 years old, male.

Some participants deem it impractical learning Berber, since Berber competes with international languages such as French, Modern Standard Arabic, and even English in Moroccan daily life.

“For international, it’s not important. For what? Just in Morocco. If you are not Moroccan you don’t need it. For example, if you are American, if you are Chinese, or European, you come to Morocco, with who are you going to talk? Where? Airport, hotel, taxi? Do you have a Berber family? You see, those families are not open a lot. Just, you need to speak very well Berber, and just to know it. No study, no school, no Koran. Internet for example, someone speaks just Berber, and wants to use the internet, how can he use it?” Hamza, 30 years old, male.

“You learn about it, for how many years, and at the end, what are you going to do? There’s not a lot of options there. Just maybe if you have some work, but I don’t know, I don’t see this. Just keep it keep it. Me, I’m with Berber, that’s all.” Hamza, 30 years old, male.

“I have some... friends who are Berbers but the majority of them don’t speak any Berber dialect; it’s a dialect not a language... and they aren’t interested on it... because we feel that it will not give them good opportunities to develop their minds, because they will not need [it] in society.” Tarik, 20 years old, male.

Most of the Berber participants showed pride in their Amazigh heritage. Their positive opinions are seen below.

“They are wonderful, they are patient; they are strict, reliable and hospitable.” Nabil, 18 years old, male.

“Mind sets are different [between Berbers and Arabs].... I see it when I visit my father’s family. They speak Berber all the time... Family is very important for Berber people... They help each other a lot. They are always trying to help Imazighen.” Hasna, 26 years old, female.

“They have some problems like draught... There are no enough wells or dams... so they are driven towards the cities; but the natives... they stick to their roots and they are proud of their culture, their customs, their traditions... I don’t believe they have any problem; there is only the problem of water, and of illiteracy sometimes, since there isn’t much schools.” Nabil, 18 years old, male.

Amazigh pride is based prominently on Berber as a traditional and original culture. Moroccans are conscious of its heritage.

“[Berber] is our culture, it’s our origin. We cannot forget who we are, and where we are from.” Amin, 24 years old, male.

Q: Would you like to see more of the Amazigh culture in Moroccan society?

“Yes, I would like. It’s part of our culture, we can’t deny. And it’s said that Berber culture was before them or us, Arabs. It’s a good culture. Moroccan Berbers, they have some good customs, traditions.” Tarik, 20 years old, male.

Some participants were ambivalent in their attitudes towards Berber. Indifference and interest at the same time represent the complexity of some perceptions.

Q: Would you like to see more of the Amazigh culture in Moroccan society?

“But for me it is not important, I am sorry... I don’t speak Berber, but I like to talk with Berber men to learn more about this, but I have not the chance because I am not looking for this.” Karim, 27 years old, male.

Some opinions are criticisms of the indifference shown towards Amazigh.

“When you hear it [Amazigh] on the radio... and you listen to some music, it’s good; but when it comes to the news, which is presented in Berber, they turn off their radios.” Nabil, 18 years old, male.

Q: Do you think that the Amazigh culture should be protected?

“Sure, I do... it’s our culture, it’s an old culture... so it deserves to be kept, to be protected... There is a lot of people... [that] have some memories in their families which are Berbers, but they don’t know anything about Berber culture, they don’t speak Berber, they don’t know anything about music... That’s really bad. It’s our culture, so we should keep and protected it.” Amin, 24 years old, male.

Some opinions are criticisms of the current Arab predominance in Morocco due to official policies.

“Moroccan dialect is a mix of Arabic and Berber... Moroccan dialect should be the official language of Morocco, and not Classical Arabic, because we don’t speak it, we don’t really understand it, and we only speak the dialect... This is a mistake.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

"*Al-Maghreb Al-'Arabi* [the Arabic West], Morocco is called Al-Maghreb in Arabic, should have been called *Al-Maghreb Al-Kabir* [the Great West] or *Al-Maghreb Amazighi*, western Amazigh lands. We can't call this region of North Africa *Maghreb 'Arab*; we have to call it *Al-Maghreb Amazighi*. Native people of this area are Amazigh, and Arabs have recently come 13 centuries ago." Khaled, 48 years old, male.

A sense of superiority based on the knowledge of languages other than Berber is seen below. However, there is also an inexplicit consciousness of the importance of Amazigh as Morocco's heritage.

"In radio, there is a million [people] that sing [in Berber]... In a lot of places people [listen to] Berber music, and usually I have a strange feeling towards them..."

Q: *What?*

"I think I'm good, I'm better than [them]. Because I hear French and English, and Arabic; but Berber is not interesting, just for people who don't study, analphabets. [But] now, I see something impor... not important, something there." Hamza, 30 years old, male.

"I am interested to learn a little bit about this language, just now. But I know just *aig, sen, crat* [*one, two, three*, numbers in Berber]." Hamza, 30 years old, male.

ARAB-BERBER RELATIONS AND IDENTITY AS MOROCCANS

Morocco is seen as a multicultural place, an amalgam of different cultures. The emphasis on the distinctions among the dialects of Amazigh seen below may have occurred because it was explicitly asked about their identity within the Berber community, whether the person spoke Tamazight, Tashlehyt, or Tarifit. The prevalence of Arabic in the field of writing is also noted.

"It [Morocco] has the Arabic culture; it has the Tamazight, the Tashlehyt, and the Tarifit, four cultures. The perfect language is Arabic; it's number one here. And coming Tashlehyt, and Tamazight and Tarifit... In the writing Arabic is good, and it is not difficult, but the writing for the Berbers [Tifinagh script] is very difficult." Ahmed, 30 years old, male.

Moroccan identity is seen as a combination of Berber and Arab influences.

"Berbers are Moroccans, and Moroccans are Berbers, Arabs are Berbers, and Berbers are Arabs... They coexisted thousands of years before... I cannot tell there is a difference between an Arab and a Berber." Brahim, 26 years old, male.

“Berber is with Arabic; when I say Berber, I say Arabic; if I say Arabic, it’s the same with Berber.” Amin, 24 years old, male.

“Even if I am not Berber, it’s [my identity] a collection from Berber... When I say I am Moroccan this means I am Arab, I am Berber. This all makes my identity.” Khadija, late 20s-early 30s, female.

Although some see no distinction between Arabs and Berbers; two separate groups, Muslims and Imazighen are emphasized here in an atmosphere of activism.

“Mohammed Chafiq, the leader of this movement, the first president of IRCAM, he is our sheikh. If Muslims have their sheiks, we also have our Amazigh leader.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

People are aware of Berber history.

“When Arab people came to Morocco, Berbers were fighting them for three centuries. After three centuries they [Berbers] showed the white flag.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

Although some recognize the clash between Arabs and Berbers following the Arab invasion, currently there is no sense of discrimination or conflict.

“Tashlehyt person, and Tamazight and Tarifit, they are all friends because for a long time they live in Morocco. After Arab men come, and we have problems, because they don’t like Berbers, but now we don’t have problems... If a Tamazight person has problems, for example, the Tashlehyt help.” Ahmed, 30 years old, male.

“Berber is part of Moroccan society, it’s there... I am happy with it. I’ve never felt that there’s discrimination of Berbers. We are happy.” Zahra, 36 years old, female.

Arab dominance, which has led to tensions between Arabs and Berbers, is observed and criticized.

“The teachings of God are misused. They are used for a wrong goal. If it’s reached in a specific language, in Arabic, the natives of that language are selfish and give themselves a higher level than others.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

Q: Is it beneficial to have a Standard Amazigh language?

“Of course. In the forest, when you come across a lion that has taken everything from you, anything you take back from the lion is beneficial for you.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

Q: Do you speak Amazigh at home?

“No, this is a big problem. With friends, when I am with a friend who speaks Berber fluently, we speak only Berber, not Arabic. But this is a sensitive situation. When you are with a salesman and when someone in the street stares at you and he doesn't understand you, they say 'we are Arabs and they are speaking Berber.' But the truth is that Berbers are in this region before them, but they [Arabs] don't like hearing others speaking a language they don't understand. Now, when I am speaking to you in Arabic, I am translating from Berber to Arabic. May God help us with the lion in the forest. [See above for reference to the lion and the forest].” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

The close contact between Arabs and Berbers leads to the blurring of their distinctions, posing a threat to the vitality of the Amazigh culture.

“There is a great difference between Arabs and Berbers, in terms of thinking, in everyday life, in managing their lives... It's present at all levels. But gradually this difference decreases. The brothers are trying to save the particularity of this race.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

RELIGION

Although questions about Islam and its role in Morocco were not asked, three interviewees mentioned religion in their responses.

A distinction is made between how Berbers and Arabs view religion.

“I think Berbers do not stick to their religion as much as Arabs. There are very open minded... It is because of their mind sets, because of their traditions... There are many Jews among Berbers.” Hasna, 26 years old, female.

Religion is seen as a form of oppression. However, religion is not condemned. The Arab imposition on this sphere and its authoritarian criticism of Berber traditions based on religious grounds is denounced.

“Mausoleums were created originally by Berbers. Egoists, conservatives fight this phenomenon. They think this is sinful. This is related to a specific tradition, specific culture; it has nothing to do with religion. So there is nothing wrong about it... We must keep it [mausoleums] and have more.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

“Amazigh people have always gotten along with new people. Amazigh lands have always been welcoming other people like Arabs. The attack of conservative Muslims

nowadays is an attack against the Amazigh culture and traditions in Morocco.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

“The easiest way to control is through the sacred text [Koran]. Or you talk in the name of God, and you promise things in the other life.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

The possibility of reconciling Amazigh traditions and Islam is explored below.

“When you read explanations of sacred texts, like Hebrew, or Christian, you find that Saint Augustine is Berber... In Muslim teachings we must find some fingerprints of Amazigh culture. Maybe there is an Amazigh way in explaining a certain text, or a certain idea.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

“It [Berber] is endangered because of the misuse of the teachings of God. It’s like racism. The question of religion comes up. Why shouldn’t we have an Amazigh religion? Doesn’t God know Berber, doesn’t he have any translators? Religions have come to promote peace among nations on earth; instead of this goal, it has caused wars and fights between people. This is against the main goal.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

“You always wonder were is Amazigh Islam. Now we have two kinds of Islam; we have Sunni and Shi’a. Shi’a is in the Middle East, near Iran; it is for Persians. They have managed to have a mix of Islam and their old traditional culture. It is very different from our Islam in Morocco, in Egypt, in Saudi Arabia. There are many groups in Sunni and Shi’a. Tradition has a great impact in Persia, on religion; they don’t even speak Arabic. So Shi’a is Islam in a Persian traditional and cultural version.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

It is further suggested that Amazigh should be incorporated into the practice of Islam, for Berbers to understand their religion better.

“We are saving what can be saved from our culture, not calling for a war on Arabs. We have been calling to have Berber as an official language, as Arabic, and maybe to translate the teachings of God to Berber. If you go to the mountains, in some areas, you find people who cannot speak Arabic. Every Friday in the mosque we have a sermon from the imam, and you don’t understand even a word. So it doesn’t achieve its goal. Maybe if he spoke to them in Berber, they would have understood it, and it would be more useful to them.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

“We can’t make all people become Arab. Religiously speaking, praying in another language is ok; so why refuse a translation of the Koran, if you don’t change anything in it, you just translate it.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

In contrast, at the present situation of Amazigh, learning Arabic is essential to fulfill religious duties, as exemplified by the following quote.

“Mouley Idriss Al-Awel is the first man who enters Islam in Morocco. They [Berbers] need to learn Arabic to understand Islam. Arabic is a power, it’s everything for using the Koran, for praying. Some people lose Berber with time, some [keep] it.” Hamza, 30 years old, male.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE THE AMAZIGH CULTURE?

When the subjects were asked about ways to protect and promote Amazigh, the following trends emerged.

Social action is identified as a factor in preserving Amazigh. Some are aware of the international support Berber has received, especially in the scholarly field, and request further attention from both the international communality and the local community.

“We need more interest from our countries, so as not to forget it [Berber culture] in the future.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

“We must change the character... The people who are responsible in Morocco don’t give time for the [Berber] culture.” Ahmed, 30 years old, male.

“The government should take care of the infrastructure, and of roads. This matter [to preserve Amazigh culture] is responsibility of civil society, and of the international civil society.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

It is also the government’s responsibility to protect the culture.

“First, it’s the role of the government because they should make more... concerts, fairs, stuff in TV. It’s also the role of the people here, they should keep protecting their culture, respecting their culture, and they just need to enjoy it... because it is a wonderful culture. They need to keep talking about it, to keep making research on that culture, because it is really rich.” Amin, 24 years old, male.

“IRCAM should take big and important steps. Making rules for languages should be done in schools, in teaching; it’s everyone’s job, not of a specific government body. [In reference to the IRCAM research centers].” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

Official efforts are recognized, but people are encouraging for more to be done.

“When we speak of this raising of the Amazigh heritage, most of the Amazigh movement, of the institute itself, IRCAM, are still longing for a lot of development and a lot of progress.” Jamil, 33 years old, male.

Perhaps a sense of conformity with the current situation leads to pessimism about government efforts.

“It’s too late for the government to think about it, they needed to do it a lot of years [ago], since [we] took independence, and now we have three languages.” Hamza, 30 years old, male.

Promoting the language is done through its diffusion. A comparison is made between the diffusion and expansion of Arabic through religion and ways that are accomplishing progress in Berber.

“Information means are helping us. CDs, films are promoting mutual understanding among the three dialects: Tamazight, Tashlehyt, and Tarifit. When the Koran came, there wasn’t one Arabic; there were many dialects of Arabic. There are many ways to read the Koran. There are seven ways, and there are many explanations, different ones. So the sacred text has unified all these dialects, Arabic dialects, and they have become one.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

TEACHING AMAZIGH AT MOROCCAN SCHOOLS

Since the IRCAM is working out plans to introduce a standard Amazigh language in schools, I wondered how this idea would be received. It was not asked about the introduction of a standard Amazigh, but of Amazigh in its diverse forms in general, since not all the participants were aware of issues involving the development of a standard language. Presently Berber is being taught at primary schools in some rural areas. I am not fully aware of the geographical location of these schools, or of the extent of the curriculum on Berber.

Berber is important to be learnt because it is part of Moroccan identity.

“After learning those two languages [Arabic and Berber], because [they are the] most important to know how to use, to speak your own languages, later they could learn

French, of course, and after they could learn English, Spanish.” Amin, 24 years old, male.

Q: Would you like your children to learn Amazigh at school?

“Yes, I would like... I don’t have any problem to educate my children [in Berber] even if I’m not Berber.” Khadija, late 20s-early 30s, female.

Q: Would you like your children to learn Amazigh at school?

“Of course, Berber is Moroccan heritage and should be taught to all Moroccans... at schools, TV, in every means possible.” Zeidan, 17 years old, male.

Amazigh being part of Morocco’s heritage is one of the reasons for the importance of learning the language.

Q: Would you like your children to learn Amazigh at school?

“It is important to learn Amazigh at school... because Amazigh is our tradition. The first people to come in Morocco are Amazigh.” Karim, 27 years old, male.

“I would like my children to know it because it is part of their culture, of their background. It’s a very good idea, I really like it.” Hasna, 26 years old, female.

“We have to teach our children their mother language. Even my son, he learned to write in Tifinagh, our alphabet, but he doesn’t speak it [Berber].” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

Q: Would you like your children to learn Amazigh at school?

“I would encourage them to learn all the languages... English, Spanish, French... but Berber is really important because it’s in our blood.” Amin, 24 years old, male.

As was seen above, the inclusion of Amazigh in Islamic practices was noted as necessary for people to be able to fulfill their religious duties. Another reason for the necessity of its official recognition and use is explored below.

Q: Is it beneficial to have a Standard Amazigh language?

“Of course it is beneficial... This is very meaningful to any Berber to have an official language... to serve their daily needs... For instance, if you have something in the court... An old woman who does not speak any Arabic, if she has this kind of problem in the court, she then needs to have her Amazigh or her code [subcategory of the three main dialects; Jamil refers to his own code as Fighigian, part of the Tarifit dialect] used so as to express herself clearly. A lot of people would have problems while in the court, and they may be sentenced for years just because they haven’t understood what the talk in the court was about.” Jamil, 33 years old, male.

Learning Berber is perceived as impractical for some, when competing with other well-established languages.

“It is good to learn [Berber] in the first school [primary school], but in the second school [secondary school] you must use a language that you use in the future.” Karim, 27 years old, male.

Q: Would you like your children to learn Amazigh at school?

“Why not. It is part of their tradition. But actually to be honest with you, for me, my children [should learn] Moroccan Arabic, then foreign languages, especially French and English and then if they have time, why not, actually... then study Moroccan dialect; Arabic is very important.” Tarik, 20 years old, male.

However, learning Amazigh is useful for some, particularly because of its official advancement.

“They [my children] should at least know my own dialect. When they go back to my hometown, they would be able to speak with their family members... When the standard version is ready... this [learning Berber] would be a need and one of the conditions for immersion in the society in the future... A standard is going to be present as an official language; they should know their official language first.” Jamil, 33 years old, male.

“From my experience I think that Tashlehyt has helped me learn English... It makes you tongue flexible... I think it is beneficial to learn this language [Tashlehyt].” Nabil, 18 years old, male.

The following opinions see learning Berber as additional knowledge, not important for any specific reason, but valuable as knowledge in general. I have sensed that urban Moroccans particularly appreciate multicultural and cosmopolitan influences.

“Why not, if my daughter liked this, why not... I want for my children to learn everything about life. Maybe they will use this in their lives. Why not.” Karim, 27 years old, male.

“[Berber should be taught] like French like English.” Rachid, 30 years old, male.

“I am of Berber descent. It is good to have a kind of diversity... to know about other cultures.” Brahim, 26 years old, male.

Learning Amazigh should not happen solely at schools, but should begin at home.

Q: Would you like your children to learn Amazigh at school?

“I am the school.” Rachid, 30 years old, male.

“For their family I would like them to learn Berber, but if they don’t have the influence, they are not going to be motivated.” Mahdi, 17 years old, male.

Q: Would you like your children to learn Amazigh at school?

“Of course. If it’s not at school, it would be at home. Now my dad is speaking with my daughter in Berber... She is 19 months.” Zahra, 36 years old, female.

Having the royal support of implementing the teaching of Berber is fundamental for the preservation of Amazigh.

Q: Would you like to see more of the Amazigh culture in Moroccan society?

“Of course, because I’m a Berber. It is really a pity because Berber wasn’t taught at school; it was not a written language; it was just spoken within the family, and now that some Berbers are moving into the city, their children and grandchildren don’t speak Berber... They have to give more importance to the language so that it doesn’t die.” Hasna, 26 years old, female.

Q: What else should the government do in protecting the Amazigh culture?

“I don’t think it is sufficient. I think it’s the government duty to encourage people to make them learn this language.” Nabil, 18 years old, male.

“This is a big decision to introduce a dialect into education. This is not our decision; it is the government’s decision... We can give our opinions but we can’t change it, and I would respect it.” Zahra, 36 years old, female.

The following quote tells us that the vitality of Berber is not affected by official policies. This agrees with Ennaji’s data, where some Moroccans do not think that the presence of Berber in the media affects Amazigh’s prominence. (See table 4, page 19). Based on other opinions by this participant, the reason seems to be Amazigh’s long standing tradition even without its official recognition.

“About the school, if the government does it, it’s good, but Berber is not touched; just they want for some people that don’t know, to [learn].” Rachid, 30 years old, male.

Learning Amazigh is fundamental. The participant wonders about foreign interest in the culture in contrast to local apathy.

“I am surprised American people speak Tamazight... and we live in Morocco... and don’t speak Berber. Why?... In North America, [you have] the Berber institute in Washington, here you don’t have one. Why? We must be learning Berber at school... because it’s our culture.” Ahmed, 30 years old, male.

Berber should be given more importance and be taught at the university level.

“It should be like other subjects, like Arabic, French, like other languages. It should be learned till the upper levels.” Zahra, 36 years old, female.

“Learn it [Berber] up to university... just like Arabic and French.” Hasna, 26 years old, female.

OTHER MEANS OF PROMOTING BERBER CULTURE: MEDIA AND CULTURAL EVENTS

It was explicitly asked whether they would like to see more Berber in the media and in local cultural events. These are the responses.

The presence of Amazigh in the media supports its expansion, becoming a vehicle for non-Berbers to learn about it.

“I remember the first [Berber] movie that I see in TV, I think it was [last] week. I am 27 and I saw just one movie. But I found it very good.” Karim, 27 years old, male.

“The royal institution [IRCAM]... teaches Amazigh for Arabs... [Berber culture is promoted] by this and by doing some programs on TV, by sensitizing people on the importance of Berber as a part of culture.” Tarik, 20 years old, male.

“It is funny for me to see people on TV talking Berber. Things which are funny make you watch it, it encourages you to watch it; and when you watch, you will learn, and when you learn you will understand, which means that you could be able to have this culture inside of you.” Amin, 24 years old, male.

Q: Do you see the Amazigh culture reflected on Moroccan society at large?

“Berber programs on TV, or some films, documentaries... show their traditions, customs... and then people see their characters, how they eat, what they do when they get married, what they wear.” Tarik, 20 years old, male.

The diffusion of Amazigh in the media not only promotes its culture, but also serves the community.

“I prefer to have a TV [channel] only in Berber... In Morocco you have two different, I am not saying nations, but two different communities. We have the Berber community and the Arab community... It's not a good solution if you have one channel where you have sometimes Berber shows and sometimes Arab shows.” Brahim, 26 years old, male.

"I would like very much to have a Berber channel for us, and also for Moroccans. We have a channel specialized in knowledge, in information. They are broadcasting Berber classes to teach them how to talk and to write. The channel is Arra'bia [a satellite Moroccan channel]." Zeidan, 17 years old, male.

"I don't watch TV a lot. It doesn't make a difference to me... I know friends who borrow CDs, and Tashlehyt films." Zahra, 36 years old, female.

Some participants are informed of the current developments of Amazigh media.

"We need a channel for us. Two days ago they were talking about this, about having a Berber channel." Khaled, 48 years old, male.

"There will be an Amazigh channel, only for Imazighen very soon... in the three dialects." Hasna, 26 years old, female.

Festivals and cultural events are also means for the promotion of Amazigh that Moroccans encourage.

"They could bring about festivals... In festivals they would be in close contact with the people, and the people then would feel this kind of culture whether in music, whether in movies... To be close to the other identity... to have this understanding, since we already talked about cohabitation... This would be very important also for Arabs to do." Jamil, 33 years old, male.

Q: Would you like to see more Amazigh cultural events in Rabat?

"Of course. It's been ages that I haven't seen anything like that here, in Rabat. When I go to a Berber place I see Berber people, I see Berber shows, but in this city it's such a rare thing." Amin, 24 years old, male.

Q: Would you like to see more Amazigh cultural events in Rabat?

"I would to see more. It is very interesting for me to see this." Karim, 27 years old, male.

People who do not speak Berber would not necessarily enjoy ampler diffusion of Amazigh on TV and radio.

Q: Would you like to see more Amazigh TV or radio programs?

"Since I don't understand it, it would be frustrating for me." Khadija, late 20s-early 30s, female.

Music and cultural activities are transcultural; it is not necessary to know the language to enjoy them.

Q: *Would you like to see more Amazigh cultural events in Rabat?*

"I like music, I like songs even if I don't understand them." Khadija, late 20s-early 30s, female.

"When I come to my work sometimes by taxi... the driver is Berber and the driver is listening to [Berber] music. I like it [Berber music] even if I don't understand it." Khadija, late 20s-early 30s, female.

A certain aversion towards activism and politics is noted here. Amazigh representation through cultural events is preferred.

"We have to keep it in the culture, not in the politics... We [can] organize festivals... We can use the media but not use the discourse." Khadija, late 20s-early 30s, female.

HOW BERBER CULTURE IS PRESENT IN MOROCCAN SOCIETY

People are aware of Berber ethnicity in the royal family and high-ranking officials.

"Our finance minister from Berber, a lot of generals from Berber, the king's mother from Berber." Karim, 27 years old, male.

"The king is half Berber half Arab, even his father was half Berber half Arab ... In the royal family they were trying to gather the two nations so that there are no problems... That is why there are no problems... as in Algeria... because Berbers are concentrated only in the east and northeast of Algeria, and they want their independence; whereas in Morocco you find Berbers everywhere... There are no problems with Arabs." Hasna, 26 years old, female.

Berber is perceived as part of Moroccan identity, which is reflected in language.

"In the language because Moroccan Arabic is Arabic mixed with Berber, French, and a little bit of Spanish." Hasna, 26 years old, female.

"Berbers are more than 60% of Moroccans. The Amazigh culture is definitely there." Hasna, 26 years old, female.

"Berbers are the origins of all Moroccans." Mahdi, 17 years old, male.

Berber legacy is seen in cultural expressions: external such as dressing, and internal such as their accent in speaking other languages.

"I see it [Berber heritage] in dressing... in jewelry." Brahim, 26 years old, male.

“In clothes, in the way people talk, maybe in the way they think. The big difference is in the way of talking... You still have that [Berber] accent... If I record some voices you will recognize which one is Berber and which one is Arab.” Zeidan, 17 years old, male.

“Berber heritage is always present in my everyday life, in my voice, in my language, in my phonetics... Even if I speak Arabic, people know I am Berber.” Khaled, 48 years old, male.

Thanks to government involvement, Amazigh is also present in the media, reaching Moroccans' interest.

“Since the succession of Mohammed VI to the crown... the Amazigh heritage is strongly present if compared to the past era of Hassan II, where also we can speak of some initiatives that were taken in this regard, mainly, the broadcasting of Amazigh news; but this was not very satisfying as far as the expectations of the militants and activists... Also, there is a presence of Amazigh movies... which is very well appreciated by a lot of people, not only Berbers themselves.” Jamil, 33 years old, male.

“News is given in Berber on TV, so it's like invading home.” Zahra, 36 years old, female.

Amazigh presence is noted particularly in the sphere of commerce, which is considered a monopoly by some.

“The people that sell, all of them speak Berber... They took a lot of places in Morocco. They are very rich also. And they don't care about politics; there are other people who care about politics.” Hamza, 30 years old, male.

“There are a lot of Berbers who practice trade especially in Rabat and Casablanca.” Zahra, 36 years old, female.

The following is an ambivalent discussion of issues of discrimination and identity. However, a prevalence of Amazigh in different fields is acknowledged and welcomed.

“I feel that they are the same [Berbers and Arabs]. The only difference is language... and the only difference is the way they perceive each other... A Berber perceives Arabs as being racists and Arabs perceive Berbers as being racists too. I cannot say that I would really like to see more of the Berber culture because now, as you've may noticed, there is a big revolution of having the Berber culture coming back especially after Mohammed VI and Hassan II, after the independence where Berbers were fighting [for] their rights... The Berber culture is becoming more developed and more widespread over Morocco... As an example, we have Berber languages being

taught at primary schools. This a good sign... that the Berber culture is coming back." Brahim, 26 years old, male.

"It is becoming more common nowadays to see some Berber events... seminars on the Berber language... national meetings or sometimes international meetings on Berber, on Berber being taught at schools... That helps to develop a sense of cross-cultural learning... Berber is the closest one [language] to you as Moroccan, not French. We can talk about TV shows in Moroccan Arabic, or Classical Arabic, Berber, and then we can talk about French TV shows." Brahim, 26 years old, male.

Amazigh presence is more prominent within the family, but not reflected in other settings.

Q: *Do you perceive Amazigh heritage present in your everyday life?*

"In my house, in my family, especially with my mom, but outside, in the boulevard, all over the city, it's really rare; but except with some sellers in the old medina. There we could find some sellers who speak Berber; so if you talk Berber, they make good prices." Amin, 24 years old, male.

Q: *Do you perceive Amazigh heritage present in your everyday life?*

"I don't think Berber is present... in the area in which I live." Tarik, 20 years old, male.

IS THE AMAZIGH LANGUAGE ENDANGERED?

Some consider that Amazigh is not endangered since it has already survived many years despite the Arab invasion, and because it has enduring support from its speakers.

"They speak it for thousands of years; it's not endangered." Rachid, 30 years old, male.

"History is not going to change; they are never going to forget it [Berber]." Rachid, 30 years old, male.

Q: *Do you perceive the Amazigh culture as being endangered?*

"Not at all. I've never had this conception. Never." Zahra, 36 years old, female.

"I don't think [it is endangered]. A culture can be endangered if people are not interested about their own culture. But what happens with Tamazight in Morocco, we have people that continue speaking their own language. For example here in the café I talk in Amazigh with people... Tashlehyt, Tamazight, Tarifit are not endangered." Salah, 36 years old, male.

Some recognize the support of the government, its diffusion in the media, and the royal involvement in preserving Amazigh.

Q: *Do you perceive the Amazigh culture as being endangered?*

“Not anymore because of the royal activities. They have built the Amazigh center [IRCAM], and they are really encouraging the Berber culture; they are teaching it at school. It was endangered in fact, but it’s no more.” Hasna, 26 years old, female.

“Before it was forbidden to write in Amazigh. Arabic was the only official language and Berber was considered a dialect... not a language. They were afraid it endangered Arabic... But now there is news in Berber, in the three dialects in national TV.” Hasna, 26 years old, female.

Particularly, the establishment of the IRCAM institute is appreciated as a factor for the vitality of Amazigh.

“Your question is good because... they [Berbers] are analphabet... They don’t speak Arabic. 39 percent are analphabet. But the government... has the institute for the Amazigh.” Ahmed, 30 years old, male.

“I think in Morocco there is a Berber institute. I think they are working well in this sense. Now in Morocco there is no danger; if there is more effort it could go very well.” Salah, 36 years old, male.

“I wouldn’t say it is endangered now... Now the government has shown a strong will to promote and ameliorate the results and do all the best to bring about more interesting issues. I don’t think there is any fear for the future because the king himself is putting stress in the improvement and development of the issue.” Jamil, 33 years old, male.

Q: *Do you perceive the Amazigh culture as being endangered?*

“Before, not now. Now it has some places. In Rabat for example I saw this Amazigh institute [IRCAM] in Hay Ryad, I work just in front of it. And I don’t understand these letters [Tifinagh script]. Usually for me it’s art.” Hamza, 30 years old, male.

The presence of Amazigh in the royal family is seen as a strategy to ameliorate tensions between Arabs and Berbers. The royal connections and the efforts of activists have enhanced Amazigh’s vitality.

“It has been endangered, but not now... I can tell that the Amazigh culture is more secure than it used to be, thanks to those who made revolutions, peaceful revolutions to have this culture back in Morocco. During the colonization... [Berbers] were pushed into the Atlas Mountains, into the Rif Mountains, into the far south of Morocco... Now we have the government, to some extent controlled by

Berbers... The king himself is from Berber descent, and the king's wife was Berber... The history repeats itself... If we go back to the first dynasty, the Idrissi dynasty... there was that huge conflict between Arabs and Berbers. The first ruler, Idrissi Al-Awel, got married to a Berber woman... to have this kind of reconciliation between Berbers and Arabs. The same thing that Hassan II has done." Brahim, 26 years old, male.

International support has also helped preserve the Amazigh language and culture.

"There is a strong relationship between culture and language. Language is the body of culture. This is what we have been trying to save in recent decades, in recent years. Thanks to foreign help and foreigners interfering in our affairs, we can make a difference and we are making some difference, to save something from our heritage, to have little space to talk and to discuss these matters related to culture. We thank the United States and the new world system for this help." Khaled, 48 years old, male.

However, some participants have a pessimistic look at the current situation of Berber, noting globalization and the Arab influence as causes of its endangerment.

"It [Amazigh] is being less and less used by Moroccans. They are more influenced by Arabic culture." Mahdi, 17 years old, male.

"Yes, especially lately... Arab countries, they love to change, they love to be more modern, so modernity could make this Berber culture disappear. It's a wrong combination between Berber culture and modernity. The Berber culture is really in the point of disappearing. If people continue and keep trying to get more modern year after year, this culture could disappear, except in some villages in the mountains." Amin, 24 years old, male.

"In the boulevard, and some places which are modern, I could say that it's already disappeared... In the old medina we could find... some sellers who still keep their culture, talking Berber, and wearing even Berber clothes... Berber culture is only [within] families... but outside, it's really rare." Amin, 24 years old, male.

"It has been endangered for centuries, and now we're trying to save what we can save." Zeidan, 17 years old, male.

Migration is also a factor leading to the decline of Amazigh.

"I feel that it is being endangered even [with the founding of]... the royal institution [IRCAM], very good initiation from our king Mohammed VI... And yet we feel that Berber is being endangered. Before there were many people [that] used to speak [it] and now their children who come to the city don't speak any Berber, even [though]

it's their mother tongue. Their fathers speak it but they don't." Tarik, 20 years old, male.

CONCLUSION

Moroccan history and the preset status of the Amazigh culture show a complex interrelation with Moroccan identity. On the one hand, Muslim identity is ever present in Moroccans' mindsets, promoting Morocco as an Arab country. On the other hand, there is a persistent social consciousness that recognizes Imazighen as part of Morocco's heritage.

With the official recognition of the Amazigh language as a national language, and the creation of the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture, established to preserve its culture, Moroccans have become more aware of the Berber presence. This awareness is developing at a new level. Besides being a language representing tradition, Amazigh is striving to become a functional language, thanks to the intended implementation of a standard Amazigh language in the school system and in the media. Current official efforts may continue to have an impact on how Moroccan society perceives Berber.

It is significant to mention some issues occurring during the conduction of my research in Morocco. As an outsider to the culture, perhaps I could not elicit opinions as open and frank as those that would have been expressed by some participants in candid and casual conversations with friends. Also, it seemed that some regarded themselves as ambassadors of their country and wanted to highlight honorable aspects of their culture. This may be a factor for the positive trend of

attitudes revealed by my data. The welcoming disposition of Moroccans, however, made conducting interviews pleasurable. They seemed very glad to be able to talk about their own identities, their cultural heritage, and their concerns and perceptions on these matters.

Issues of discrimination or racism, and religion were brought up in a few instances by the interviewees. I considered them sensitive issues and did not include questions addressing them. However, if I was to design the project a second time, I would incorporate questions about the influence of Islam on Moroccan and Berber identities, since the reflections made by some participants on this topic were very insightful.

Although the number of urban Moroccans that learn English as a foreign language is significant, since I was not fluent in Moroccan Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, or French, to have an ample set of participants was not an undemanding task.

As the interviews were conducted in a foreign language to the participants, it would have been useful for me to learn relevant terms, either in French or Arabic, to make questions more accessible. For example, when I presented the issue of language endangerment, this concept had to be explained to some of the participants.

Also, as noted previously, the background of my informants was not significantly varied. All of them were urban Moroccans and had command in more than one language, having therefore a more exposed view of cultural diversity. Perhaps results would have been different if this study was conducted in rural

settings, where the Amazigh presence is more prominent, and where knowledge of a second language is not as reachable. However, the opinions elicited in this project are rich and representative of diverse perspectives.

Additionally, matters of politics were not addressed in this thesis. My library research could have been expanded to include information on the history of Moroccan politics and its influence on the status of the Amazigh culture. My fieldwork could have also addressed such issues more directly. I visited the center Tariq ben Zayad, an Amazigh cultural center in Rabat that is known for its militant activism regarding Amazigh representation in Morocco; however, I was unable to communicate with them in English or Spanish. Knowing Berber certainly would have been useful on this occasion.

Throughout the thesis, language and culture have been used sometimes equivalently, because of its strong interrelation. The connection between language and identity is another matter that deserves attention in future studies. It was not explicitly examined here whether the knowledge of Berber language was indispensable for asserting Berber identity.

What remains to be explored further is how the attitude trends observed in Morocco and the methodology used to elicit them fit at large into social theory. The works of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu would facilitate a more structured examination of how the empirical data obtained represents social trends.

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Appendix A

Biographical sketches⁶

- Karim, 27 years old, does not speak any dialect but father is fluent in Tarifit. Male.

“I am from Rabat but my father... is Tarifit. There is a big difference between Tarifit and Tamazight.”

- Rachid, 30 years old, Tashlehyt, fluent. Male.

This interview was conducted in Moroccan Arabic and synchronically translated by Moroccan friend.

- Ahmed, 30 years old, Tashlehyt, fluent. Male.

- Hasna, 26 years old, Tashlehyt, fluent. Female.

“My father is Berber, but my mother is Arab, from Fez”

“My mother [is] Arab so I don’t speak Berber at home. I speak Berber with some friends... and with my father’s family”

- Salah, 36 years old, Tashlehyt, fluent. Male.

“Here in the café I talk in Amazigh with people.”

This interview was conducted in Spanish and translated by the thesis author.

- Nabil, 18 years old, Tashlehyt, fluent. Male.

- Mahdi, 17 years old, Tashlehyt, semi-fluent. Male.

“My grandparents speak Berber.”

“I speak it sometimes with my family but I frequently speak it... when I am in Souss, in the house of my grandparents.”

⁶ All names are fictitious in order to protect the interviewee’s identity.

- Jamil, 33 years old, Tarifit, fluent. Male.

- Brahim, 26 years old, Tashlehyt, semi-fluent. Male.

“My mom is a Berber, originally from Agadir... She doesn’t speak Berber with us at home... She codeswitches. Sometimes she is talking to me in Moroccan Arabic... if we have a guest who is Berber, she switches easily.... I feel it [Berber heritage] in the way my mom is behaving, because my father is not Berber originally.”

- Zahra, 36 years old, Tashlehyt, fluent. Female.

“I was born in Rabat; I’ve been to my region many times as a child. I speak Berber fluently. This is because my grandmother before she died used to talk to us in Berber at home... I would like my daughter to speak it as well... We speak Berber at home. Not my brother or my sister, they just speak Arabic.”

“My husband is Berber but he doesn’t speak Berber. I do speak it with my mom and dad as well, and with my uncles... with people I know, like the watchman in our building, he does speak Berber so I really appreciate when he speaks to me in Berber, so I am trying to not forget it.”

- Zeidan, 17 years old, Tashlehyt, passive speaker, father is fluent. Male.

- Amin, 24 years old, Tashlehyt, passive speaker, mother is fluent. Male.

“I speak just a little bit, but I understand really good.”

Do you speak Berber at home?

“Sometimes, for fun with my mom... because all my sisters they hear me talking in Berber and start teasing me and laughing.”

Do your sisters speak Berber?

“No, I am the only one in my house who speaks with my mom in Berber.”

- Khaled, 48 years old, Tashlehyt, fluent. Male.

Do you speak Berber at home?

“No, this is a big problem. With friends, when I am with a friend who speaks Berber fluently, we speak only Berber, not Arabic.”

This interview was conducted in Modern Standard Arabic and translated by a Moroccan friend, the participant's son.

- Hamza, 30 years old, non Berber, does not identify any family member as Berber. Male.

“There are some cities, everyone speaks Berber. And also, there are some people who don't speak Arabic, they speak just Berber. It is a problem to communicate with them.”

- Khadija, late 20s-early 30s, non-Berber, does not identify any family member as Berber. Female.

- Tarik, 20 years old, non-Berber, does not identify any family member as Berber. Male