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Minority Language Policy in Algeria and its Influence on Language Use and Attitudes: The Case of Tamazight in Benisaf

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سياسة لغة الأقليات في الجزائر وتأثيرها على استخدام اللغة والمواقف: حالة الأمازيغية في بنيصاف

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ABSTRACT:

Recently, the Algerian constitution has acknowledged Tamazight (a large minority language) as a second official language in the country. This language-related decision was the result of continuous demand and claim from the Tamazight-speaking community in Algeria. This article draws on the issue of Tamazight in Algeria, examines its use among Arabophone Algerians, and investigates the attitudes of the Arabophone Algerians towards this language. A sample of 141 participants responded to a 22-item questionnaire. The results suggest that the attribution of official status to Tamazight has barely had any impact on its use among the Arabophone community, as its use remains nearly non-existent. As far as attitudes are concerned, the findings reveal that they are contradictory towards Tamazight and its relation with language planning and language-in-education planning. Possible motives and implications are further discussed in the analysis.

Keywords: Arabophones, Attitudes, Language-in-education, Language policy, Tamazight.

ملخص البحث

في الآونة الأخيرة، اعترف الدستور الجزائري بالأمازيغية (لغة أقلية كبيرة) كلغة رسمية ثانية في البلاد. جاء هذا القرار المتعلق باللغة نتيجةً للمطالبة المستمرة من المجتمع الناطق بالأمازيغية في الجزائر. تتناول هذه المقالة قضية الأمازيغية في الجزائر، وتدرس استخدامها بين الجزائريين الناطقين بالعربية، وتحقق من مواقفهم تجاه هذه اللغة. أجابت عينة من 141 مشاركاً على استبيان مكون من 22 بنداً. وتشير النتائج إلى أن ترسيم اللغة الأمازيغية لم يكن له تأثير يُذكر على استخدامها بين المجتمع الناطق بالعربية، حيث ظل استعمال هذه اللغة شبه معدوم. أما بالنسبة للمواقف تجاهها، فقد كشفت النتائج عن تناقض تجاه اللغة الأمازيغية، وتخطيط اللغة، والتخطيط اللغوي في التعليم المتعلق بها. تتم مناقشة الدوافع والآثار المحتملة بشكل أكثر تفصيلاً في التحليل. الكلمات المفتاحية: الأمازيغية، سياسة اللغة، المواقف، الناطقون بالعربية، اللغة في التعليم.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, universal minority language treatment has witnessed an enormous shift, from deliberate disregard to complete recognition; and reports about efforts to save endangered languages and reverse language shift are a prominent topic the sociolinguistic literature today. This change has occurred as a reaction to the practices of monolingual language policies, which have often been adopted in order to promote national unity and eliminate language-related social conflicts at the expense of minority languages (Stephen May, 2018). However, these policies have ultimately proven to be a chief factor for the occurrence of such conflicts. Such claims are backed by evidence from many nations throughout the world, and the language issue in Algeria is a pertinent example, as the Tamazight language (a Berber variety) has finally been acknowledged as an official language in the country, years after having been attributed the national language status (in 2002).

Following this recognition, Tamazight has been incorporated as a school subject in multiple primary schools throughout the country's provinces, where Standard Arabic continues to be the language of formal instruction. This partial integration is intended as an initial phase which will soon be generalized throughout the country. Nevertheless, this change of policy at the state level does not necessarily imply an easy-going transition. In fact, the success of language policy and planning (LPP) endeavours is tightly connected to tolerant and accepting attitudes. In fact, an increase in minority language use and enhanced attitudes towards it can be said to reflect such success. Accordingly, the present article aspires to offer an evaluation of LPP in Algeria *vis-à-vis* Tamazight by examining the language use and attitudes of Algerian Arabophones; whose mother tongue is dialectal Arabic, a completely different and unrelated linguistic variety to Tamazight.

To explore the issue, two research questions have been addressed:

- 1) To what extent has LPP in Algeria influenced the use of Tamazight among Algerian Arabophones?
- 2) What attitudes have emerged among Algerian Arabophones toward Tamazight as a result to the recent shift in LPP?

To deal with these questionings, we hypothesize that

- The officialization of Tamazight adopted almost 9 years ago by the Algerian language policy does not seem to have influenced Arabophones in general as they do not show any interest in using it.
- Following the hypothesis above, it may be claimed that the overall attitude towards Tamazight is rather indifferent and even negative.

We begin by a brief description of the linguistic situation in Algeria before the French colonization. Next, we situate Tamazight within the country's post-independence LPP and portray the developments it has undertaken so far. This is followed by a detailed account of the methodology, including a description of the research instrument _a questionnaire_ and the research participants. Finally, we present the research findings, discuss their implications, and propose some strategies to enhance positive attitudes towards the Tamazight language and its new status in the country.

2. The Literature Review

2.1. The Tamazight Language

Tamazight (also Berber) is a branch of the Hamito-Semitic (Afro-Asiatic) language family. It is the language of the indigenous people of North Africa and the Sub-Saharan region, as well as part of the West African Sahel (Chaker and Mettouchi, 2006, p.739). Tamazight “is currently being spoken in nearly ten countries of the greater Maghreb-Sahara-Sahel region: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Niger, Mali, Burkina-Fasso, Mauritania, Libya, and Egypt” (Chaker, 2001, p.136). Chaker and Mettouchi (2006, p.739) suggest that Tamazight languages and dialects have been the only ones found in the aforementioned regions, for as far as human presence could be traced therein. According to the same source, no proof of archaeological or physical-anthropological nature (that any other variety had existed in the area) has been found. Within the same line, Campbell and Moseley (2012, p. 58) point out the discovery of Tamazight inscriptions in the African continent, which provide “evidence going back to at least 600 BC”, and establishes thus the fact that Tamazight is the language of the indigenous people of North Africa. The name ‘Tamazight’ is used as a comprehensive term which comprises about twenty to thirty languages or dialects (Philip and Friederike, 2008, p.72). Among these, at least four can be found in Algeria alone, which is a multilingual North-African country.

2.2. Tamazight in Algeria

Tamazight is one of the languages which make up Algeria’s linguistic repertoire, alongside Algerian Arabic (AA) Standard Arabic (SA), and French (F)². An assertive statement regarding the exact number of the Tamazight-speaking population cannot be maintained as “no census taking this question into consideration has ever been made in any country in North Africa since decolonization” (Achab, 2001, p.1). However, it has been estimated that Tamazight indigenous people makeup around 25 to 30% of the entire Algerian population (Chaker, 2001; Benrabah, 2005; Aitsiselmi, 2006), which may allow us to consider that Tamazight constitutes a significant minority language in Algeria.

The majority of the Tamazight speaking-population is based in four main regions of Algeria, but a great many can also be found all over the country’s provinces. They speak distinct dialects of the language with varying degrees of intelligibility, namely, Taqbaylith (Kabyle), Tachawit (Chaouias), Tamzabit (M’zabi), the Ajjer and Tamahaq dialects are spoken by the Touareg people (Roberts, 2014). These dialects (which may as well be viewed as languages of the same family) are found in Kabylia region (Tizi Ouzou, Bejaia, the Aures region (Bouira, Batna and Khenchla), the Southern region of Algeria (Ghardaia), and the Ahaggar area respectively. Benrabah (2005, p.403) maintains that ten other dialects of Tamazight are found in Algeria, spoken by isolated minorities which are scattered throughout the country, namely Chenoua, Tarifit, Korandje, Tachelhit, Tagargrent, Tamazight of Central Atlas, Taznatit, Temacine Tamazight, Tidikelt and Tit.

What is appealing about the Tamazight language is its ability to survive through all the political eras of the country (i.e., all since recorded history in the area, including the Phoenicians by about the 12th century BCE, the Roman rule 46 BCE, the Islamic conquests in 674AD, the Ottoman presence in 1518, and the French Colonization from 1830 to 1962), despite the fact that it had never obtained the status of ‘official’ language (Aitsiselmi, 2006). The Amazigh people managed to maintain their language(s) as part of their identity and culture, even when coexisting (or in competition) with other

² It is currently premature to consider that English has managed to obtain an established status in Algeria in spite of the growing importance attached today to this global language.

ones, namely the Roman, the Arab, the Ottoman and the French cultures. It is suggested that the Amazigh people managed to successfully preserve their language because they lived in the deserts and mountains of North Africa which are, indeed, “somehow naturally ‘protected’ areas” (Achab, 2001 p.1).

Tamazight languages (whether those of Algeria or elsewhere) are often regarded as oral languages of basic communication, which have neither been ‘regularly’ used as written languages (O’Connor, 1996, p.112), nor have they been used to record any literary works (Campbell and Moseley, 2012, p.58). However, this assumption does not exclude the existence of a long-lasting Tamazight literature, a set of stories, poems, and songs which have been orally passed down through the generations, and which continue to exist today.

Despite the fact that Tamazight was not written, the possibility for the existence of a writing system distinctive to Tamazight has not been entirely left out. In fact, the discovery of several old inscriptions in North Africa has revealed two writing systems: a) ‘Ancient Berber’, and b) ‘Tifinagh’ (O’Connor, 1996, p. 112). The two writing systems have more or less been claimed to be relatable to the Tamazight languages. It is noteworthy, though, that “no modern Berber language can be identified with the language of the [Ancient Berber] script” (ibid., p. 114). At present, there is general consensus among Tamazight speakers that *Tifinagh* is the original script of Tamazight, and calls for its revival and adoption have been made. The script is even “being used in writing by some Algerian and Moroccan Imazighen who want to reclaim their identity” (Abu-Haidar, 2000, p.153).

2.3. Tamazight in the Algerian context

In any mention of Algerian language policy (or any other type of policy for that matter), one should not fail to understand that the term explicitly refers to the decisions made by the Algerian government (s) and/or policy makers in the post-independence era, i.e., from 1962 onwards. Indeed, it was only after Algeria gained independence that the country had an officially functioning government, no longer being a French colony under French rule. Nevertheless, it is useful to briefly portray the linguistic situation in Algeria both before and during the French colonization.

Pre-colonial Algeria was a linguistically rich area, where monolingualism had never been a norm. Algeria, which was under Ottoman rule before the French conquest, was a linguistic mosaic where Literary Arabic, spoken Arabic, and several dialects of Berber, in addition to Osmanli Turkish (and some other languages, including ‘Sabir’, the lingua franca used at that time) were all of existence, and were all at use (Benrabah, 2013, p.23). While Osmanli Turkish was often the only language used by the Turks during their presence in Algeria (Saadallah, 1998, p.15), it was not the only medium they used in their external correspondences, which were sometimes carried out using literary Arabic (Qannan, 2007, p.12). The Algerians, on the other hand, spoke various dialects of Arabic and Tamazight in some areas. Concerning the fulfilment of official and literary purposes, historical evidence suggests that Arabic was used. In fact, Ahmed Toufik al-Madani, in his book entitled *The Three Hundred-year War between Algeria and Spain: 1492-1792*³, included an impressive collection of treaties and letters which were written in Arabic (1965). Among these, a beautifully-written letter sent from the king of the Berber tribe “Kuko” Mohamed ben Mohamed al-Qadi (the estimated date

³ The book is originally written in Arabic: حرب الثلاث مئة سنة بين الجزائر واسبانيا 1492-1792 أحمد توفيق المدني (1965) The English title *The Three Hundred-year War between Algeria and Spain: 1492 – 1792*, is our own translation.

of this letter is 1543) to the Emperor of Spain Charles V⁴. In his book, the writer also included a set of poems by Algerians calling for the liberation of Oran which was the last Algerian city under Spanish rule (liberated in 1708). These poems were also written in Standard Arabic (al-Madani, 1965, pp. 437- 443, 466- 472). Furthermore, the Algerian writer and historian Prof. Abou el Kacem Saadallah, who set himself the task of restoring the literary works of Algerians before the French colonization, wrote a book entitled *The Cultural History of Algeria* (1998) in which he managed to assemble a rich collection of books, poems, letters, and narratives from various sources, including libraries from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the US Congress and the British Museum; all of these literary works were written in standard Arabic⁵.

Nonetheless, after the French conquest and settlement in the area starting from 1830, the situation changed drastically, and probably in an irreversible manner, as Benrabah (2013, p.24) states: “Within a relatively short period of time, 132 years, the French occupation made a profound impact on Algeria’s culture and linguistic profile. The influence was so deep that Algerian society was never the same again”. This change is due to the colonial policy of France which aimed to assimilate the Algerian people culturally throughout its presence in Algeria and “till the very end” (Benrabah, 2013, p.26). To achieve this aim, French schools, which offered mandatory education in the French language, were built. Furthermore, French was the only medium with official recognition, used in administrative, educational and other public purposes, whereas literary Arabic was considered a foreign language (Abu-Haider, 2000, p.152). In addition to this war against the languages of the Algerians (literary Arabic, Algerian Arabic and Tamazight languages), the French worked on spreading the idea that the Algerians had never been acquainted with politics and literature in their past (Saadallah, 1998:13), which was very dangerous, as indeed, a people without a culture - or an identity - have nothing to cling onto, and are, thus, much easier to *drag* into others’ cultures. Algerian children who were educated in French schools were expected to learn and use French, and consequently, the use of languages other than this latter would gradually diminish, leading to eventual oblivion, not only of the native languages of Algerians⁶, but also of their customs, thinking and values (Benrabah, 2013, p.37).

Linguistically, then, France sought to create a monolingual Algeria, where the only linguistic medium found would be the French language. These efforts to ‘Frenchify’ Algeria were met with some resistance for quite a while. On the one hand, Algerians were reluctant to send their children to these ‘untrustworthy’ French schools; and on the other, the colonists (the European settlers in Algeria) did not accept that Algerian children be granted the same opportunities to education theirs were (Benrabah, 2013, pp. 32-33)⁷. Through its policy in Algeria, France did not only reshape the Algerian society, but it also affected the mindset of Algerians and the image of multilingualism in the country, an image which was inherited by language policy makers in independent Algeria.

⁴⁴ For more details on these documents, see pages 148, 150, 235, 303, from the book

⁵ except some works which were only available in their translated forms.

⁶ Nevertheless, Algerians were reluctant to send their children to French schools, mainly because these latter were considered a threat to their religion, language and the Algerian culture.

⁷ In 1962, it was estimated that only 14% of Algerian Muslim children were in school, whereas only 557 Algerians attended the university of Algiers (Gordon, 1985, p.137).

2.4. The Post-independence Language Policy

After the end of a draining seven-year war, Algeria gained its independence in 1962 and ended a French colonization which had lasted for 132 years. However, it eradicated the colonial presence but retained some of their policies; notably the monolingual language policy. It is noteworthy to point out that though the French were the first to introduce planned monolingualism to Algerians, the language policy in Algeria was driven by two other factors. The first was the Western trend known as the ‘nation-state’, which suggests that linguistic homogeneity, which would be brought into being by means of status planning, was a requirement for the successful building of *modernized* political units (Ricento, 2000, p.197). The second factor was ‘the Pan-Arab linguistic ideology’ which had inspired many Algerian nationalists during their exile in the Middle East (Benrabah, 2013, p.50).

When post-independent Algeria’s governments aimed to shape the foundations of the newly-established state, achieving unity on the Algerian soil and accomplishing a *shared* Algerian identity was a priority. While monolingualism represented the ideal choice, the existence of multiple languages appeared to be an obstacle to national unity and needed, thus, to be eliminated. Consequently, the government sought to minimize the linguistic differences between Algerians by means of adopting a language policy known as ‘Arabization’, which entails the promotion of Arabic as the sole language of government and instruction in the country (Sirles, 1999, p.116). The Arabization language policy was meant as a tool to recover the almost wiped-out Algerian identity, an aim which was at the core of Algeria’s general policy, as Benrabah (2005, p.379) puts it, “[...] the Algerian leadership [that] showed ideological intransigence in recovering both language and identity”.

The success of Arabization meant that, within a few years, all the spheres of language use shall be arabized. Nevertheless, language proved to be hard, if possible at all, to control. Arabization, both as a policy and a process, was considered problematic for several reasons⁸. Ostensibly, the term ‘Arabization’ should have primarily targeted the existence of French in Algeria. But in reality, the impact of this language policy on French was insignificant compared to the indigenous languages of Algerians. When deciding upon the direction language policy would take in independent Algeria, none of the Algerian mother tongues (Arabic dialects and Tamazight varieties) were taken into account (Berger, 1998, p.44; Benrabah, 2013), a decision which was contradictory to recommendations from experts that both should have been given the status of ‘inter-regional languages’ (Benrabah, 2013, p.54). The effect of Arabization was not on the two varieties *per se*, as both are still the native tongues of Algerians; its major effect was rather on the attitudes it generated among the population. Algerian Arabic, like all other dialects of Arabic, is the low and *stigmatized* variety in the diglossic relationship described by Ferguson (1959), whereas standard Arabic enjoys the rank of the high prestigious variety. For Algerian Arabophones, “only the ‘High’ variety is ‘appropriate’ for use in the classroom” (Benrabah, 2005, p.406). Consequently, they strongly supported the policy of Arabization⁹. In contrast, the Berberophone community perceived this policy as a denunciation to the Tamazight language and culture.

⁸Tabory and Tabory (1987) list two limitations to Arabization as a policy: a) that the Arabic chosen was barely comprehensible to the Algerian population; and b) that eliminating the use of Tamazight from governmental, administrative and educational fields represented a discrimination against the Berber population. The implementation of Arabization had its shortcomings as well, the most problematic of which was the recruitment of non-qualified teachers.

Berberophones, even those who embraced the Arabo-Islamic identity as a uniting tool against French colonization during the war of independence, expressed their rejection to the Arabization policy through protests and armed struggles, which soon led to the creation of activist organizations demanding the acknowledgment of Tamazight language and culture (Benrabah, 2014, p56; Tabory and Tabory, 1987, p.1). Arabization in Algeria, thus, is an ample example of the problems which might result from the inadequate management of languages in a community. In fact, it is not unlikely that language policy may lead to the creation, or even the intensification, of social conflicts. E.H. Jahr (1993, p.1) claims that “language planning activity may itself ultimately be the cause of serious problems as well as major conflicts”. Although the choices made by language policy makers in Algeria have not led to the creation of social conflicts, as these had already been implanted by French policies during the colonial period (especially the one referred to as ‘divide and rule’¹⁰), they did lead to their noticeability and, later, to their intensification.

2.5. Towards the Recognition of Tamazight in Algeria

Recently, a more critical approach to language policy and planning has emerged as a result of increased awareness of the problems and social conflicts that had been created, rather than solved, by monolingual policies and the concept of ‘nation-state congruence’¹¹. According to this new approach, Ricento notes, “societal multilingualism – not monolingualism – was seen as normal, and its recognition and acceptance were taken as an important requirement for the realization of meaningful democracy” (2006, p.15). Under the influence of this new approach – the universal demands for the recognition of the language rights of linguistic and ethnic minorities and the continuous local pressure from the Algerian Berberophone community, which sometimes developed into general strikes and violent riots, the Algerian authorities have understood the mistake that had been made and remade after the country’s independence and sought, gradually, to remedy the language situation in the country. The first endeavour was made when two departments of Tamazight language and culture were created in the Universities of Tizi Ouzou in 1990 and Bejaia in 1991, as a result of the Berber uprisings known as the ‘Berber Spring’ in 1980 (Benrabah, 2013). Later in May 1995, a High Commission for Berber Affairs (HCA) was created, aiming to: a) rehabilitate and promote Tamazighity (which encompasses both Tamazight culture and language) as a component of the Algerian identity, and b) introduce Tamazight in the educational system and the media¹² (Benrabah, 2013, p.235). Following the creation of the HCA, Tamazight started to be taught in Algerian schools, though its teaching was non-compulsory and those who chose to take the course were very limited in number and mainly from Tamazight-speaking regions. In fact, Aït-Mimoune and Chalah (2014, pp.307- 308) who analyzed the progress of the teaching of Tamazight on the national scale from 1995 to 2011, maintained that it has been amplified by the authorities and reported that the number of

⁹Their acceptance of Arabization was so strong that they protested against the slow pace its implementation took (Tabory and Tabory, 1987).

¹⁰Benrabah (2014, p.26) argues that the French categorized Algerians according to language and ethnicity and affixed stereotypes to each one of these groups. This resulted in the creation of a fractured colonized population, where each group, mainly the Arabophones and the Berberophones, held negative attitudes towards one another.

¹¹Nation-state congruence entails that “the boundaries of political and national identity should coincide”. Citizens of a nation-state should then all share the same identity and speak the same language. (May, 2018, p. 6)

¹²For more details regarding the creation and objectives of the HCA, visit:
(<https://www.hcamazighite.dz/docs/document/hca/decrets/Decret%2095-147.pdf>)

children who studied Tamazight “has never exceeded 3% of the total number of children who attended school”¹³. In 2002, following the 2001 dramatic events known as the ‘Black Spring’, Tamazight was recognized in the Algerian constitution and attributed the status of a second national language (Benrabah, 2014, p.69). Concerning the introduction of Tamazight and culture in the media, the year 2009 witnessed the creation of a Tamazight-speaking channel called Channel 4 by the Algerian Public Establishment of Television (known as ENTV in French).

The act of attributing the status of ‘national’ to Tamazight was described as merely ‘symbolic’, with no concrete accomplishments in the field (Aït-Mimoune and Chalah, 2014). Nevertheless, it fit the purpose and represented, according to Benrabah (2013, p.69), “a first step towards the establishment of a society that values its plurality”. Indeed, this decision by the Algerian authorities has prepared for the further recognition of Tamazight, which took place fourteen years later, in the 2016 amendment of the constitution, when Tamazight was finally attributed the status of both ‘official and national’ language in Algeria.

After such a decision, it is natural to expect an expansion in the functions Tamazight fulfils in the Algerian community, as it is an instance of status planning making, which “implies the allocation or reallocation of the functions of such language in a speech community” (Cobarrubias, 1983, p.41). This means, as the general secretary of the HCA, Si El Hachemi Assad, believes, that the Algerian government will mobilize more resources to make up for the deficits associated with the promotion and teaching of this language so far¹⁴. Indeed, the government took several measures to consolidate and concretize the constitutional recognition of Tamazight as official, including the creation of a Tamazight Language Academy in 2017, and the progressive generalization of the teaching of Tamazight throughout the country so that all children attending school would have it as a mandatory school subject, even among its non-Tamazight speakers. Such measures shall, undoubtedly, have an influence on the language use and attitudes towards this language, particularly among Arabophone Algerians, the issue that is at the heart of this investigation.

3. Research Design

This study investigates the Algerian Arabophones’ language use of Tamazight and their attitudes towards this language, using the direct approach— which relies on directly asking people about their attitudes —by means of a questionnaire study. The study took place in a small coastal city called Benisaf, situated in the far West of Algeria. In spite of its distant location from Berberophone regions in Algeria, this city presents a suitable ground for conducting research with Arabophones who have never been in contact situations with the Tamazight language and/or its speakers, and those who have, either through education or travel. This fact allows us to discover the factors which may further exert an influence on the language use and attitudes of local inhabitants. For the most part, the survey was conducted in direct contact with the respondents, as they were handed the questionnaires and invited to answer and hand them back to the researcher.

¹³Translated from French by the present authors.

¹⁴<https://www.hcamazighite.dz/fr/espace-presse/aps-letat-a-mobilise-tous-les-moyens-necessaires-pour-promouvoir-tamazight-art361>

3.1. Research Sample

The study was conducted in the 2021/2022 academic year. We were interested in the language use and attitudes of the residents of Benisaf city towards Tamazight. It was conducted in *Djemai Moussa* Middle School, where we managed to obtain answers from the school's administrative and educational staff (N=43), its learners(N=62) and their parents (N=36), to whom we sent copies of the questionnaire, as we were unable to meet with them in person. A hundred (N=141) participants responded to the questionnaire, after the exclusion of nine (9) incomplete responses. Among them, 80 were females and 61 were males. The respondents' ages ranged between 15 and 59 years old, classified into the following age groups: (see Table 1)

Table 1. Categorization of Respondents According to Age and gender.

Age Range (years)	Number of Respondents	
	Males	Females
15- 25	27	35
25- 35	7	13
35- 45	8	11
45- 55	12	9
Above 55	7	12

3.2 Research Instrument

The survey was anonymous, and each participant was informed about this fact and about the objectives of the study. The data collection tool used was based on Baker's (1992) model, which was adopted in several earlier studies on language use and attitudes (see for example Lasagabaster and Huguet, 2006; Belmihoub, 2018). It was translated into standard Arabic and modified in accordance with the study's population and research objectives. It consisted of 22 single- and multiple-choice items categorized into three parts.

In the first part, the participants were asked to provide some personal information, which included gender, age, place of birth and residence, and whether they had visited Berberophone regions. They were then asked about their linguistic backgrounds, regarding their native languages and the languages they thought represented their identities. Questions concerning proficiency in the Tamazight language were also part of this section. The third part was concerned with Tamazight language use in different domains, and the last part was comprised of 10 statements which inquired about the respondents' language attitudes towards the Tamazight language, language planning and language-in-education planning in Algeria as regards this language.

Respondents were asked to rate the statements on a Likert scale, from 1 to 5:

1→Strongly Agree2 → Agree3 → Neither Agree nor Disagree4 → Disagree5 → Strongly Disagree

The data obtained were inserted into Microsoft Excel for statistical analysis. Questionnaires with empty, unclear or unrelated answers were excluded from further analysis in order to avoid bias resulting from misinterpretation.

4. Results and Discussion

The first part of the questionnaire aimed to gather data on participants' place (s) of residence, their native language(s), and the language(s) that represented their identities. All the participants were residents of Benisaf city, and declared themselves as fully Arabophones. Concerning the language that represented their identities, 62.41% respondents stated that it was standard Arabic, whereas the remaining (37.58%) said that it was Algerian Arabic. When asked about their competence in Tamazight, (24.8%) respondents said that they knew some words; the great majority (75.2%), on the other hand, described themselves as having null knowledge of it. This may be due to several factors, most importantly, the weak contact with the language and its speakers. Indeed, among the responses we received about whether our respondents had lived in or near Berberophone regions in the country or visited any, only a small number of participants responded 'yes' (see Fig.1 for more detail). Intergroup contact, according to Allport (1954), can exert a change not only on behaviors, but also on the attitudes different groups and individuals hold towards one another.

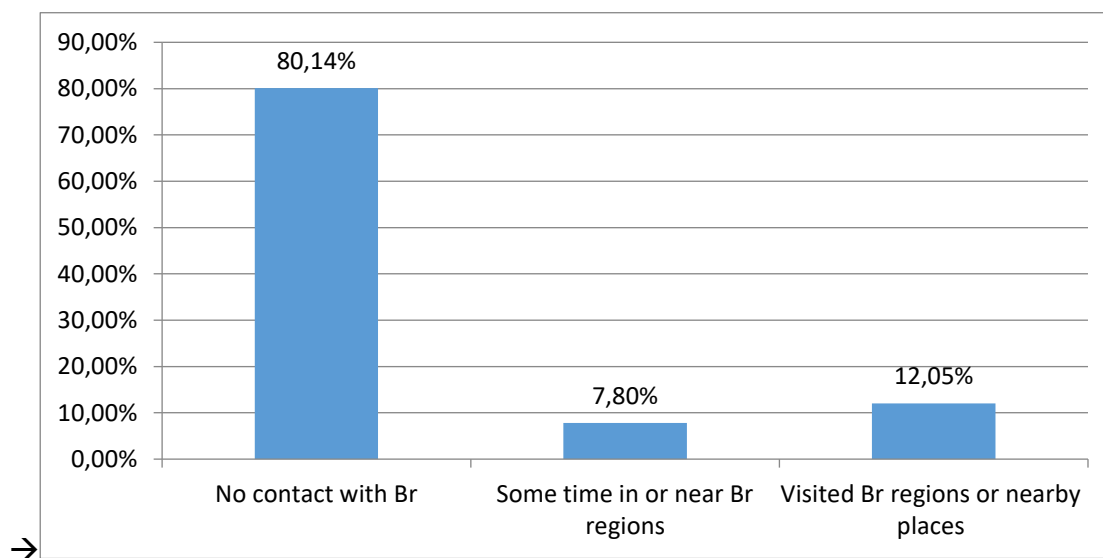


Fig. 1. Contact of Respondents with Berberophones.

Another factor which might have caused this situation is the fact that only a few of our respondents 20.6% (29 students), were concerned with the Tamazight course in primary school. The weak or missing motivation to learn Tamazight is not to be dismissed as another strong reason for this. Indeed, an overwhelming majority of our respondents (75.9%) stated that Tamazight was the language least interesting to them compared to the other languages used in the country (Arabic, French and English). Besides, the answers indicated that there were hardly any motives that would boost the respondents' interest in the language, including tourism. In fact, when respondents were asked if visiting Berberophone regions in the future (or visit them again for those who already had) was part of their plans, only 39.7% among them responded affirmatively, while 60.3% said that it was not. Furthermore, almost all our respondents denied watching televised programs, listening to music or spending time on any other Tamazight-speaking media (see table 2). The latter, however, is not exclusively caused by the respondents' low interest in the Tamazight language but is rather directly linked to their low or non-existent competence in it. As a matter of fact, multimedia contents which are carried out in Tamazight are not comprehensible to those who do not speak the language,

and would probably not attract their attention, regardless of how interesting it may be, especially since translation of televised contents have not yet been provided on the Algerian channel dedicated to the Tamazight language (Channel 4). Furthermore, in the answers provided by our respondents regarding the language(s) they use to fulfill the different functions, Tamazight was not listed in any.

Table 2. Using the various media in Tamazight.

Activity	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Watching Television	00%	00%	00%	100%
Watching films	00%	00%	00%	100%
Reading newspapers and magazines	00%	00%	00%	100%
Listening to music	00%	14.2%	29.8%	56.02%
Listening to the radio	00%	00%	00%	100%
Using the internet	00%	00%	00%	100%
Using the social media	00%	00%	00%	100%

Similarly, a 100% of our respondents affirmed that they never used Tamazight for communication, were it formal or informal, and that they never used it in the home, school, or work domains. They also affirmed that they did not attach any importance to it in carrying out their daily activities (acquiring knowledge, getting a job, shopping, making phone calls, school success, and raising children), or in maintaining their social relationships, such as speaking to family members, friends, and colleagues, in addition to making new friends, and being liked by others. These results suggest, then, that in the eyes of Arabophone Algerians who inhabit Arabophone regions (mainly those that are geographically distant from Berberophone regions) in the country, Tamazight is not considered a requirement in any domain of language use. Thus, this category of Algerian citizens, we assume, might never feel the need nor have the desire to learn this language.

In our analysis of the perception of Tamazight, we noticed that the number of respondents with favourable attitudes was relatively modest. When asked to rate “I like listening to Tamazight”, for instance, only 25.53% of our respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the statement. 23.4% neither agreed nor disagreed, while the remaining 51.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed to it. According to language experts, evaluations of the phonesthetic aspect of languages are rarely the product of language-intrinsic factors, as there is no scientific basis for describing linguistic forms as innately superior or inferior (Edwards, 1999). Rather, this may be due to socio-cultural factors. As a matter of fact, a study revealed that language familiarity (even in cases where respondents wrongly perceived knowledge of the languages) and sociolinguistic factors (namely, cultural-geographical biases) were primary factors in determining language preference (Anikin *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, it has been claimed that ‘listening to a given variety is generally considered to act as a trigger or stimulus that evokes attitudes (or prejudices, or stereotypes) about the relevant speech community’ (Edwards, 1999). In this sense, it is possible that whatever attitudes Arabophone Algerians hold towards the Tamazight language may rather be attitudes towards *a category of its speakers*. If so, these latter might be the product of historical and socio-political factors, including the infamous French colonial

policy in Algeria known as ‘divide and rule’. Furthermore, these attitudes might essentially be generated out of fear of disunity within the country, especially as a result of the foundation of the separatist organization known as the Movement for the Autonomy of Kabylie (MAK) in 2001, demanding the independence of the Berber-speaking regions from the rest of the country. It is worth noting, though, that the MAK is not considered as an official political representative of Algerian Berberophones, especially since it has lately been classified as a terrorist organization by the Algerian government (2021).

In another instance, respondents were asked whether they perceived Tamazight as an easy language to learn. The majority of the informants (44%) disagreed to this statement and 22.7% agreed to it, while the remaining 33.33% expressed neutrality by selecting the ‘neither agree nor disagree’ option. The only predicament here was that only about 24% respondents had claimed earlier that they had some knowledge of Tamazight, while the great majority among them affirmed that they were not acquainted with the language, which leads one to wonder how can anyone describe a language as easy (or difficult) to learn when they had never approached the task of learning it. Again, it is possible that the informants’ evaluation of the learning of Tamazight was plain subjective, stemming from already established attitudes towards the language and its speakers.

In addition to attitudes towards the structure of Tamazight, we wanted to know how our informants felt about learning this language and about being associated to it. After the exception of those who had previously been taught Tamazight (20.6%), 26.24% respondents said that they wished they had been taught Tamazight at school, 17.73% chose the neither agree nor disagree option, whereas the remaining 35.5% said that they did not. This may be due to the fact that the study’s informants initially belong to the group of Arabophone Algerians, who represent the dominant language group in the country. It is argued that these groups typically promote their “patterns of language use as the model required for social and economic advancement” (Ó Riagáin, 2008, p.329). Moreover, the informants’ responses indicated weak motivation towards the learning of Tamazight. This is probably due to the fact that minority language learning motivation, it is argued, “is rather linked to identity, and is influenced by language attitudes and ideologies” (Rosiak: 2023). Indeed, when informants were asked what language represented their identity, the answers varied between Standard Arabic and Algerian Arabic. In contrast, in a latter part of the questionnaire, when respondents were asked to rate the statement ‘Tamazight language is part of my identity’, we observed that a sentiment of dissociation from this language prevailed, as only 24.11% agreed and 29.8% neither agreed nor disagreed, while 46.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed. That is because citizens of Arabic countries usually incorporate their identity to the Arabic language, and Algerian Arabophones are no exception to this.

Furthermore, the data obtained translate into limited utility associated to Tamazight among Arabophones. For instance, 52.48% disagreed that Tamazight is a language worth learning, 45.4% respondents thought that learning Tamazight was a waste of time, while an overwhelming majority (71.62%) disagreed that there are not more useful languages to learn than Tamazight (further details are included in table 4). Surely, the linguistic situation in Algeria alongside the status of Tamazight and the functions it is used to fulfill in the country’s Arabophone regions have participated in the instigation of such attitudes. Indeed, the study’s informants have affirmed that the use of Tamazight is not considered a requirement for the fulfillment of both formal and informal functions, as the current linguistic profile of the country suggests that Arabophone Algerians, who represent a majority, speak Algerian Arabic as their native tongue and use Standard Arabic (or French) for the

fulfillment of official functions. On the other hand, it is estimated that Tamazight is spoken by 25 to 30% of the overall population in Algeria. The vast majority of Berberophone Algerians inhabit the Kabylia region. Some, however, are scattered around Arabophone provinces, but not in large numbers as to be able to exert a linguistic influence or modify the linguistic behaviors and attitudes in Arabophone regions. Indeed, although specialists agree that attitude change is fairly possible, this change is usually instigated by factors, such as those listed by Baker, which include “personal experiences, significant events, (e.g. violent episodes, mass protests, and government-imposed policies), communities, families, peer groups, institutions, and mass-media” (1992). Nevertheless, “change is moderated by attitude strength. Thus, strong attitudes are firmly crystallized and relatively resistant to change” (ibid.). Furthermore, even on the international scale, the Tamazight language does not have much to offer to Arabophone Algerians. This is at least for two main reasons, the first one is the nature of Tamazight as a minority language which has only recently been recognized, and is still in the preliminary phases of development; and the second is the uncontested universal hegemony of English in the world today.

Table 3. Attitudes towards statements which express the utility of Tamazight.

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Tamazight is a language worth learning	9.2%	17.02%	21.9%	31.9%	20.6%
Learning Tamazight enriches my cultural knowledge	10.63%	27.65%	17.73%	24.82%	19.14%
Learning Tamazight is a waste of time in Algeria	13.47%	31.91%	20.56%	21.98%	12.05%
There are not more useful languages to learn than Tamazight in Algeria	0%	4.25%	24.11%	21.98%	49.64%

The final section of the questionnaire aimed to gather data on the respondents’ attitudes towards language planning and language in education planning in Algeria vis-à-vis Tamazight. Firstly, we wanted to address the question of the attribution of official status to Tamazight, which was implemented since the 2016 constitutional amendment. The data obtained revealed a lack of enthusiasm towards this decision, as 44.68% informants disagreed to the statement which reads: ‘I think that attributing official status to Tamazight was the right thing to do in Algeria’, while 17.73% neither agreed nor disagreed and 37.58% agreed or strongly agreed to it. The reluctance towards accepting a multilingual language policy that attributes official status to Tamazight is likely one of the outcomes of the strictly implemented monolingual policy, which entailed that Arabic was the sole official language, as early as Algeria regained its independence. Furthermore, the association of minority languages with ethnicity, and the fact that the latter is considered by the wider public to be “the principal cause of many of today’s social and political problems” (May, 2012: 21) is not to be dismissed as, yet, a stronger reason for the Algerian public to be fearful of such policies, especially since “[...]since the end of the Cold War, the most common sources of political violence in the world

have been ascribed to these so-called ‘ethnic conflicts’ (Gurr, 1993, 2000)” (ibid.). The number of those who disapproved of the integration of Tamazight in the educational system, on the other hand, was a bit higher. When asked if they would like that their children be taught Tamazight at school, more than half of the informants (57.44%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, while only 26.24% showed favorable attitudes (see Fig. 2 below).

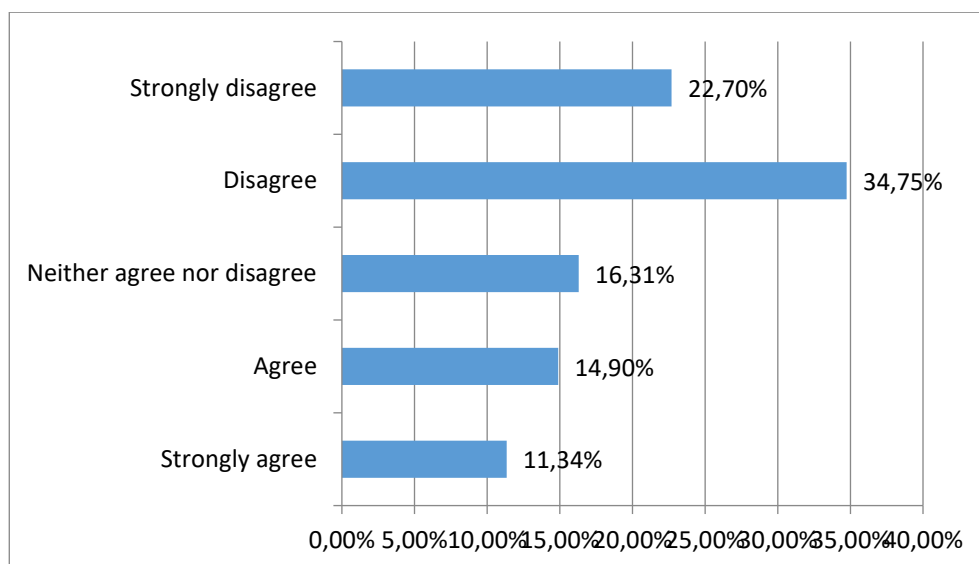


Fig. 2. Parents’ attitudes towards teaching their children Tamazight at school.

These findings go in line with results from an earlier study about attitudes towards the teaching of Tamazight at schools in Tlemcen (a city nearby Benisaf), where 60% respondents answered with ‘no’ to the question ‘do you think that Algerians have to learn Tamazight?’ (Ghounane and Rabahi, 2018). According to the researchers, the reluctance expressed towards the teaching and learning of Tamazight stems from the fact that it is a variety spoken by a small minority (ibid.). Furthermore, the negative attitudes usually expressed towards minority languages and their link to ethnicity (May, 2012), and the perceived lack of usefulness associated to Tamazight as has been revealed in earlier results of this study, must have all contributed to the construction of such attitudes.

5. Recommendations

In a concluding paragraph of a paper dedicated to describing multilingualism in the Maghreb, Ennaji (1991) anticipates that Berber (i.e., Tamazight) dialects will be exclusively used within family and friends circles among Berberophones both in Algeria and Morocco. Nevertheless, he also implies that this situation is likely to change if two conditions were met: a) if authorities make *audacious* language revival endeavors and, b) if favorable attitudes towards Tamazight prevail (ibid.). Of course, the constitutional recognition of Tamazight as an official language, and the gradual generalization of its teaching can be considered as steps ahead in the fulfillment of the first condition. As for the second one, i.e., positive language attitudes, the results of the current study suggest that much work is still required. These latter are of crucial importance and should not be taken so lightly. As a matter of fact, “language attitudes held by both the majority and minority groups affect the success or failure of entire minority language planning strategies” (Ó Riagáin, 2008, p.329). In this regard, the authorities

should engage in language planning activities, especially prestige planning, to enhance positive attitudes towards Tamazight among Arabophones.

Furthermore, the two main variables that were statistically significant as regards language attitudes were 'having learnt Tamazight at school' and 'having visited Berberophone regions or spent periods of time there'. Therefore, improving the circumstances of Tamazight language education and increasing cross-cultural contact between Arabophones and Berberophones should also be considered. The authorities should also increase familiarity with Tamazight in Arabophone regions, which may be achieved through what May (2000, p.102) referred to as 'the institutionalization of the minority language within civil society', "by this", he continues, "the minority language comes to be accepted, or 'taken for granted' in a wide range of social, cultural and linguistic domains or contexts, both formal and informal". The importance of the media in diffusing languages and influencing both language attitudes and use should not be underestimated. Thus, the use of Tamazight-driven media by offering translated attractive contents should also be taken into consideration.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to offer insights into language use and attitudes of members of the majority linguistic group in Algeria (Arabophones) towards Tamazight (minority language) in light of the country's language policy, especially after the latest amendment of the constitution which promoted the status of Tamazight into official language. The results revealed that the use of Tamazight was virtually non-existent among the informants who demonstrated contradicting attitudes towards this language and its teaching to school-aged children.

Although the use of Tamazight (or its absence) among Arabophones does not necessarily imply a problem, the prevailing unfavorable attitude towards it can pose a challenge to the success of the country's new language policy, which entails that preserving the nation's unity should go hand in hand with treasuring its diverse linguistic and cultural heritage. In order to avoid such outcomes, it has been suggested that authorities should work on enhancing positive attitudes towards the Tamazight language among the Arabophone community in Algeria.

This study has not been realized without some limitations, including small sample size as well as exclusive reliance on the direct method for data collection. The investigation presented is merely a fraction of the work that needs to be done on the correlation between language policy and planning, language use and language attitudes in Algeria. Thus, further research in the area is encouraged.

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