

Ethnolinguistic Identity in Morocco

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Abstract: This study investigates and reports on the strong relation between language and ethnolinguistic identity in Morocco. The study examines and analyzes comments of both Berbers and Arabs' reaction to the plan of promoting Arabic. Two communities of practice will emerge once they react to a plan aiming at promoting Arabic. The source of data for this study is the main online newspaper in Morocco, Hespess (hespress.com).

The comments demonstrate that once Arabic and Berber are put together, the ethnicity associated with each language prevails. Data analysis shows that Language is a prominent index of ethnicity. It can create conflict and rivalry between the two main ethnic groups in Morocco. The results support the hypothesis, which claims that there is a strong link between language and ethnicity. The commentators were expressing their identities in a community of practice that is either defined by Berber or Arabic. Data analysis also shows that language can separate ethnic groups and can also be an essential factor in forming communities of practice. It is clear from the analysis that language separates these two groups, supporting the idea that language has a role in shaping these communities of practice and forming their identities.

Keywords: Ethnolinguistic Identity, Language, Index of Identity, Morocco, Berber, Arabic, Community of Practice

Introduction

An ethnic group has a shared system of values and rules. Giles and Johnson (1981) give a simple definition of an ethnic group: "those individuals who say they belong to ethnic group A rather than B, are willing to be treated as A rather than B" (1981:106). Via a variety of channels circulating throughout the international community, there is currently a heightened focus on membership; who belongs, who doesn't, who decides, and what are the consequences thereof. Ethnolinguistic identity in Morocco has potential to enter into these conversations, through analysis of a relevant case study that examines the relationship between language and ethnic groups. This paper investigates and reports on the strong relationship between language and ethnolinguistic identity in Morocco. The study examines and analyzes comments by both Berbers and Arabs' reacting to a plan for promoting Arabic. Our focus is studying speaker identity, which emanates from the choice of words. The identities of the two communities of practice will emerge once they react to a plan aimed at promoting Arabic.

This study supports the claim that language is an important index to ethnicity. Lawrence Bobo argues that “Ethnicity tends to be associated with culture, pertaining to such factors of language, religion, and nationality” (2001:267). Race and nationality are also important elements in determining differences between groups. Hamers and Blanc (2000) define ethnicity as “a sociological concept which refers to objective common indicators of differences, such as race, religion, language and national origin, used in the classification of individuals” (Banc 2001:202). Moreover, subjective perception is also involved in group identification. Social psychologists (Leets, Giles and Clement 1996) define ethnicity as a “subjective feeling” of belongingness or identifying with an ethnic group. Thus, objective factors and subjective feelings play an important role in a group’s identity construction. Makihara (2010) emphasizes the interplay of the subjective and objective ethnicity in the construction of identity. He defines ethnicity as “social organization that deals with “us” and “them” (2010:34). He also points to the essential role of language in ethnic identity as he describes it as a “powerful force” in building associations and identification. This role of language is manifested through education and media.

Makihara (2010) argues that a shared or common language is powerful in terms of forming a national identity. Therefore, an official language is a tie that unites all citizens and makes them loyal to the nation. Additionally, many studies emphasize the relationship between language and ethnicity (e.g. Adegbija 1994; Apte 1979; Apple and Muysken 1987; Edwards 1977; Guboglo 1979; Igboanusi 1997; Ohia 1998; Paulston 1986; Williams 1991; cited in Igboanusi & Ohia 2001). Fishman (1989) emphasizes that language is the most important symbol of ethnicity. Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) posit that language is one of the most important symbols of ethnicity. El Aissati (2001) mentions that if a Berber lost his language, there will remain nothing about his ethnicity (Amazigh), which means that language plays an essential role in the maintenance of an ethnicity. Berber view their language as a basic element in their identity.

Hamers and Blanc (2000) use the term “ethnolinguistic identity” to refer to the basic role of language in defining cultural identity. They also point out that ethnolinguistic identity is a “subjective feeling of belonging to a particular ethnolinguistic group” (2000:202). Language is a salient factor in identifying with an ethnic group. Moreover, while language grants a badge of belonging to a group, it can also mark differences from other groups. Wardhaugh (2010) points out that speakers may belong to multiple communities of practice. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet explains that a community of practice is “an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagements in some common endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations—in short, practices—emerge in the course of their joint activity around that endeavor” (1998:490). On the basis on this definition, Berber and Arab speakers constitute two different communities of practice.

There are three fundamental criteria in defining communities of practice: mutual engagement, jointly negotiated enterprise and shared repertoire (Meyerhoff 2013). Language could be an important factor in constructing communities of practice.

Meyerhoff discusses the important role of language in forming communities of practice: “language is understood as but one vehicle by which speakers construct, maintain, or contest the boundaries of social categories and their membership in or exclusion from those categories” (2013:526). Therefore, languages could be used in constructing communities of practice. Wardhaugh also explains “it is such communities of practice that shape individuals, provide them with their identities” (2010:128). Berber and Arabic are related to different ethnicities which could also be related to two communities of practice. El Aissati (2001) discusses how Berber speakers differentiate themselves through language. The stronger the feelings of belonging to a certain group, the stronger the desire of promoting the language of that particular group (Ennaji and Sadiqi, 2008). Therefore, we could conclude that language plays an essential role in the construction of an ethnic group’s identity.

Language can also create some conflict between two different ethnic groups. Adegbija (cited in Igboanusi and Ohia 2001) reports, “Mutual suspicion existing between language groups results in prejudice, stereotypes, and subtle linguistic hostility” (1994:150). Igboanusi and Ohia discuss ethnolinguistic identity in Nigeria and argue, “There will always be suspicion, political tension and feelings of marginalization in Nigeria as long as language policy makers do not take into full consideration minority language interests and the feeling of minority language speakers” (2001:139-40). Thus, prejudice, stereotype and hostility may prevail in a multilingual country. Language is a more important index for ethnic group’s identity than other shared elements, and because of its importance in constructing identity, it can evoke subjective feeling. Fishman (cited in El Aissati 2001) explains, “Language is the recorder of paternity, the expresser of patrimony and the carrier of phenomenology” (1989:27).

Berber language in Morocco plays a basic role in identifying the Berber group. The “Amazigh”, speakers of Berber, insist on using the term Amazigh instead of Berber to refer to their ethnicity. They justify their preference based on the fact that “Amazigh” is their original name, whereas, “Berber” was used by the Greeks and Romans to refer to “Barbarians” (El Aissati 2001). El Aissati (2001) uses the term Amazigh interchangeably to refer to Berber language and ethnicity as well. Berber speakers construct their ethnic group in part through their language. Because of their use of Berber, they differentiate themselves from Arabs despite the long history of contact between the two groups. El Aissati (2001) argues that in the case where a person stops speaking Amazigh, there remains little about him or her, which would indicate his “Amazighness”.

Apparently, it seems that the Arab and Berber groups live in harmony as there is no attested conflict between the main ethnic groups in Morocco.

In Bentahila and Davies' (1992) study, 53% of Berber participants identified themselves as Moroccans and not Berbers. Additionally, Berbers and Arabs stood against the Berber Decree (Dahir Berbere, 1930) when France tried to break the linguistic solidarity in Morocco through the decision to teach French and Berber to Berbers. They excluded Arabic from their teaching system, applying the principle of divide and rule (Bentahila 1983, Ennaji 2012). We argue that there is a struggle between the Berber and Arab ethnic groups in Morocco. Signs of this struggle can be found in the fact that Berber intellectuals, after observing that their language has been stigmatized and not used in any practical domain, want to revive their language and to redefine their social group in positive terms (El Aissati 2001). This is because language is a basic symbol of identity and considered by some to be more important than residence, religion, or ancestry (Pool 1979, cited in Mahootian 2012). Therefore, despite the intense contact between Berbers and Arabs, language can create a gap between these two ethnic groups. Mahootian (2012) argues that there is a direct relationship between a language and the group that speaks a particular language, and, therefore, if there is a debate about the value of a language, it is a debate about the speakers and their race, ethnicity, or other non-linguistic factors. She writes that, "Languages do not exist in isolation and are always associated with speakers, it is not surprising that controversies over language are often regarded as controversies over race/ ethnicity" (2012:194). This study shows how language can create tension between two ethnic groups, namely Berber and Arabs. In the remainder of this paper, we will first talk about the history of languages in Morocco. Later, we will discuss how the decision by law makers to promote Arabic leads to tension between two ethnic groups. Then, we will discuss how language defines ethnic groups and creates tension.

The History of Languages in Morocco

Before talking about ethnolinguistic identity in Morocco, I think it is worthwhile to discuss the history of languages in Morocco. Before the Arab invasion, Berber was the indigenous language spoken in Morocco (Bentahila 1983, Ennaji 2005). It belongs to the Hamito-Semitic group of languages. The Berber spoken in Morocco can be divided into three linguistic groups: Tashlehait in the south-west of Morocco, Tamazight in the Atlas Mountains, and Tarifit, located in the north in the Rif Mountains (Bentahila 1983, Ennaji 2005). These Berber dialects are not mutually intelligible, (Bentahila 1983) and did not have a written form in the past, (Bentahila 1983, Ennaji 2005, Todd 2012) but, now they are codified (Todd 2012). The Arabs invaded Morocco in the seventh century A.D. based on the religious imperative to spread Islam. Berbers embraced Islam and, as a result, they acquired Arabic. Berber children are introduced to Moroccan Arabic at an early age by their playmates (Bentahila 1983) and acquire Standard Arabic through school.

French was introduced to Morocco in 1912, bringing yet another language into contact with Moroccan Arabic, Standard Arabic, and Berber, and causing the linguistic map of Morocco to change once again. Ennaji ob-

serves, “French colonization was a turning point in the linguistic history of Morocco” (2012:71). Consequently, the introduction of French created a lot of linguistic and social change. By 1956, French became the language of science, education, and modernity. Bentahila (1983) discusses how Moroccans developed an image where Arabic is associated with tradition and religion, whereas, French is the language of modernity. Furthermore, French has become a key to obtaining a good job, as pointed out by Gallagher who wrote, “It may be stated flatly that in Morocco today the non-French-speaking-candidate has no chance of getting a good government job” (1968:143). Graduate students who are not fluent in French can only work They already were. What have you been wearing? in police domains and education (as teachers) (Bentahila 1983). Since then, French has become a required language for police jobs as well. For example, a candidate needs to be tested in both Arabic and French. Also on the national exam, teacher candidates for public primary schools must prove both written and oral French-Arabic proficiency. French is not required for low paying occupations such as restaurant jobs, bakery jobs, and driving. Since 1957, Morocco has adopted modernization and French is a prerequisite to modernization. French is a second language for educated Moroccans and is used widely in throughout the country. It coexists with Arabic as one of the two languages of education.

Berber is the mother tongue of Berbers. It is spoken by about 40% of the Moroccan population (Ennaji 2005). Berber was not recognized in the constitution, since Moroccan national identity was identified by the monarchy, Islam and Arabic. The Amazigh activists stood up against the marginalization of Berber and asked for the recognition of the Berber language and culture as part of the national identity. They also complained about the fact that Arabization suppresses their language and identity, despite their being the indigenous inhabitants of Morocco. In 1991, the Moroccan Berber organization published the “Agadir Charter of the linguistic and cultural rights of Amazigh”. They did not use the term Berber, as they preferred the term ‘Amazigh’ and asked for official recognition of Berber as part of Morocco’s identity (Maddy-Weitzman and Zisenwine 2007). Berber was revitalized in 2001, when King Mohammed the 6th redefined the national identity of Morocco by recognizing Berber as an integral part of the national identity and the original language of Morocco. In 2003, Berber was introduced to Moroccan public schools, standardized, and codified. However, the teaching of the codified Berber has faced many obstacles (Todd 2012).

In 2011, Berber was officially recognized in the Moroccan constitution and introduced to schools to modify its status in Morocco. Todd points out that “status planning efforts in Morocco on the surface are aimed at increasing the usage, access, and availability of Berber in Morocco” (2012: 17). The Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) plays a primary role in promoting Berber and in preparing text books. IRCAM is responsible for standardizing the three dialects of Berber. A controversial debate over the

script of Berber and a desire not to use the Roman and Arabic alphabets led to the 2003 language policy, which opted for the Tifinagh script for ideological reasons. Tifinagh is an ancient script which was used for “ornamental, decorative, and/or artistic purposes” (Teddy 2012). Tifinagh was a challenge to teachers as they were exposed to it during a workshop for a week before teaching. In addition, most parents do not know Tifinagh and are unable to help their children decode it.

Todd states that, “Even experts at IRCAM described difficulties decoding Tifinagh” (2012: 48). Therefore, the history of languages in Morocco shows that Morocco is a multilingual country. Standard Arabic, Moroccan Arabic, Berber and French characterize the Moroccan linguistic map. Each language has a different status, and each is used in different contexts. Their use is controlled mainly by identity, social mobility and education. In addition, Benmamoun (2001) argues that the use of languages in Morocco is controlled by religion, ethnicity, and issues of identity, education, and development. Code choice may express a membership to a speech community. In other words, code choice is a means of expressing identity (Wardhaugh 2010).

Methods

The source of data for this study is the main online newspaper in Morocco, Hespess (hespress.com). Commentators are educated to the level that they can read a speech by the minister, which was published by the online newspaper. The purpose of choosing this data source was that it would elicit spontaneous responses from commentators. In addition, since commentators use anonymous names, it is likely that their comments would reflect their true opinions on the languages in Morocco. Twenty-four comments were chosen from the electronic newspaper “Hespess”. This newspaper is well-known throughout the country and considered to be reliable. The comments are in French, Arabic and English. Arabic and Berber are the languages that have strong relation to ethnicity. French in Morocco is a second language and English is taught as foreign language. As a Moroccan citizen, I have the same linguistic background as the commenters, a fact which helped me to translate the responses. Twelve comments that were written by twelve Berber readers were translated. The same number of comments that represented Arabs’ reactions to two Arabic articles were translated as well. One of the articles was about the Minister of Culture’s speech about promoting Arabic. The second article is about Mr. Oudghiri, the former head of the Islamic University in Nigeria, and his opinion on promoting Arabic. Based on attitudes and linguistic qualities found in the comments, it was clear whether the writer of the comment was an Arab or a Berber. For example, all of the Berber comments show opposition to Arabization. The use of phrases like, ‘we the Berber’ and other word choice such as ‘Amazigh’ provide clues about the ethnicity of a writer of a comment.. From the language used, it was clear that a Moroccan who is not of Berber origin will welcome promoting Arabic. I depended on word choice, how the speakers of each language described each other, and how each of the groups use that language as an index for ethnicity. The reason

that I did not include all of the comments is that many exhibited similar qualities to the ones I chose. All the comments were translated to English. My focus is on word choice and how a speaker's identity emanates from the choice of words.

Tension Between Languages in Morocco

Language as a Boundary Between Two Ethnic Groups in Morocco

Language can be a source of controversy and serious dispute, in spite of the fact that all Moroccans speak Arabic, and there is an abundant contact between Arabic and Berber speakers. In addition, there is a great deal of adoption of the Arabic language and culture by Berber speakers. Furthermore, the majority of Berbers and Arabs are Muslim and share the same national feelings as Bentahila and Davis' study (1992) showed. However, the comments on the articles that discussed promoting Arabic reveal different Moroccan identities that seem to contradict each other. In Addition, they reflect prejudice, rivalry, and discrimination. Appel and Muysken (1987, cited in Igboanusi and Ohia 2001) argue that ethnic groups have certain attitudes towards one another. Whenever there is a debate about a language, it is about the race of the group that speaks that language rather than the language itself. Supporting this claim, Hill (2001) argues that debates about "official languages", are about race, not language. El Aissati (2001) also argues that language plays an essential role in shaping an ethnic group's identity. Therefore, we may conclude that language shapes Berber identity. El Aissati talks about Berber's identity and how they redefine their ethnic group through language when they want to perceive themselves as a different group from Arabs. El Aissati also notes that "the most prominent index to ethnicity is linguistic" and that Berber language is a basic index for Berber identity. He proposes that other indexes of ethnicity such as dress can be generalized. Therefore, debates about language should be debates over the group speaking a particular language. Furthermore, language can create boundaries between groups and boundaries are not always physical (Omoniyi 2010). These boundaries between groups can affect identity and perception of self and others.

The decision to promote Arabic would create dispute and disagreement between the two ethnic groups, Berbers and Arabs, as their comments will show. Makihara (2010) points to an interesting fact that an individual may move in and out of the boundaries. He also mentions that boundaries between groups are defined by self and others. Group boundaries can be abstract as well. Omoniyi argues that group boundaries "also exist as abstract constructs in our minds" (2010:124). Bentahila and Davies report that "Berber is rapidly being lost, but that this is not felt to imply a loss or change of identity" (1992: 203). In their study, Bentahila and Davies also report that the youngest generation of Berbers had already lost their language, and their parents encouraged them to shift to Arabic. They conclude that there is not a strong link between language and identity, "Language and group identity, then, do not seem to be closely linked" (1992: 202).

Bentahila and Davis conclusion implies that the national identity is more important than the group identity. In addition, Berber speakers did not show regret for their language shift. They expressed that Berber by itself would not grant them opportunities; they said that Berber will not help them to earn their daily bread (Bentahila and Davies 1992). Bentahila and Davies's results imply that there is a strong national feeling since 53% of Berbers identifies themselves as Moroccans and not Berbers. Therefore, there is a feeling of nationalism that both Arab and Berber share, but the target in Bentahila's study is just Berbers. They are not positioning themselves against any group. Additionally, the study was conducted nearly twenty-five years ago.

The comments we got from Hespress are current and indicate a change in Berber attitudes. Nowadays things are different and Berbers are negotiating their ethnic identity through their awareness of their language as a main index of ethnic identity. In addition, their education makes them aware of their mother tongue 'Berber' as an index of this identity. Hence, when the two groups are put together, language can play a central role in evoking separation. Thus, groups can step in and out of their group boundary. There is the national identity that brings the two groups together and there is also the language identity that differentiates these two groups. Fanderson (1983) defines nationality as "imagined communities" confined by territorial boundaries. Their nationality is also defined by the official language (Omoniyi 2010). These two groups are unified by the national language, Arabic. Therefore, multilingualism and conflict between groups can be a complex issue since members of the group can negotiate their membership and their belonging as well.

The Decision to Promote Arabic and Resulting Conflict

Languages in Morocco don't have the same status and use. French is used in vital domains. The Moroccan elites are aware that Arabic is not used in all domains. That is why the Justice and Development political party organized a study day in the parliament on July 3, 2013. The study day was about the "law of promoting Arabic". On this day, Moroccan people in power met to discuss efficient methods for promoting Arabic. On July 5, 2013 the electronic newspaper "Hespress" (Hespress.com) published two articles about this event. One article was about the minister of culture, Mohamed Amine Asbihi and his participation and reflections concerning 'enacting the law of empowering Arabic'. Hespress published what the Minister of Culture said about promoting Arabic. In the same vein, 'Hespress' (hespress.com) also published another article about the participation of an ex-professor in the study day in the Moroccan parliament, which was used by educated people to promote Arabic. Oudghiri, an ex-professor and ex-head of the Islamic University in Nigeria, also discussed some of the factors that hindered the progress of Arabic.

We analyzed the comments by both Berbers and Arabs reacting to the plan for promoting Arabic. The Minister of Culture thinks that Arabic can be promoted and developed if they depend on knowledge rather than religion and identity, whereas, Mr. Oudghiri thinks that there are some lobbies standing against it. Below is what the Minister of Culture and Oudghiri think about the appropriate policy to promote Arabic and factors hindering the progress of Arabic. The Minister of Culture, Mr Asbihi, who was speaking about promoting Arabic in a study day, organized by the political party Justice and Development on July 03, 2013, mentioned that the establishment of a linguistic policy would not be implemented merely by amending the Constitution. He explained that a linguistic policy is a long-term process. The policy needs to engage all the forces in this process in a spirit of understanding, coexistence and without conflict. He pointed out that the successful development of Arabic will be achieved through a policy that is well structured and based on knowledge not just religion and identity. He also stated that the aim is to enable Arabic to be a carrier of the greatest concepts and accommodate different sectors. In addition, Asbihi said that French and English are two main languages that compete with Arabic in vital sectors such as education and media. (hesspress.com, translated from Arabic)

Abdelali Oudghiri, the former head of the Islamic University in Nigeria, participated in a study day about “the law of empowering Arabic language”. He wondered about the need to produce a new law for the Arabic language, as the previous laws were not put into practice. Furthermore, he stressed that there is a lack of political will to defend the Arabic language in Morocco. Although, since the constitution of 1962, when Arabic was declared an official language, it has primarily functioned as a helping language that assists French. He argued that what has happened to the Arabic language is a violation and affects the supreme law in the country. He also argued that there are some lobbies standing against it, and he said metaphorically, “There are some devils and crocodiles standing against Arabic”. (hespress, translated from Arabic).

The Minister of Culture argues that only ‘knowledge’ and a well-structured policy can promote Arabic. He also points out that language policy should be applied in an atmosphere of understanding and coexistence, away from conflict. It seems that the minister is aware that there is a conflict between the languages in use in Morocco. Promoting one language can provoke controversy between different ethnic groups. In addition, in Morocco it is obvious, as the minister of culture declared, that French and English are competing with Arabic. I think this is the first time in Morocco that a minister has admitted to the status of English, which implies, that a recent change has occurred in the linguistic map of Morocco. English is digging hard into this linguistic map, and its presence in education is strengthened day by day.

Concerning the second participant, the former professor Oudghiri, wonders “what is the purpose of producing a new law to promote Arabic as the previous laws were not put into practice” which implies that Oudghiri is

pessimistic about the future of Arabic in Morocco. Moreover, he proposes that there are some lobbies standing against the implementation of the laws that promote Arabic. In addition, he mentions that people in power lacks the will to promote Arabic. It is clear that there is a conflict between languages in Morocco and; therefore, there is a conflict between Berbers and Arabs over language.

Results and Discussion

The following comments showed the dispute that was created between two Moroccan ethnic groups after reading about promoting Arabic. The twenty-four comments were adopted from Hespress as a reaction to the articles that discussed the Minister of Culture and Oudghiri's thought on promoting Arabic. The comments will demonstrate that once Arabic and Berber are put together, the ethnicity associated with each language will prevail. Language plays an essential role in evoking separation and forming two communities of practice. Table 1 contains twelve comments by Berbers, and Table 2 contains twelve comments that were written by Arabs.

Table 1. Berbers' comments against promoting Arabic

Is this **'Andalusian' Immigrant the minister of culture or the minister of Arabic?** The country has been promoting **the half dead language** for fifty years and he is still saying 'the law of Arabic and means of empowering it' **where is the plan of promoting Berber?**

There is no Moroccan person learning what is called mother language.
This is a big problem for Moroccans, you should understand, it is self-explanatory ...!

Berber as a language and culture was not given the opportunity to develop and spread, but was attacked throughout history, what is called in Maghreb countries the ideology of Arabization was imported by the nationalist Arabs. Its aim was **to make the Berber Identity and culture fade away. And applying the policy of one country, one language, one religion and the aim was to erase whatever is not an Arab** and one of them is the Istiqlal party in Morocco which has an ideology and believe that Arabic is above all the languages, that is why **we will prove to Moroccans that Berber is able to cope with all the changes through time**

Arabic language is a dead language you tried to revive it and you adopted shame, oppression, racism and terrorism. There are no Arab values. **The language of 'Abu Jahl' and 'Abu Lahab' is dead...** you all tried. **The only legitimate language for Moroccan citizens is the Berber language.**

Morocco is an Amazigh country and its language is Berber. Arabic exists in the middle East and Saudi Arabia. **And if someone wants to impose 'Koraich' language should emigrate from the Berber country.**

Table 1. Berbers' comments against promoting Arabic (cont.)

Arabic is not a language of social communication.

It not a language of modernity and civilization.

I really don't understand those people! He is talking like Arabic language is persecuted in morocco when we see the opposite. Arabic is everywhere! He would prefer his children to study in French or English, but he needs to say this for poor people who can't afford to go to private schools. Wow how hypocrites are those Arabs.

If there is any language that is persecuted in morocco is Tamazight we didn't get chance to learn our language in school also we can't name our children Berber names that we want. Most of jokes are about Berber people that accuse them that they are ignorant and uneducated, but thanks God we are living now and Berber is an official language even though those 'Barbarist' are trying to create obstacles for it, but Berbers are coming and no one will stop them.

To talk about empowering Arabic at the expense of Berber will lead us to serious problems. You should know that Arabic status in Morocco just like French. Both of them are foreigners and this judgment will not exclude Arabic as a foreign language just because it is old.

French is the language that you can live on but Arabic is not.

You want from Morocco, with multi identities, to perform a role which even real Arabic countries such as Saudi Arabia, Gulf countries and all the Eastern Arab countries could not perform! **You should know that.**

Arabic status in Morocco is just like French both of them are foreigners.

No one was able to react against that. **Today the circumstances are different any step as that will destabilize Morocco's Identities.** The hypothesis that 'Arabs' depend on can turn against them. They claim that the citizens should study their mother language to achieve a scientific revolution but **Arabic is not the mother language of Morocco. Instead Berber is the mother language.** Arabic is just like French they were brought to Morocco, only Berber was the mother language.

This man is pathetic...What **about Berber the native language of Moroccans? Your Arabic is useless because it is only a language of religion, whereas, French is a language of science and technology. If there is really a language that is marginalized in morocco it is Berber...**Long live Berber and French

I think that this man forgot that **the majority of the Moroccan citizens are Berbers.** He should respect the Moroccans and their history, if he is really Moroccan

In Table 1, Berbers comments described Arabic as a 'dead language', 'a language that you cannot live on,' and, 'not the language of communication and modernity'. Hence, Arabic was described in terms of its use. These comments

revealed some of the domains that the language is used in. The comments also pointed to the perception of the uselessness of Arabic in some domains. Arabic was also described as the language of religion, which means that speakers associated Arabic with religion. The comments also positioned Arabic as ‘not a mother tongue of Moroccans.’ Moreover, some comments showed a negative attitude towards Arabic as it was described as a foreign language ‘just like French,’ which implies that some of them view Arabic as a language of occupation since Berbers are the indigenous inhabitants of Morocco. The comments also revealed dissatisfaction with the status of the Berber language. They complained that ‘Berber as a language and culture was not given the opportunity to develop and spread, but was attacked throughout history.’ Berbers also wanted to assert their identity by promoting their language. Moreover, some of them argued that they would prove that Berber can cope with changes: ‘we will prove to Moroccans that Berber is able to cope with all the changes through time’. The use of the pronoun ‘we’ is very symbolic because, it is inclusive and marks the Berber group identity and the community of practice that they belong to. In addition, Berber commentators also expressed their fear of erasing their culture and identity ‘applying the policy of one country, one language, one religion, and the aim was to erase whatever is not an Arab’. Commentator 12 also expressed hostility towards promoting Arabic, ‘today the circumstances are different any step as that will destabilize Morocco’s identities.’

Table 2. Arabs’ comments that support Arabization

Thanks for the Justice and development party for organizing a study about Arabic language **in a time when abandoned by everyone for the benefit of foreign languages, which has been proved just to westernize.**

Nowadays, **Arabic suffers a big competition** with other languages of the world especially with French and English we should be prepared to stand against these languages.

I criticize strongly who said the Arabization of higher education is the solution for restoring the glory of Arabic, **the real solution is to return to teaching the memorization of Quran to the young generation before learning other sciences** as doctor Zarlol Najar said about his education as it started with memorizing Quran and ends as a biologist and scientist. He speaks all the languages and developed countries invite him to benefit from his research. I am strongly against French advertisement, and films that are not in Arabic, medical certificates and other documents that are written in French and ashamed of the language of Quran that God has chosen and challenge all the fluent poets and enable the illiterate prophet to speak it and release God’s orders in Arabic, which goes through the believers’ hearts. The strong Arabic made the intelligent and poets of ‘Quraysh’ crazy and the prophet’s followers admired it.

Table 2. *Arabs' comments that support Arabization (cont.)*

Yes Mr. Minister, **Arabic will not develop unless we depend on knowledge, and religion is a big part of this knowledge**, but I assure you it will not be accomplished as long as the country chose French in all domains, and it is obliged for that. **Marginalizing Arabic in our country is a new way of occupation** which focuses on the cultural and civilization side, it is meant to erase all the privacy so as the world can have a common culture. And to react against that is not something easy because the occupied countries will not allow that and all of us remember what happen in Algeria at the beginning of nineties when the government applied the rule of Arabization. **Arabic will not flourish until they start using it in all domains** of administration, military and the universities of science... I think that will be the beginning of development in our country as the Asian countries

Just start by imposing and displaying the names of café shops, restaurants, shops, names of streets and avenues in an Arabic script...Because **it is a shame to walk in our cities and all the names are displayed in French as if we were in France**. At the airport, all the restaurants display their meals and prices only in French, I was shocked no word in Arabic. Do just like Quebec that applied 101 law for applying the use of French even for computers software, in administrations and companies are in French.

This article is right! The author has mentioned the historical facts that made Arabic decline in a scary way! The majority of Arab countries have the same problem. **When the occupied countries stepped away they asked the Arab countries to give Arabic a minor status, and his language is the main one. This is what happened in Maghreb**. Arabic status is weakened in an alarming way and French is prevailing. **Even parents start preferring French and they put their children in Private schools called French Mission**. Even in Gulf countries, nowadays they teach their children English or French and they don't want Arabic! That is a Zionist colonial plan to destroy Arabic and to weaken the Arab nations. They are aware of the importance of language and it is everything. If it is attacked, identity and religion will be attacked as well. Unfortunately, and with all the regrets, their plans were fruitful! Here we are we see this new generation of secularists and atheists. They reject the Arabic and religious identity. They consider the illnesses are in the language and religion, they ignore Arabic and they don't want to belong to it! I complain to God! And there is no power except the power of God.

You are talking about Berber as if you are talking about an international language. Wake up! Berber is a limited dialect. You should be aware of the linguistic situation in Morocco and the languages that are widely used. We don't need to go backwards. Berber spreads just in bakeries. Look at the original Berber families in the cities and how they deal with this dialect, don't dream so much.

Table 2. Arabs' comments that support Arabization (Cont.)

In job competitions the priority is given to French, as a good example, in the police exam you will find the French grade is welcomed and Arabic grade does not matter. **There is no place for Arabic by itself as a language in any job.** A good proof for what I say is that a police officer can't speak Standard Arabic. He cannot even compose a correct sentence. To make this country French one was the choice and the purpose for the unfaithful elites, who were responsible for this country after decolonization. Thus, France has people that can achieve its purposes.

Arabic is the official language of twenty-two countries, it does not suffer.

Just recently some people emerged want to eliminate and destroy it, but they communicate with the outside world in Arabic. They use it in a daily basis. No one can affect the status of Arabic. They cannot marginalize it, because its domain is big. And **Quran is protecting it.** Arabic will never die. If someone is against it and wants destroying it, he is just dreaming. I said to this minister I warn you from creating reason to marginalize Arabic. Don't dream that the three dialects that were written just recently in Phoenician letters or symbols will replace Arabic. All the intolerant people that hate Arabic are communicating with it. How do you communicate and speak a language that you do not want. That is a split of identity!

Tarifit, Tamazigh, Tachailhit are Three dialects. Most of its lexicon is from Arabic. They are written in Phoenician Tifinagh then they call it Amazigh language. The ICRAM staff do not know it. They just know how to write in Tifinagh script, just written words. **There is no Tamazight language. You cannot compare three different dialects to Arabic.** These dialects were written recently in ancient Tifinagh letters. Please don't compare three different dialects were codified just recently by IRCAM using ancient script with Arabic. **Arabic has an international status**, plus it has a great heritage since a long time.

We have lost our linguistic identity, which is a requisite to progress.

Look at how other foreign countries respect their languages but for us **we have a split in our personalities.** More than that you will find Spanish or French come to Morocco and they want to communicate with you in their mother tongue

If you want to promote Arabic you should seek mediation from Holland (the French president), because our elite cannot decide.

They expressed that the situation is different, not like the past, and they will not accept Arabization. Comments also show anger and enmity: 'Berbers are coming and no one will stop them.' Berbers have protested the marginalization of their languages in the past. They also complained about the fact that some Berber names were not allowed as names for children. They complained about not being able to study their mother tongue in the past as well as exemplified by one of the comments, which stated 'If there is any language that is persecuted in Morocco [it] is Berber we didn't get chance to learn our language in school also we can't name our children Berber names that we want'. Moreover, they showed that they were proud of their identity and they wanted to assert that Berber was the official language of Morocco. Some of them also showed preference to Berber-French bilingualism as in Comment 6: 'What about Tamazight the native language of Moroccans? Your Arabic is useless because it is only a language of religion, whereas, French is a language of science and technology'. Hence, an individual can belong to multiple groups. Language could be the main index to ethnicity and could provoke separation. It is also clear that the commentators were expressing their identities in a community of practice that is defined by Berber.

In Table 2, the Arabic language is a prominent index for identity. The comments revealed that foreign languages, primarily French, are in a competition with Arabic. They, also, expressed fear of westernization and losing Arabic identity, 'We have lost our identity.' Commentator 11 complained that even when French or Spanish visit Morocco, they want the Moroccans to communicate with them in their language. Moreover, they pointed to the split in identity that some Moroccans might experience, 'we have a split in our personalities.' The commentators also thought that the prominent status of the French language in Morocco is 'another type of colonization.' In Comment 6, they pointed out that parents prefer their children to learn French, which shows the status of French in Morocco: 'even parents started preferring French and they put their children in private schools called French Mission.' Furthermore, Arabic was described as the language of religion, 'Arabic will not develop unless we depend on knowledge, and religion is a big part of this knowledge.' Arabic is also associated with the Quran as one of the comments showed, 'Quran is protecting it.' Additionally, it was described as a language with great heritage. Nevertheless, the commentators derided the vital role of French in many sectors. For instance, they said that, 'it is a shame to walk in our cities and all the names are displayed in French as if we were in France...at the airport, all the restaurants display their meals and prices only in French, I was shocked no word in Arabic.' This last comment showed dissatisfaction with the excessive use of French as he/she said, he/she was shocked as restaurant menus had no words in Arabic. He/she expressed his/her feeling of alienation and desire to see Arabic script at restaurants, airports, and other places. He/she wanted to assert his/her ethnolinguistic identity using Arabic language. In addition, comments expressed the idea that Moroccans will not achieve progress until they depend on Arabization in all the sectors, 'Arabic will not flourish until they start using it in all domains of administration, military and the uni-

versities of science... I think that will be the beginning of development in our country.'

Moreover, they complained of the socio-economic status of French, writing, 'in job competitions the priority is given to French.' Commentator 9 also said that Arabic has been attacked recently by a group that speak and communicate in Arabic, implying that some Berbers are trying to destroy Arabic, 'Just recently some groups have emerged who want to eliminate and destroy it, but, they communicate with the outside world in Arabic. They use it on a daily basis. No one can affect the status of Arabic.' Commentators also thought that there were foreign forces intent on destroying the language and the Arabic identity. It was also implied that French is the country controlling the use of languages in Morocco, as Comment 12 stated, 'If you want to promote Arabic you should seek mediation from Holland (the French president), because our elite cannot decide.' Some comments revealed that there is a strong link between Arabic and identity and religion. Because of the status of Arabic as a dominant language, the comments did not show any fear of Berber, 'you are talking about Berber as if you are talking about an international language, wake up! Berber is a limited dialect.' In addition, one of the comments said that Berber is just three different dialects that borrow their vocabulary mainly from Arabic. They also pointed out that Berber was just codified recently by IRCAM using Phoenician Tifinagh script, 'you cannot compare three different dialects to Arabic.' They were confident about the status of Arabic. They even pointed out that Berber is just used in bakeries, which implies that there is prejudice towards the ethnic group using this language. The comments showed that Berber was positioned as the language of low-income jobs. Additionally, the comments showed awareness that foreign languages are the real rivals to Arabic. The comments showed no desire for codifying Moroccan Arabic, and they did not ask to have it taught at school. Comments in Table 2 showed that there is a strong link between language and ethnicity. Language, in this case, Arabic, defines the commentators' community of practice.

Conclusions

Language is a prominent index of ethnicity. It can create conflict and rivalry between ethnic groups. Though there is abundant contact between Berbers and Arabs and they have lived peacefully since the Arabs settled in North Africa, there is still a contact community dynamic between the two groups, which illustrates a power of linguistic disparity. Berber was not recognized by the Moroccan government until 2011 (Bullock 2014). Once the minister of culture talked about promoting Arabic, enmity, separation, and other hidden feelings emanated from the comments. Educated Berbers are aware that their language, 'Berber,' has a strong link to their ethnicity and identity. They may feel that their ethnicity is endangered by the power that Arabic enjoys. Arabs' comments don't not show any fear of Berber language but they complain of the status of French, since it is the language that prevails in domains such as medicine, economy and higher education. Moroccan Arabic, which is the colloquial Arabic variety, is distinct from Standard Arabic. However, no com-

ments show that there is a need to codify Moroccan Arabic. There is a change in the way Arabs and Berber look at the relationship between language and ethnicity. In the past, Berbers encouraged their children to shift to Arabic (Bentahila and Davies 1992).

Now, however, education makes the new generation aware of the role of their language and they fought for it to be recognized in the constitution. The results support the hypothesis, which claims that there is a strong link between language and ethnicity. Data analysis showed that language can separate ethnic groups. Language can also be an essential factor in forming communities of practice. It was clear from the analysis that language separates these two groups, supporting the idea that language has a role in shaping these communities of practice. Additionally, belonging to different communities of practice shapes the identities of Berbers and Arabs in Morocco. In the future, a study should be conducted, which examines Moroccans' attitudes towards the languages in use in their country, focusing on which language they prefer to be promoted and used in vital domains. Participants would be asked to identify themselves as Berber, Arab, or Moroccan to examine whether national feeling is stronger than ethnic identity. Since Algeria's linguistic history is similar to Morocco's, it would further demonstrate the power of language in the development of identity to conduct the same study with Arabs and Berbers in Algeria.

Notes

1. Many scholars who have written about the linguistic situation in Morocco (Bentahila 1983, Ennaji 2005, Todd 2012) used the term Berber instead of Tamazight to refer to the language spoken in the Atlas Mountains, in the north in the Rif Mountains and in the south-west of Morocco. One of the reasons for the use of Berber was to avoid confusion, as Tamazight is also a name of a Berber dialect in the Middle Atlas. I use the term Berber as a cover term for all Berber dialects used in Morocco.
2. Arabization is the main language policy that Morocco has adopted after independence, and the aim was to replace French in vital domains. Marley (2000) argues that "official Moroccan language policy could be summed up in one word: Arabization which is understood to mean replacing French with Arabic as the official language" (2010: 68).

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