
DUAL DIGLOSSIA IN MOROCCO: A NEW SOCIOLINGUISTIC SITUATION**Fathi, S.**

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ABSTRACT

Morocco is a multilingual society in which a variety of languages harmoniously co-exist. The HIGH COMMISSION OF PLANNING (HCP) states that there are 7 languages used in Morocco, which are, according to their number of users: Moroccan Arabic, Tashelhit, Tamazight, Tarifit and Hassani, together with French and Spanish. While being multilingual, Morocco is also a diglossic nation in Ferguson's terms, with two varieties of the same language, namely, Standard Modern Arabic and Moroccan Arabic. Today, Morocco is gradually shifting from a diglossic nation toward a unique sociolinguistic situation of "Dual Diglossia". In other words, two situations of diglossia will have to coexist: on the one hand, Diglossia 1 that is already in place between Standard Modern Arabic (HV) and Moroccan Arabic (LV); on the other hand, Diglossia 2 that is being phased in between Standard Moroccan Berber, officially labeled Standard Moroccan Tamazight (HV) and Moroccan Berber (LV) with its three main varieties, Tashelhit, Tamazight and Tarifit.

Keywords: Bilingualism, Tamazight, de facto, Tashelhit, de jure, Diglossia, Tarifit, language planning, Moroccan Arabic, language policy, multilingualism, national language, Standard Modern Arabic, official language, Standard Tamazight, dual Diglossia.

1. INTRODUCTION

All over the world, there is virtually no linguistically homogeneous state/nation where everybody speaks and uses the same variety of language over time and space. Linguistic variety is a sociolinguistic phenomenon which permeates all states/nations. Since language is primarily speech that is used by humans who are usually on the move, physically and virtually, and, therefore, in contact with other people who use other languages, such languages in contact will always be inter-influenced and speakers of such languages will always be unconsciously incorporating linguistic features of other languages in their speech. The resulting situation is more language change and language differences leading to more linguistic variety. Therefore, we can claim that most states/nations are linguistically heterogeneous and that multilingualism is a natural sociolinguistic phenomenon common to most states/nations.

Being no exception, Morocco is a multilingual society in which a variety of languages harmoniously co-exist. According to the latest official figures released by the **HIGH COMMISSION OF PLANNING (HCP)** after the last population census in 2014, there are 7 languages used in Morocco, which are, according to their number of users: **Moroccan Arabic** (91%), **Tashelhit** (14%), **Tamazight** (8%), **Tarifit** (4%) and **Hassani** (1%), together with **French** (32%) and **Spanish** (5%). It should be noted that many speakers of any of the 3 varieties of Moroccan Berber, who total up to 26%, are also speakers of some variety of Moroccan Arabic and are, therefore, bilingual, in addition to speaking French and/or Spanish. While being multilingual, Morocco is also a diglossic nation in Ferguson's terms. In other words, two varieties of the same language, namely, Standard Modern Arabic and Moroccan

Arabic, are used with a distinct functional distribution, i.e. Standard Modern Arabic is considered as the High Variety (HV) used for written/spoken formal contexts and Moroccan Arabic is used as the Low Variety (LV) for informal spoken contexts. My claim, in this paper, is that Morocco is gradually shifting from a diglossic nation toward a unique sociolinguistic situation of “Dual Diglossia”. In other words, two situations of diglossia will have to coexist: on the one hand, Diglossia 1 that is already in place between Standard Modern Arabic (HV) and Moroccan Arabic (LV); on the other hand, Diglossia 2 that is being phased in between Standard Moroccan Berber, officially labeled Standard Moroccan Tamazight (HV) and Moroccan Berber (LV) with its three main varieties, Tashelhit, Tamazight and Tarifit.

2. FERGUSON’S DIGLOSSIA

Modeled on the French term “diglossie”, first used by William Marçais in 1930, the original concept of Diglossia goes back to Ferguson (1959). According to him, the H-variety and the L-variety have to be two divergent forms of the same language which are above the level of a standard-with-dialects distinction, but which stay below the level of two separate (related or unrelated) languages.

The H-variety is the code associated with education, government, religion, and other institutional domains. The H-variety is also the one that tends to be the standardized form of the historical language and the one used for writing and scripted communication. By contrast, the L-variety is the code used extemporaneously for daily communication within the family and in other informal domains of interaction. Generally, the L-variety is not standardized and shows a wide range of variation along geographical and socioeconomic lines. Another distinction between the H-variety and the L-variety has to do with attitude and language ideology: while speakers do not naturally transmit the H-variety to their children, and while these children acquire the L-variety as a native language, speakers in diglossic situations tend to have much more favorable attitudes toward the H-variety. In fact, the L-variety is often perceived as a “corrupt” form of the H variety or as a less sophisticated form of communication. Characteristically, the H-variety is never used for everyday conversation and in this respect a diglossic situation differs from a standard-with-dialects situation in which the standard may also be used for everyday conversation. The original description of Diglossia according to Ferguson (1959) is:

“Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation.”

Today, in addition to the Arab World, the phenomenon of Diglossia is applicable to Switzerland, more exactly the German-speaking Switzerland whose speakers account for almost 2/3 of Swiss citizens, and where the High Variety is Standard German and the Low Variety is Swiss German and Haiti, where the High Variety is Standard French and the Low Variety is Haitian Creole. Greece, on the other hand has ceased to be diglossic. In fact, the Greek language question was finally laid to rest on 30 April 1976, when Article 2 of Law 309—still written in *Katharevousa*—stipulated that Modern Greek should be the sole language of education at all levels, starting with the school year 1977–78. This Law defined Modern Greek as: the Demotic that has been developed into a Panhellenic instrument of expression by the

Greek People and the acknowledged writers of the Nation, properly constructed, without regional and extreme forms.

Another historical example is Latin, Classical Latin being the (HV) and Vulgar Latin the (LV); the latter, which is almost completely unattested in text, is the tongue from which the Romance languages descended, namely, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Romanian, in addition to Catalan, Sardinian, Corsican, etc.

Nowadays, you can find diglossia in countries all over the world, from Jamaica to France and China. In Jamaica, Jamaican Creole is the Low Variety while English is the High Variety. France has some areas where the regional language is the Low Variety, and Standard French is the High Variety. In China, the same thing happens, with Mandarin being the High variety and other regional varieties used as the Low Variety.

The majority of Chinese speakers learn Mandarin Chinese as the standard national dialect. However, Standard Chinese and its pronunciation in local Chinese language varieties is still a formal register in regions where Mandarin is not spoken natively, such as most of South China, where Cantonese Chinese is more commonly used.

For instance in Hong Kong and Macau, Cantonese is the primary language of spoken communication, although all formal written communication is done in standard written Chinese, i.e. Mandarin. Unique among the other Chinese language varieties, Cantonese has its own written form, but it is largely used in informal contexts, such as personal communication, internet slang, advertising, music, and film.

3. FISHMAN'S DIGLOSSIA

In 1967, Fishman presented a modification of Ferguson's (1959) original concept and rather strict definition of diglossia. He proposed an expansion of Ferguson's diglossia in two respects. A diglossic speech community is not characterized by the use of two language varieties only. There may be more than two language varieties used within a linguistic community. According to Fishman, diglossia refers to all kinds of language varieties which show functional distribution in a speech community. Diglossia, as a consequence, describes a number of sociolinguistic situations, from stylistic differences within one language or the use of separate dialects (Ferguson's 'standard-with-dialects' distinction) to the use of (related or unrelated) separate languages.

Fishman notes that diglossia serves more as a social role and argues that any speech community that uses two different varieties or two different languages for different social functions can be classified as diglossia. Thus, in Paraguay certain speech communities use Guarani for the functions Ferguson had described as Low and Spanish for the functions described as High. In Peru, as throughout most of Latin America, Spanish is considered the High language while indigenous languages like Quechua dialects or Ayamara are considered the Low language. This has resulted in most Peruvians who do speak an indigenous language using Spanish more and more in everyday life.

The process of national integration does not necessarily require monolingualism. The western intellectual heritage prompts contemporary sociologists to assume that cultural and linguistic differences automatically tend toward demands for nation formation and language recognition. Countries like India have proven otherwise. Not all language differences that exist are noted, let alone ideologized. Conscious and even ideologized language differences need not be divisive. In the new nations of Africa and Asia, diglossia, in Fishman's sense, is extremely widespread and each language has its own functionally exclusive domain. Most new nations of Africa and Asia are not yet ethnic nations; this situation tends to reinforce diglossic

conditions. African languages have rarely become symbolic of the quest for nationhood. Diglossia could easily remain a way of life for new nations.

Myers-Scotton (1986) proposes the terms 'narrow' for Ferguson's 1959 version of diglossia and 'broad' (or 'diglossia extended') to refer to Fishman's expansion of the discussion. According to Myers-Scotton, few truly diglossic (in the 1959 sense) communities actually exist, because to meet the criteria, two conditions must hold: "(1) Everyone speaks the Low variety as a mother tongue." and "(2) The High variety is never used in informal conversations." That is quite true as today Diglossia (in Ferguson's terms) is common only in the Arab World, German-speaking Switzerland and Haiti.

4. CURRENT SITUATION IN MOROCCO

When King Mohammed 6th ascended to the throne, he positioned himself as a reformer and created IRCAM by Dahir N° 1-01-299 in 2001, (the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture in Morocco). In response to growing protests in 2011, he gave a speech in which he announced the promulgation of a new constitution which recognizes Tamazight as a co-official language alongside Standard Modern Arabic.

In 2003, Mohammed 6th, the King of Morocco, took a neutral position between the claims of Latin script and Arabic script advocates by adopting Neo-Tifinagh as the official script for Standard Tamazight, the 2nd Official Language of Morocco. This decision was not without controversy, however, and while some Tamazight speakers agreed with the change, others preferred either an Arabic or Latin alphabet instead. Interestingly, Soulaïmani identified two main camps: the pro-Latin, and the Pro-Arabic, with the former tending to have a higher number of Amazigh activists who support their cause.

Only time will tell if these measures will shift the status of Tamazight outside the few government agencies of Rabat. The reason is that this writing system has been criticized by scholars and activists as being impractical for teaching literacy (Soulaïmani 2015), in particular, the low number of teachers who know neo-Tifinagh well enough to teach it. Additionally, a significant number of Tamazight speakers who are literate are literate in either Arabic or Latin-based scripts. Adding another script could complicate teaching literacy, a major concern since the literacy rate is estimated to be only around 72% (World Bank 2017). In this respect, we need to know that there are three major varieties of Berber spoken in Morocco, namely Tashelhit in the south, Tamazight in the center, and Tarifit in the north. However, it should be noted that within these varieties, several other dialects or dialectal variations can be found depending on the region or town. Eastern Morocco Zenati dialects are a group of Berber dialects spoken in Morocco from Jerada Province to Berkane Province.

Senhaja of Srair is a Northern Berber language. It is spoken by the Sanhaja Berbers inhabiting the southern part of the Moroccan Rif. It is spoken in the Ketama area west of Tarifit in the Taza-Al Hoceïma-Taounate region. Despite its speech area, the Sanhaja language belongs to the Atlas branch of Berber. It has also been influenced by the neighboring Riffian language.

Ghomari or Ghmari is a Berber dialect spoken by the Ghomaras, an ethnic group of the Rif Mountains in Morocco. It is related to the other varieties of the Atlas Mountains. Ghomari is spoken by the tribes of Beni Bouzra and Beni Mansour, whereas elsewhere Ghomaras speak a variety of Moroccan Arabic.

Moroccan Arabic is another component of the Moroccan linguistic market, and it is the most widely used language in Morocco. Since it is neither codified nor standardized, it is mostly seen as a variety but not as a literary language. Moreover, given its contact with Classical

Arabic, Ferguson argues that Moroccan Arabic stands in a diglossic relation with CA; while CA is the high variety, MA is considered the low variety.

It is noteworthy that the use of the term “Moroccan Arabic” can be ambiguous because it does not refer to any specific variety spoken in Morocco. Therefore, when talking about MA, most linguists and scholars differ to a large extent when it comes to classifying it in terms of varieties. First of all, some linguists such as Boukous divide MA into four major varieties, namely, the Urban Variety, the Mountain Variety (Jebli), the Bedouin Variety and the Hassani Variety.

Other linguists like Ennaji, follow two approaches. First, historically, MA can be divided into the non-Bedouin dialect, the Bedouin variety, and the Andalusian-Arabic variety. In the modern sense, MA can be divided into Urban (‘mdini’) and Rural (‘ʕrubi’) varieties. Moreover, Ennaji goes further and subdivides the Urban dialect of MA into different regional varieties, namely, Northern dialects spoken in Tangiers, Tetouan, Larache and other north cities, the Fassi variety spoken in Fès, the Moroccan dialect of Rabat and Casablanca, the Marrakesh and Agadir dialect which are influenced by Tashelhit, widely spoken in the Atlas and Souss regions and the Hassani dialect used in the southern Saharan regions.

Regardless of these divisions, what is common between all these varieties of MA is that they all share a high degree of mutual intelligibility and that they form what can be referred to as a dialect continuum.

Standard Moroccan Tamazight, also known as Standard Moroccan Berber or Tamazight, is an ongoing project to create a standard national Moroccan variety of Berber. It was established in accordance with Article 5 of the 2011 amendments to the Moroccan Constitution.

Standard Tamazight was created by combining the three major Moroccan Berber varieties (Tashelhit, Central Atlas Tamazight and Tarifit), with an emphasis on Tashelhit. The creation of this standard made all the Berber languages of Morocco 'substandard'; no-one speaks Standard Tamazight natively and it must be learned in some primary schools. At the same time, a new script was created, based on IRCAM's Neo-Tifinagh adaptation of the Touaregs' traditional Tifinagh script (augmented with letters for vowels and additional letters for consonants) but adjusted for legibility.

According to Morocco World News, in an official statement issued in October, 2018, the Head of Government urged administrations across the country to use Tamazight, side by side with Arabic. The two are Morocco's two “official languages,” he said, according to “the fifth chapter of the constitution.”

The Prime Minister repeatedly asserted the need to use only Arabic and Tamazight in official documents instead of foreign languages. This statement notes the administrations' “lack of consideration” of the government's previous calls.

Although the Prime Minister did not name “foreign languages,” he had previously said that French, the most used foreign language in Morocco, only signifies the country's openness to foreign cultures. He said that public institutions and administrations should communicate in Arabic or Tamazight with citizens, i.e., that both official and administrative documents should be issued in Arabic and Tamazight.

Morocco's 2015-2030 strategic vision of education stresses the use of three common languages in the kingdom: Arabic and Tamazight as the official languages, and French as a means of “openness” to other cultures.

In September, 2018, Morocco World News wrote that **Morocco's Ministry of Education has defended textbook content written in Darija (Moroccan Arabic), saying that it is “purely for educational purposes.”**

Images of multiple pages in Arabic primary school textbooks have caused social media uproar because they contain words used in Darija, the unwritten Moroccan dialect of Arabic, instead of pure standard Arabic.

The texts include names of Moroccan traditional clothing and food in Darija, such as “jellaba” (traditional Moroccan clothing for males and females), “ghriyba” (a Moroccan cookie), “baghrir” (Moroccan crepes), and “briouat” (a sweet/savory puff pastry).

In addition to the Darija words in Arabic textbooks, photos of a French textbook containing a popular Moroccan children’s song next to its transliteration into the Latin alphabet and translation in French inspired the mockery of Moroccans online.

It is true that in Morocco today, there are only 3 ministries that mainly use Standard Modern Arabic in their communication and official statements, namely, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Habous (Endowments) & Religious Affairs and to some extent the Ministry of Education. All the other ministries and departments use Arabic and French concurrently, or just mainly French. As for private or semi-public companies, the rule is to use French at all levels and limit Arabic to the letter-headings of their official documents.

5. PHASING IN TAMAZIGHT

According to Akinou (2021) two decades after the integration of Tamazight, the language of the Amazigh people, into Morocco’s education system, teaching the language at schools and universities still faces great challenges. The most important of those is the lack of programs and courses available in Tamazight, which is the standardized version of the many Amazigh dialects.

Lindsey (2015) states that even Amazigh activists and intellectuals do not generally work and write in the language. According to the Royal Institute, only 250 books have been written in Tamazight.

Cited by Lindsey (2015), Abdeslem Khalafi, a researcher at the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture (Institut Royale de la Culture Amazigh du Maroc, IRCAM) says that Tamazight is now only taught to about 12 percent of Moroccan students. Because of this, thousands of children whose first language is Tamazight flunk out of school.

Khalafi and his colleagues at the Royal Institute believe that students should begin their education in their native languages—the Moroccan dialect of Arabic or whatever Amazigh dialect they speak—and then learn the standardized version. They are calling for six hours a week of Tamazight throughout primary and secondary education.

An initial enthusiasm for Amazigh studies programs in universities has recently waned partly because of poor prospects for graduates. But the education minister has indicated his support and now both academics and activists are leading a new push to teach Tamazight.

“Amazigh studies started recently compared to other disciplines,” said Lahcen Amekrane, a professor at the Amazigh Studies Department at Hassan II University of Casablanca. “However, the experience is more than 14 years old today and it is necessary to think about enabling Moroccan students to study this major at new universities.”

Amekrane also stressed the importance of “expanding the university offer of Amazigh studies to include other higher education institutions that have not yet opened Amazigh courses.”

The situation in neighboring Algeria is not much different although it has made strides in teaching Tamazight—including establishing universities, other educational institutions and radio and television channels to promote the language— more needs to be done.

According to Chaif (2015), today, Berbers are still finding it hard to gain acceptance of Tamazight, a dilemma that is leading many to complain that they have no place in Algerian education.

“In Kabyle, Tamazight lessons are almost empty because parents prefer their children to study Arabic, French, English or other foreign languages,” said Djaffer Ouchelouche, a doctoral student in Tamazight at Tizi Ouzou, referring to a region of northern Algeria that has been a subject of his research. “There are no jobs in Tamazight.”

Teaching Tamazight at Moroccan universities did not start until 2007 at Ibn Zohr University, in Agadir (southern Morocco). Today, Tamazight is taught in only four of Morocco’s 13 public universities, namely Hassan II University of Casablanca, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University in Fez, Mohammed I University in Oujda, and Ibn Zohr University.

In recent years, there has been a decline in the number of students enrolled in the Amazigh studies course at Ibn Zohr University. There were 178 students in its first cohort, in 2007. The number rose to more than 1,000 students in 2015, to be followed by a gradual decline until it hit only 238 students in 2020, says El-Hussein Bouyakoubi, a Professor of Amazigh Studies.

“The decline in students’ enrollment is closely related to the ambiguity of prospects due to the delay in the actual implementation of the law activating the official adoption of Amazigh outside the university, and its inclusion in the fields of public life,” he said.

In an interview with Al-Fanar Media, Bouyakoubi pointed out that one problem is the poor level of some students in French, the instruction language often used in teaching Tamazight at university, also deters many students from continuing their studies.

Studying Standard Tamazight as a university subject requires major and continued efforts mainly because its practice outside university circles is very limited. Moreover, there is a misconception among some students that Tamazight is an easy subject because it is their mother tongue, when in fact it is a linguistic specialization that requires, like all languages, great effort. This leads some students to feel frustrated and withdraw from the program. Similarly, it is not because you speak a variety of Moroccan Arabic as a mother tongue that you will easily study and master Standard Arabic.

The fact that Standard Arabic and Standard Tamazight are mainly limited to formal and written contexts will always constitute a handicap for their promotion and teaching. Today, Moroccans use either a variety of Moroccan Arabic or a variety of Moroccan Berber in their daily lives quite normally because these varieties are mother tongues. In Ferguson’s terms, these varieties are considered in a diglossic situation as the LVs used in informal and spoken situations. On the other hand, Standard Arabic and Standard Tamazight are the HVs mainly used in formal and written contexts.

With the advent of Standard Tamazight as the 2nd de jure Official Language of Morocco, we are in the process of witnessing a unique sociolinguistic phenomenon, namely, Dual Diglossia in Morocco, where two linguistically different, but functionally similar, languages coexist as the HVs used in formal written contexts corresponding to their LV counterparts, namely, Moroccan Arabic varieties and Moroccan Berber varieties, that are used in informal and spoken situations.

In the light of Ferguson’s definition of Diglossia, cited above, Dual Diglossia in Morocco can be defined as follows:

“Dual Diglossia is a relatively unstable unique language situation in Morocco in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the two languages, namely Moroccan Arabic and Moroccan Berber, there are two very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed varieties, namely, Standard Arabic and Standard Tamazight, the vehicle of literature, which are learned largely by formal education and are used for most written and formal purposes but are not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation.”

Given the sociolinguistic situation in neighboring Algeria, we can safely say that the phenomenon of Dual Diglossia is also gradually expanding there and probably in other North

African countries with differing percentages of speakers of varieties of Tamazight among their populations, like Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania.

6. CONCLUSION

In this article, we have dealt with the concept of Diglossia as explained by Ferguson and also applicable to the Arab World, German-speaking Switzerland and Haiti. We have also dealt with the expansion of the concept of Diglossia as explained by Fishman, who gives more importance to the functional, rather than the linguistic differences between two language varieties coexisting in the same speech community. Given that Morocco is both a diglossic and multilingual state, the implementation of Standard Tamazight as the 2nd de jure Official Language of Morocco has led to a change and more variety in the linguistic market. As a result of this language planning, we have also explained the off-shoot of Diglossia in Morocco and probably Algeria, which can be defined as “Dual Diglossia”. This is a unique sociolinguistic phenomenon where two cases of Diglossia concurrently coexist in the same speech community with two HVs mainly used in written and formal contexts and two corresponding LVs that are used by everybody in daily informal spoken situations.

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