

A NEW SOCIOLINGUISTIC INSIGHT INTO LANGUAGE CONTACT PHENOMENA: EVIDENCE FROM ARABIC/FRENCH LANGUAGES PAIR

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Abstract

The present article is an empirical study of the speakers' attitudes and speakers' use of their languages/varieties of languages in both Algeria and Morocco. In fact, these two neighboring countries share common sociolinguistic and cultural heritage; with a common colonizer (France), common culture, common religion and mutually intelligible dialects. In both countries, we worked with a sample of respondents whose linguistic repertoire includes: the local dialect (Algerian Arabic or Moroccan Arabic), Classical Arabic and French. The basic questions raised in this comparative work are: do Algerian as well as Moroccan speakers use Classical Arabic, French and their local dialects in the same situations and for the same reasons? More importantly, what is the actual role of French in either country?

For this purpose, we elaborated a questionnaire which was filled by informants from either country. The results confirmed that the Algerian as well as the Moroccan speakers use the formal varieties (Classical Arabic and French) and the local dialects in approximately the same situations and contexts but with varying doses. In both countries French is viewed as the language of prestige and high social status, however, it was found omnipresent in the Algerian speech much more than in the Moroccan verbal interactions and this is probably due to socio-historical reasons.

Keywords

Bilingualism, Language contact, Linguistic repertoire, Social context of language use, French, Arabic

1. Introduction

The present article¹ as its titles indicates focuses on language contact phenomena in both Algeria and Morocco, yielding therefore a new sociolinguistic perspective on central aspects of Arabic/French languages pair. Throughout this work, we will endeavour to highlight the sociolinguistic factors underlying language choice using three basic languages which constitute the linguistic repertoire of the speakers notably the Arabic dialect (Algerian Arabic (hereafter AA) or Moroccan Arabic (here after MA) , Classical Arabic (here after CA)² and French (here after Fr). A particular interest will be given to the study of the role the French language plays in both speech communities.

As for French language, it is considered as a second language in Algeria and Morocco, and plays a role of a paramount importance in both countries. In Algeria for instance, Fr is regarded as an important medium of communication, it is inevitably used as a functional instrument in all the spheres of public life namely in the administration, government and the mass media. It is also used to display the social status of the speaker. Within this framework, Akila (2001:01) states :

Le Français est devenu une langue élitiste , symbole de la réussite sociale et reste omniprésente dans les secteurs ‘ de la banque , de l’économie et de l’ouverture sur l’universel’. Elle n’en reste pas moins la langue de l’ancien colonisateur

French has become an elitist language , symbol of social success and remains omnipresent in the fields ‘ of the bank , of economy and the opening up on the universal’ . It remains nevertheless the language of the coloniser

Both Algerian and Morocco are diglossic and bilingual speech communities. A diglossic language situation is usually described as consisting of two varieties of the same language, each of which has clearly defined function (Ferguson, 1959). The high variety being used in formal settings such as public speaking, religious texts, education and other prestigious contexts, whereas the low variety is reserved for use in more informal and relaxed situations such as at home and in coffees. From a

¹ This article is written in the frame of an investigation led in both Morocco and Algeria thanks to the funding of AIMS (American Institute for Maghrebi Studies- USA) in late 2009.

² In this work Classical Arabic is used to mean the modern version of Arabic or as it is called Modern Standard Arabic.

global societal perspective, most of the world's speech communities use more than one language and are therefore bilingual rather than monolingual. As far as Bilingualism is concerned, it entails the use of two or more languages or varieties of languages in situations in which such languages are in free or parallel distribution. Within this framework, Mackey (1984:122)³ defines bilingualism as the ability to use more than one language by an individual or a community. When it is considered at the individual level, bilingualism is concerned with issues such as how one acquires two or more languages, when it is viewed as a societal phenomenon; bilingualism is concerned with its institutional dimensions such as the status and roles of the languages in a given society.

At the micro-sociolinguistic level, the Algerian as well as Moroccan speakers may use and eventually switch between two or more languages namely AA , CA, Fr and Berber with varying doses, depending on non-linguistic factors such as the speaker's age ,intelligence, communicative competence in various codes, and his/her attitudes towards different languages. Seemingly, the existence of many languages and varieties of language would reflect to a great extent the sociolinguistic richness and diversity of such countries.

2. Data Collection Procedures

This investigation is meant to study the speaker's use of languages notably AA (or MA), CA and Fr in particular, in different situations and various contexts. Berber as a variety is excluded from the study, since it is not spoken by our respondents in both countries .

For this work, we selected 80 respondents: 40 males and 40 females from different socio-educational backgrounds in either country. The questionnaire was addressed to informants from different regions; in Algeria: from Sidi Bel Abbés, Oran , Tlemcen , Elbayadh and Saida . From Morocco, we mention towns like : Casablanca, Rabat, Marakech, Fés, and Kenitra, and those which were under the Spanish protectorate (1912 –1956) such Tanger and Tetouan . The results of the present investigation will certainly draw a new direction in the study of language

³ Romaine (1989 :16)

contact phenomena in the Maghreb, especially in the establishment of the exact role of Fr in either country. So far, the present investigation endeavours to discuss the triangular relationship between Fr, CA and the local dialects with a particular focus on the study of the role and status of Fr, between what is assumed and what is found on the real ground. In other words, between myth and reality. Two major questions are raised in this study, which are: in the same situations and contexts, do the Algerian speakers and their neighbours the Moroccans use the same languages/varieties of languages? What is the real role and status of Fr in either country: is it the language of prestige, modernity, colonialism or something else? The questionnaire is composed of 8 sections: section 1 is meant to describe the socio-educational background as well as the linguistic repertoire of the respondent. Sections 2, 3 & 4 attempt to elicit the speaker's attitudes towards different languages, in particular Fr, while, section 5 deals with the informant's frequency of switching between languages, especially the dialect and Fr. Section 6 endeavours to identify the speaker's choice of languages according to different types of interlocutors namely family, friends and strangers, the relationship varies therefore from formal to a very informal. Section 6 displays the interaction of some factors relevant to language choice, indeed, the integration of the speech variables would create what Fishman and Greenfield (1972)⁴ called *Congruent Situation*, i.e.: situations in which individuals interact in appropriate role relationships with each other, in the appropriate locales for these role relationships and discuss topics appropriate to their role relationship.

Within this framework, five domains were labelled: 'Family', 'Friendship', 'Religion', 'Education' and 'Employment'. Fishman and Greenfield's research (1972) was within the Puerto Rican speech community, where individuals are bilinguals and speak both Spanish and English. Spanish was primarily associated with domains related with family, while English was mainly related to religion, work and education.

Fishman and Greenfield's model helped clarify the construct validity of domains as well as the procedure for their recognition. In what follows I will adopt Fishman and Greenfield's model including four domains cited above (Family, Friendship

⁴ Bouamrane (1986:230)

Education and Employment) in an attempt to know which languages are used in each domain.

Certainly, the outcome of both questionnaires (held in both Algeria and Morocco) will enable us understand to a great extent the triangular relationship between the speaker's mother tongue, CA as well as Fr in both countries.

2.1 The questionnaire

Thank you for having accepted to answer this questionnaire. This questionnaire is anonymous, i.e. you should not include your name. Please answer the following questions by putting a thick when appropriate (you can answer in Arabic or in French).

Section 1

Gender: Male 40 Female 40

Age: Do you have between:

15-25 25

26-35 25

36-50 20

More than 50 10

Educational Background:

Primary Level 11

Middle School level 14

Secondary Level 22

University Level 33

Communities Languages	Algerian speech community	Moroccan speech community
Which languages do you use in speaking?		
Classical Arabic	37.67%	41%
Arabic Dialect	42.33%	47.88%
French	20%	11.12%
Which languages do you use in writing?		
Classical Arabic	34%	42.33%
Arabic Dialect	36%	39.09%
French	30%	18.58%
Which languages do you use in reading		
Classical Arabic	52.86%	68%
Arabic Dialect	8.14%	2%
French	39%	30 %

Table 1 shows the speakers' use of languages at different levels. Seemingly, both Algerian and Moroccan speech communities use the colloquial dialect in their daily interactions with high doses; 42.33% in Algeria as opposed to 47.88% in Morocco. CA is more or less restricted to the written and reading purposes, with a particular tendency of the Moroccan speakers more than the Algerians (41%) against (37.67 %) to use CA at the oral level, mixed with Fr and/or MA.

Section 2

Communities Languages	Algerian speech community	Moroccan speech community
Which languages do you find the most useful in your daily life?		
Classical Arabic	34 %	49.79%
Arabic Dialect	44.58%	31.65%
French	34.25%	18.56%
Which languages do you find less used in your daily life?		
Classical Arabic	47%	35%
Arabic Dialect	25%	24.42%
French	28%	40.58%
Which languages do you find modern?		
Classical Arabic	24%	24.87%
Arabic Dialect	22	21%
French	54%	54.13%
Which languages do you find outdated/old-fashioned?		
Classical Arabic	57%	46%
Arabic Dialect	32.89%	28%
French	10.11%	26%
Which languages do you find prestigious?		
Classical Arabic	39%	43%
Arabic Dialect	20%	44%
French	41%	43%
Which languages do you find nice?		
Classical Arabic	30%	41%
Arabic Dialect	33%	32.42%
French	37%	26.58%
Which languages do you find heavy /complex?		
Classical Arabic	46.55%	42%
Arabic Dialect	23.45%	8%
French	30%	40%

Section 2 discusses the speakers' attitudes towards languages which constitute their basic linguistic repertoire including CA, Fr and colloquial dialect. Within this

framework, Romaine (1989:256) states: “Attitude is too general a concept to be accurately determined from the answer to a specific question or from the responses given by an informant in a carefully controlled experimental situation.”

Virtually, 41% of the Algerian speakers as well as 43% Moroccans regard Fr as the most prestigious form which is used to express their modernity, and /or social and intellectual level. Interestingly enough, the Moroccans more than the Algerian speakers find CA (41% against 30% of Algerian respondents) as nice and as prestigious as Fr. Probably, this is mainly due to the Moroccan’s frequent use of CA more than Algerians in their daily speech.

Section 3

Communities Languages	Algerian speech community	Moroccan speech community
What do you feel when you speak Classical Arabic?		
Shame	10%	1.20%
Pride	45%	38%
Prestige	30%	21%
Nothing	15%	39.80%
What do you feel when you speak Dialect?		
Shame	24%	29.55%
Pride	11.25%	24.45%
Prestige	35.25%	1%
Nothing	48%	45%
What do you feel when you speak French		
Shame	1.22%	12.56%
Pride	21.42%	22.42%
Prestige	46.36%	52.69%
Nothing	31.00%	12.33%
Do you like to improve your level in Classical Arabic?		
Yes	48.56%	56.45%
No	51.44%	43.55%
Do you like to improve your level in French?		
Yes	68%	78%
No	32%	22%
Are you For or against Bilingualism (Arabic and French) in your country?		
For	86%	89.66%
Against	14%	10.34%

The speakers from both countries share the common feeling of pride when speaking CA (45% for Algerians and 38% for Moroccans), prestige with Fr (43.36%

for the Algerian speakers and 52.69% for the Moroccans) and indifference towards their local dialects (48% in Algeria and 45% in Morocco). This is probably linked to the sociolinguistic and political status of languages in their countries. In fact, in both Algeria and Morocco, CA is the language of the national constitution and the holy book 'Coran', Fr is the language of the elite and the local dialects are stigmatized varieties used in daily informal interactions.

Section 4

Communities Languages	Algerian speech community	Moroccan speech community
What do you think of French Language?		
Language of prestige	94%	85.66%
Language of modernity	95.33%	94%
Language of studies	89.66%	79.66%
Language of the colonizer that we should not use	29.55%	37.66%
Useful Language in our daily life	90%	97%
Language that we should get rid of	1%	0.55%

Section 5

Communities Languages	Algerian speech community	Moroccan speech community
Do you switch (mix) between Classical Arabic and French		
Yes	36%	46%
No	64%	54%
Do you switch (mix) between Classical Arabic and Algerian Arabic?		
Yes	42%	59%
No	58%	41%
Do you switch (mix) between Dialect and French?		
Yes	89%	85%
No	11%	15%
Do you think Code switching represents :		
A linguistic handicap	23%	39%
A linguistic diversity	77%	61%

The percentages displayed in sections 4 & 5 reflect the status of Fr; being a useful language of modernity, studies and prestige. Algerian and Moroccan speakers favour

CS between the local dialect and Fr and find that CS is a common phenomenon among speakers. Switching is therefore a very common behaviour among the Maghrebi speakers who consider it as a marker of linguistic diversity (77% in Algeria and 61% in Morocco).

Section 6

			Algerian speech community			
The Interlocutor	Locale	Theme of discussion	Classical Arabic	Dialect	French	Mixing between Arabic and French
mother	Home	Summer holidays	12%	85%	19%	81%
Sister/ brother	A chic shop	Choosing a clothe	5%	45%	58%	86%
A friend	Street	Yesterday's film	1%	87%	41%	55%
Waiter	A chic restaurant	Order a meal	0%	12%	86%	51%
A colleague	Work place	Salary raising	9%	59%	28%	83%
A teacher	University	The exam	1%	18%	87%	46%
A doctor	In his cabinet	Health problem	0%	45%	54%	81%
A foreigner	Street	Asking for your way	5%	48%	31%	81%
Clerk	Bank	Creating an account	1%	20%	56%	84%
Your boss	Office	The work problems	6%	81%	23%	46%

			Moroccan speech community			
The interlocutor	Locale	Theme of discussion	Classical Arabic	Dialect	French	Mixing between Arabic and French
mother	Home	Summer holidays	25%	85%	12%	56%
Sister/ brother	A chic shop	Choosing a clothe	12%	15%	64%	55%
A friend	Street	Yesterday's film	8%	85%	16%	59%
Waiter	A chic restaurant	Order a meal	5%	83%	95%	56%
A colleague	Work place	Salary raising	29%	59%	88%	53%
A teacher	University	The exam	14%	23%	47%	58%
A doctor	In his cabinet	Health problem	14%	61%	38%	71%
A foreigner	Street	Asking for your way	19%	85%	34%	61%
Clerk	Bank	Creating an account	5%	21%	81%	61%
Your boss	Office	The work problems	18%	45%	48%	79%

From the above situations, the speaker's relationship with the locutor, topics under discussion as well as the setting play a role of paramount importance in the choice of a variety/language over another. The norm of 'appropriateness' is the general rule for language choice. Accordingly, Fishman (1971:23) points out: "Language choice is much clearer cut and polarised in 'usual' situations governed entirely by sociolinguistic norms of communicative appropriateness".

However, the status of the speaker is also important, in fact, when formality is present, the speaker tends to use Fr or a mixture of Fr and AA, as with doctor (54% of Fr) or teacher at the university (87%)(in the case of the Algerian community). The more the setting is formal; the tendency is for the use of Fr or switching between Fr and other varieties, as in restaurant or a chic shop. Within this perspective, Trudgill (1995:86) states:

A further important feature of the social context is the 'context of the person spoken to, and in particular the role relationships and relative statuses of the participants in a discourse. For example, speech between individuals of unequal rank is likely to be less relaxed and more formal than that between equals

Still, the speaker socio-educational background is also very decisive in language choice, as an example, a layman cannot speak Fr with a doctor. CA is not so frequently used alone ; it is generally mixed with AA and/or Fr. Whether within the Moroccan or the Algerian speech communities, the speaker adopts the same behavior ; the use of the appropriate language/variety when speaking to a particular interlocutor in a specific context . For formality, the option is for the use of Fr which is used with higher doses by the Algerian speech community than the Moroccan community .The local varieties are stigmatized for informal settings and CA is used , generally mixed with the local dialect in either country .

3. Outcomes and Outlooks

As far as the present investigation is concerned, the preliminary results of the investigation revealed that language use among speakers depends on sociolinguistic factors among them: the interlocutor, his/her linguistic background, the place and

topic under discussion, among other factors. Seemingly, the major difference between the questionnaire's findings in both countries lies in the amount of Fr as well as CA use. This is probably due to two main reasons:

1. Algeria was colonized during 132 years as opposed to Morocco with 44 years of French protectorate in towns which were under the French protectorate. Even with the intensive campaigns of Arabisation which were launched in both countries right after independence, Fr is still powerfully omnipresent in Algeria in all domains, at the oral and written levels.
2. The second point involves the short period of investigation, indeed I tried to understand the Moroccan speech behaviour in only four weeks of observation (from 13/12/2009 to 13/01/2010) ; a period during which it is quite impossible for any sociolinguist to discover all the characteristics and entities of any bilingual speech community .

4. Conclusion

Our visit to Morocco was very instructive and informative; indeed, we discovered the nature and the main characteristics of the Moroccan speech community, with its sociolinguistic diversity and richness. We could visit many towns notably Tanger , we seized the opportunity to visit many francophone towns namely Casablanca , Rabat , Fés and Marrakech in order to observe the respondents speech behaviour. Unlike Algeria which was wholly colonized by France (1830 –1962) , northern and southern Morocco (like Tétouan, Larach , Nador and the Great Sahara) were under the Spanish protectorate (1912 –1956) whereas , the internal towns like Casablanca , Rabat, Marakech, Fés, and Kenitra were under the French protectorate (1912-1956). Tanger was declared as an international Zone in 1912 and freed in 1956. But , what we have noticed during my stay in Tanger is that comparing with the first time we visited it in 2004 , there have been considerable linguistic changes characterized by the use of more Fr , either in public life (panels in particular) and at the oral level . This can be probably explained by the influence of new waves of comers from francophone areas especially Casablanca and its surroundings to settle there, especially after the economic boom of the area.

The comparative study on language use among Algerians vs. Moroccans revealed that regardless of the different situations and contexts, the Algerian speakers have a tendency to use more Fr than the Moroccans. This is probably related to historical reasons; French colonialism in Algeria vs. French protectorate in Morocco, but also to the human sample used in this investigation. In fact, the Moroccan speakers of Casablanca use Fr more often than those living in other towns, and we may find some Algerian speakers who do not speak Fr correctly or rarely switch between Fr and other languages. The findings are therefore significant and representative of only a given sample.

This investigation put into evidence that the Maghrebi linguistic map with its regions notably Algeria and Moroccans holds a heavy socio-historical and cultural heritage partly due to the French occupation. The result is the formation of linguistic repertoire mainly composed of local dialects, Fr, CA and Berber, used in both regions with varying degrees. But, it seems that regardless of the differences in the amount and frequency of uses, both the Algerians as well as Moroccans have positive attitudes towards all languages; they feel pride when speaking Fr and/or CA and are actually becoming aware of the importance the local dialects which are now less considered as stigmatized varieties but rather a radius linguistic print in their idiolect.

The linguistic map of the Maghreb is very informative, and this work should be strengthened by other investigations in other Maghrebi countries like Tunisia and Libya , in order to put under the spotlight the linguistic differences and similarities among the Maghrebi speakers .

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