Abstract

Upon the growth of the field of linguistics in Morocco, specifically sociolinguistics in the 1970s, several research have been conducted. The booming growth of this field resulted into a great amount of research. However, there was no attempt to analyze this contribution closely and see how important sociolinguistic research has been in the study of Moroccan languages and varieties. This article reports on a study of attitudes towards sociolinguistic research conducted among linguists in Morocco, mainly the region of Rabat-Sale, but also from Casablanca, Fes, and Marrakesh. Following the booming growth of sociolinguistic research since 1970s in Morocco, this paper investigates how researchers see this field of research and to what extent has language policy affected the produced research and what is the attitude of linguists towards this change in research. The study intends to provide a brief background to the sociolinguistic situation in Morocco and the Moroccan language policy in use since the independence in 1956. It also sheds light on the recent changes proposed in the status of Moroccan languages. Following this, come the part of revealing the findings of the study, focusing on attitudes towards the development of sociolinguistic research. The majority of researchers seem to be widely in favor of a change in the research topics worked on by researchers in sociolinguistics. Views on the benefits of Arabization are mixed, but there is a general agreement that Amazigh is gradually taking its share of research as well. The study found out that the population believes that research in Sociolinguistics in Morocco does not deal with all languages/varieties used in Morocco equally but rather focuses on certain language and varieties. We can conclude that despite the immense growth of the field of sociolinguistics, it still does not meet the expectations Moroccan research have put as standards for the latter. This can be explained by the fact that Morocco is a melting pot with a very rich linguistic nature which makes the linguistic situation in Morocco in need of even more research in sociolinguistics.

Key words: Language attitude, sociolinguistic research, Arabization, Amazigh
INTRODUCTION

Being a complex multilingual country, Morocco pursued a simple language policy for years under the umbrella of ‘Arabization’. This was followed with the ultimate goal of creating a monolingual society. This linguistic policy worked on restoring the role and the status of Standard Arabic a posteriori the period of the French Protectorate. The purpose after doing so was to eliminate the dominance of French in the official settings. While French was flourishing, Moroccan Arabic and Tamazight (Berber) were degenerated and deprived from their rights of being presented. Nonetheless the 2000 Charter for Educational Reform identified the importance of other languages and dialects that are preexisting in the country. It also presented regulations in order to improve how these languages are thought and learned in schools. 2011 was also a changing point in the country’s language policy since it witnessed the reformation of the constitution and the emergence of Amazigh in equal terms with Arabic. The aim in this article is to examine the impact of these policy changes on the nature of the produced research in the field of sociolinguistics. Before we delve into the findings of this study, it is a prerequisite that we identify the context the study seeks to deal with. After providing a description of the Moroccan perplexed sociolinguistic situation, we then shed light on the policy applied post-independence until today. This study will then will then discuss the findings of the study being the interpretation of the attitudes gathered.

UNFOLDING THE MOROCCAN SOCIOLINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

Having a strategic location, in the crossroads of Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, meant that Morocco has been characterized being a melting pot where multilingualism and diglossic situations are deemed to occur. The influence of this location was, and still is, exhibited in both little traces of foreign languages as well as noticeable linguistic changes. This resulted into the existence of three crucial languages or language groups namely, Amazigh, Arabic, and French. Nonetheless, it is worthy of mentioning that Spanish has had its role in multilingualism in Morocco. This is due to the juxtaposition of Spain as well as the Spanish occupation. It should be noted that there are still two Spanish enclaves namely, Ceuta and Melilla and the Spanish languages still holds the lion’s share in the north of Morocco. Nevertheless, the use of Spanish has been in continuous retrogression since independence in 1956. This is normal since Spanish is not represented in the educational system of the region. To this end, Spanish merely holds the status of a foreign language (Benzakour, Gaadi & Queffélec, 2000). Therefore, this study does not focus on Spanish since it has very limited presence, specifically in the region where this paper was conducted.

1) Amazigh

Amazigh or ‘Berber’ is the term used by Europeans to refer to the indigenous languages of the Maghreb countries. The term covers the mother tongue of the indigenous people of Morocco, Algeria, and partly Tunisia, in addition to the adjoining sub-Saharan countries. This region is rich with a number of affiliated, but not entirely mutually intelligible, languages belonging to the Hamito-Semitic family. The speakers of Amazigh in Morocco trifurcate into three distinctive groups namely, Tashelhit, Tamazight, and Tarifit. The term Amazigh or ‘Berber’ is neither recognized nor is it used by speakers of these languages. Despite these have been present approximately 5000 years ago (Boukous, 1995b: 18), no attempt to codify them and provide a proper script (Tifinagh) has ever took place in the country.

To this end, for the last fourteen centuries, these varieties have always been identified as ‘Low language’ in a diglossia, compared to Arabic. The reason why Arabic has been the ‘high’ language in
Morocco resides in the fact that the latter was embraced by the Amazigh community as the language of Islam. Despite the aforementioned, Amazigh still holds the status of being the language that 'shapes the mental world of Berber speakers and defines their collective cultural identity' (Boukous, 1995a: 11). It is indeed a fact that the language has been marginalized for several years to make room for the Arabization process, especially after the French Protectorate (1912-1956) attempt to separate the 'Berbers' and the Arabs. Nonetheless, the Amazigh cultural movement received much support and made a name for itself in the Moroccan political pool. The echo of this uprising has made its way today to several respected universities both in Europe and the Americas.

Regardless of the crucial status of Amazigh, it is only fair to note that it is still greatly confined to merely a few parts of the country (the Rif, the Atlas, and the high parts of the Sahara south), despite the fact that there are important areas in other locations in Morocco (Boukous, 1995a: 11).

2) Arabic

The Arabic language is related to Hebrew, Aramaic, and several other Semitic languages. The wide spread of the language over several countries gave birth to new varieties and Morocco was of course one of those countries since it is part of the Islamic Conquests’ area. For the purposes of the present research, it is of concern to us that we discuss two forms of Arabic namely, ‘MSA’ (Modern Standard Arabic), which refers to the standardized form used in official settings, and ‘Dialectal Arabic’, the verbal version and non-standardized variety. This entails the existence of a diglossic situation within the diaglossia happening between the different languages. Therefore, MSA takes the role of the ‘High’ language, serving as means of communication in formal settings such as religion, education and politics. On the other hand, Moroccan Arabic plays the role of the ‘Low’ language, used in informal situations. The dissimilarities that pop-up when comparing the two languages is highly noticeable lexically, prosodically, structurally, and Grammar wise. This melting pot of languages and varieties causes problems for young learners of MSA. In their eyes, MSA is a ‘foreign’ language since that it is not the language they acquire at home. This results into a high number of illiterates in Morocco. This brought the issue, in the recent years, of recognizing the Moroccan variety as a language and, therefore, use it as a language of instruction. However, this caused a prolonged and controversial debate in the country. Despite MSA as the written variety remains intact by influence from Moroccan Arabic, a few linguists beg to differ. Boukous (1995b: 35), for instance, posit that there is a new born in the Moroccan context. Boukous refers to this form as ‘intermediary’ and claims it is used mainly by the educated elite merely in formal settings as it is the case in national television and radio broadcasting. Ennaji (1995) also shed light on this phenomenon with the nomenclature ‘Educated Spoken Arabic’, which is used by educated people working in media. Ennaji goes further and posits that there is often a codemixing between Moroccan Arabic and MSA due to the lack of a full grasp of the formal language or to oversimplify for the layman in the audience.

3) French

While the two aforementioned languages have made the sociolinguistic situation very complex, this multilingual situation became even more delicate after the contact of French on the country during the French protectorate in 1912. France imposed French as the language of civilization in Morocco and downgraded the importance of Arabic.
Therefore, most of the resistance attempts focused on restoring Arabic being the sacred language of Islamic population, not only in Morocco, but in the region of North Africa. Logically, French failed to compete with Arabic in religious contexts. However, it overtook the role of the language use in education and administrative endeavors. During the colonialism period (1912–1956), knowledge of the French language was highly demanded in power positions and, henceforth, was learned by the elite. and so was learnt by an elite. Its widespread stood against the Arabization, which we still witness until today. Since Independence, a high number of people learnt French given its importance in the job market. Therefore, despite the lack of any form of officialization of the latter, it remains of paramount importance in several crucial domains namely, economy, science, technology, and to a great extent in media. It possesses an honorary position in education and a greater position in the private sector.

Due to the long history of all of the languages in Morocco, multilingualism expanded for centuries, making the population to become bilingual. Nonetheless, the language policy focus post to independence ignored the linguistic reality and focused on unifying the country’s linguistic situation.

**Significance of the Study**

This study should be of interest to a number of researchers focusing on research in the field of linguistics in Morocco, Language policy, the fast growth of Sociolinguistics in Morocco. By providing insights into attitudes of Moroccan researchers toward the current status of Sociolinguistics and to what extent has it developed since its emergence in the 1970s, this study contributes to a general understanding of all the languages/varieties spoken in Morocco and how researcher approach them within the field of sociolinguistics. Furthermore, this paper provides insights serving language attitude research as well as ethnomological studies and to some extent historical linguistics.

This paper provides an opportunity to look at how the field of linguistics, which witnessed the booming growth, is viewed through the eyes of local researchers. If researchers working in sociolinguistics were able to identify what is needs to be elaborated upon and which topic, language, variety is over researched, they are able to adjust their interest according to what needs to be studied and researched more rather than reinventing the wheel. Furthermore, curriculum makers could make use of this study to reconsider the content and the design of the curriculum in order to please the interest of students and make the learning process faster and more efficient for them.
The purpose behind such a study is to find out what are the researchers’ views towards an important field of linguistics such as Sociolinguistics. This paper also seeks to provide concrete knowledge about the nature of Sociolinguistic research published in three languages namely, Arabic, French, and English. This research also seeks to determine if there is a significant difference in the attitudes of different researchers towards linguistic research published in each of the aforementioned languages. Henceforth, the study seeks to answer the following research question:

- What is the attitude of linguists towards the nature of linguistic research produced thus far?

**Methodology**

1. **Research Design**
   The design of this study is quantitative in nature. That is, this paper seeks to provide descriptive and inferential results. Therefore, the instrument used herein was determined as a proper questionnaire. The latter targeted researchers working on linguistics in Morocco. The participants were assured complete privacy and the use of their information only for the purpose of this study. The participants were advised to provide honest answers and give their viewpoint about their attitudes towards the nature of sociolinguistics research in Morocco through the way they see it.

2. **Participants**
   The participants in the present study were 33 researchers (n=14 females and n=18 males). They have different backgrounds and they speak different mother tongues (Moroccan Arabic and Amazigh). The population was gathered from Mohammed V University in Rabat, both from Faculty of Letters and Humanities (FLSHR) or Faculty of Human Science (FSE) and, to a less extent, from several other universities namely, Ibn Tofeil University in Kenitra, Moulay Ismail University in Meknes, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University in Fes, Kadi Ayyad in Marrakech, and Hassan II University in Casablanca.

3. **Instrumentation**
   The instrumentation used in this study is a questionnaire in the form of an online survey. The questionnaire used in the study contains three sections, the first of which had to do with the background of the participants. The second part had to do with languages/varieties in Morocco and tested the participants’ knowledge in the Moroccan linguistics situation and the third section tested the attitude of the participants on research in Sociolinguistics. The type of question was diversified to avoid any robotic answers. The questions ranged from multiple choice and ranking, to Likert scale and ordering.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section consists of two main sections. First, it provides a report of the results of the current study as obtained by the implemented instruments elaborated on previously. Second, the results of the study are discussed in the light of the research question.

1. Descriptive Statistics

The following table provides the descriptive statistics of this study

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The table above shows a number of 33 participants. the mean value is $\mu = 1.45$. The standard deviation is SD = 0.50.

2. One Sample t-test

A t-test is used herein since the population is represented into one group representative of the attitude of researcher on Sociolinguistic research in Morocco. Since the population value is not identified, this paper will not make use of a z-test but rather a t-test with an estimated population variance. The test value is determined to be 1.5. That is, this paper is comparing the population sample to the population value of researchers in Morocco with a ratio of 1.5.

Concerning the first research question, the result of descriptive analysis shows that the overall mean score of English language attitude among the participants is.

After conducting the test using SPSS version 20, the following results is elicited:
Table 2: One Sample t-test

| Research in Sociolinguistics in Morocco deals with all languages/varieties used in Morocco equally? | 6.99 | 32 | .00 |
| Research in Sociolinguistics in Morocco is the most developed field of linguistics? | 8.58 | 32 | .00 |
| Research conducted on Arabic and Amazigh is equal? | 4.26 | 32 | .00 |
| Research in Sociolinguistics focuses on one language/dialect more than the rest | 10.43 | 32 | .00 |
| how evolved do you think is research in sociolinguistics in Morocco? | 3.00 | 32 | .00 |
| how much do you think research in Sociolinguistics is important? | 0.31 | 32 | .75 |

Table 2 above reveals a number of revealing results. The test reported a significance value of Sig= .00. Since it is below 0.05, the value provided herein shows a high significance. That is, to answer the questions in the table above. The participants believe that research in Sociolinguistics in Morocco does not deal with all languages/varieties used in Morocco equally but rather focuses on certain language and varieties. Despite the booming growth of Sociolinguistics since the 1970s, research in the area, according to the result, is still not the most developed field of linguistics, hence, needs more work to conducted. Concerning research conducted on Arabic and Amazigh as being two of the most crucial languages in Morocco, the results shows that the work is heavily oriented towards one language rather than the other which can be explained through the fact that Amazigh was not recognized by the state as an official language until recent years. Concerning which languages are most researched, the result showed to be in favor of Amazigh as the 13 of the participants chose the latter as the most researched. This is given the fact that interest in the Amazigh language and language grew rapidly. Hence, the language is appealing to researcher. Also, the creation of IRCAM, the Royal Institute of Amazigh culture helped in supporting standardization of the language and therefore an increase of research conducted on the latter. Concerning how evolved research in sociolinguistics in Morocco the result shows that the population sample indicates that the research in sociolinguistic is evolved but only concerning certain languages as it does not cover all languages/varieties equally as we have seen in the question about equality in research conducted on Arabic and Amazigh. Concerning the important of Sociolinguistic research in Morocco, the result was, however, insignificant. This entails that Moroccan researchers are
still not satisfied with the work done so far in the field since it’s a relatively new field in Morocco, compared to other fields like Morphology, Phonology, and Syntax which existed in Morocco before the booming growth of Sociolinguistics in the 1970s.

**CONCLUSION**

This study results that there is no question about the fact that sociolinguistic research in Morocco is dealing with a very big number of languages and varieties. Most participants’ answers were different from one language/variety to another and this shows that despite the fast growth of sociolinguistic research in Morocco, it is still not as elaborated since researchers in the field have a wide range of language and varieties and their aspects to research on. This big amount of issues to conduct research, however, could allow sociolinguistics to grow bigger than the other fields of linguistics. Because the Moroccan language policies are changing the linguistic situation in Morocco, since the country recognized Amazigh as an official language only recently, researchers are not certain about how equal research on both Arabic and Amazigh is, not to mention the foreign languages spoken in the country.

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**REFERENCES**


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