

Assessing the Ethno-/Socio-linguistic Vitality of ‘Arabic’, French, and Zenete in the Touat

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Résumé

L’objectif de cet article est de tester l’applicabilité des théories Ethnolinguistiques (Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977) et Sociolinguistiques (C.C Mann, 2000) sur la vitalité des langues à travers un échantillon d’étudiants (1^{ère}, 2^{ème}, et 3^{ème} année Anglais) de l’université d’Adrar. Les langues choisies pour confirmer ou infirmer ces théories sont la langue arabe, la langue française et le dialecte Zénète. Deux recherches sur terrain ont été faites à deux périodes différentes (2006 et 2009). La technique employée est celle de Bourhis, Giles et Rosenthal (1981) appelée Subjective Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaire (SEVQ). Nous utilisons aussi l’hierarchie des jugements de Zahn et Hopper (1985) pour mesurer la perception de la vitalité des variétés de langue mentionnées par les étudiants universitaires.

Introduction

The ‘degree of life’ of a language variety is a priority for human groupings as it helps measuring their identity vis-à-vis others’ identities. During the 1970’s, the emergence of the socio-psychological model of language use known as ***Ethnolinguistic Vitality*** (EV) (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor 1977) was an important landmark within the fields of linguistics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics. The theory proposed several ‘objective’ features to explain the variability of language use: *status*, *demography* and *institutional support*. The more an ethnic group scores higher along those three components, the higher its EV is felt in society. The human groupings which score lower may witness the disappearance of their language variety and the loss of their own vitality on behalf of the more vibrant group. It is theoretically important to broaden the background of EV to enclose that of ***Sociolinguistic Vitality*** (SV) (C.C.Mann, 2000) as

it may explicate the non-use of a foreign language such as French. This last is not categorisable as an ethnic language variety nor the language of any given human grouping encountered on the Touat area. It is also noteworthy that the ***Sociocommunicational Need Hypothesis*** (Mann, 2000) applies to the present research work. This concept aims at showing the ‘real’ vs. ‘nominal’ vitality of any given language variety through progressive communicational needs of the speech community using it.

This paper intends to shed light on the ***Ethnolinguistic*** vitality of ‘Arabic’ and Zenete, as compared to the ***Sociolinguistic*** vitality of French within the Touat speech community of Adrar. Two field-researches were done at two different dates: 2006 and 2009, and the samples consist of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year university students from the department of English. The technique employed is that of the ***Subjective Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaire*** (SEVQ) of Bourhis, Giles and Rosenthal (1981). We also make use of Zahn and Hopper’s (1985) hierarchy of judgements to try to assess the vitality of the language varieties studied according to the linguistic perceptions of the students.

The results give various interpretations among which the students tendencies as well as language attitudes towards the three language varieties. We conclude by confirming that the EV of ‘Arabic’ is much more important than that of Zenete. On the other hand, we also demonstrate that French has lost ground and that its SV is insignificantly perceived by the native speakers. This fact is substantiated by the results of the second field research. As an example, the low averages obtained in the exam on French of the Baccalaureate of 2008 are a clear illustration of the level of bilingualism encountered in the Touat.

1. Theory

1.1 Defining Ethnolinguistic Groups

Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977:308) define an ‘ethnolinguistic group’ as “that which makes a group behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations”. Fishman sees

that ethnicity can well be described as: "...an aspect of a collectivity's self-recognition as well as an aspect of its recognition in the eyes of outsiders" (1977:16) (1). The latter definition applies to the Zenetes and the Arabs of the Touat who differentiate between themselves both at the socio-cultural level as well as at the linguistic one. Beebe and Giles (1984) give a thorough definition in the following terms:

"Individuals are more likely to define themselves in ethnic terms and adopt strategies for positive linguistic differentiation (for example, divergence and linguistic creativity) to the extent that they (1) identify strongly with their ethnic group, which considers language an important dimension of its identity; (2) regard their group's relative status as changeable and illegitimate; (3) perceive their ingroup to have high ethnolinguistic vitality; (4) perceive their ingroup boundaries to be hard and closed; (5) identify strongly with few other social categories..." (Beebe and Giles 1984:13)

Vitality can be defined as the existence of a group of people who speaks the language variety as its first language, i.e. mother-tongue. (cf. Stewart, 1968, and Fishman 1970) The vitality of 'Arabic' and Zenete in the Touat is of a paramount importance for the natives. As argued by Hamers and Blanc "the higher the vitality the more likely a group and its language(s) are to survive as a distinctive entity" (1989:163). The consciousness of the group to their ethnic and ethnolinguistic difference is as important as their existence within the larger speech community. This awareness is built on the distinctiveness of the group as a whole and on their collective entity in a multilingual and multiethnic setting.

The continued existence and survival of both 'Arabic' and Zenete in the Touat depends on social, cultural and educational factors that either inhibit or encourage the group's vitality (Kristiansen,

Harwood, and Giles 1991; Harwood, Giles, and Bourhis 1994). The social status factor is based on the speech community's perception of the role and importance of the language varieties concerned. In other words, people's language attitudes differ according to their social valuation of the varieties of language present on the area. (cf. Edwards 1982:20 and Fasold 1984:148) These factors are also related to the group's economic value and sociohistorical background.

The cultural aspect is among the most essential criteria of the EV of 'Arabic' and Zenete. The larger society may have a biased idea about one language variety and not the other, depending on the relative status of each. The prestige of the speakers, which is linked to their economic, socio-historical and political importance within the society, affects the status and vitality of the language variety concerned.

The institutional variables are the support or the encouragement that a language receives both at the formal and informal representations. This does also mean that the language is used in formal institutions like the government, the media, education, the religious services and the economic sectors, which are vital for its survival.

1.2 Defining Ethnolinguistic Vitality

Ethnolinguistic Vitality is an outcome of two different social theories of group behaviour: Tajfel's (1974) theory of *Intergroup Relations of Social Change* and Giles's (1973, 1975) *Speech Accommodation Theory* (SAT). Tajfel's theory seeks to explain the behaviour of people who, while in intergroup communication activities, tend to display their positive values to the other groups. Hence, the theory is based on such factors as:

Social categorisation; social identity; social comparison; and psychological distinctiveness. Giles's theory, on the other hand, tries to explain changes in the speech of any individual speaker for

intrapersonal reasons such as motivation, or for interpersonal ones such as social relations, identity and /or status.

Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) built their theory on the grounds that it would explain some but not all the phenomena related to language use and language attitudes. Concerning the objective factors considered in their analysis, they argue that they “do not consider our analysis of the factors involved in vitality to be in any sense exhaustive or that the individual variables themselves are necessarily mutually exclusive” (1977:310)

1.3 Measuring the Vitality of Language

Objective vitality can be measured through objective data such as the demographic, the social and the political characteristics of the speakers, the institutional support of the language varieties, and the domains of use of these latter. *Subjective* vitality (Bourhis, Giles, and Rosenthal, 1981) (2) relates to the speakers’ own perception of their native language compared to others within the same speech community. (cf. Williams F., 1973)

The demographic characteristics report the absolute number of members of the in-group and their geographical distribution over the territory. The demographic patterns refer also to the birth rate of the group, the mixed marriages that occur between the members of the group, as well as the relative number of speakers of the language varieties present throughout the area. However, and as argued by Fishman (2001), the demographic factors are not imperative to revitalise a language variety which is about to change through shift, or which is endangered because of the proximity and superiority of another one.

Demography does not necessarily have a negative impact on the subordinate group’s identity. On the reverse, it can lead to the revitalisation of its self-identity as well as its language as a consequence of group’s solidarity and cohesion.

Harwood, Giles and Bourhis (1994:172) define the *Subjective Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaire* as “...a way of measuring group members’ assessments of in/outgroup vitality on each of the

items constituting the demographic, institutional support, and status dimensions of the objective vitality framework.”

This technique, which springs from Giles, Bourhis and Taylor’s (1977) construct of ***Objective Ethnolinguistic Vitality***, assesses and measures the influence of socio-structural variables on intergroup relations, second/foreign language learning and language maintenance. It also allows for a clearer appreciation of the speech community’s attitudes towards the various language varieties in presence. (Hoenigswald, 1966)

In 1986, Allard and Landry developed the ***Beliefs on Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaire*** (BEVQ), which was based on Kreitler and Kreitler (1972) “***Cognitive Orientation Theory***” of human behaviour (3). This questionnaire, thanks to which Allard and Landry set their ***Self and Social Beliefs*** approach (1992), classifies people according to normative beliefs, i.e. what are the norms that implement and provide vitality. Personal beliefs, on the other hand, concern the individual’s own perception of his behaviour and situation within the context of the larger group.

The last variable, goal beliefs, is concerned with the learner’s objectives towards the foreign language and the way he acts to improve the vitality of the language. BEVQ provides information about the vitality of both the mother tongue and the foreign languages which are taught or used by the speech community. This model of questionnaire is useful in the sense that it warns about language maintenance and language loss of a given variety.

1.4 Defining Sociolinguistic Vitality

The concept of ***Sociolinguistic Vitality***, as proposed by Mann (2000) tries to account for those language varieties which, although present and used within the speech community, cannot be categorised as ethnic, or national, or regional language varieties. In our case, French cannot be ‘really’ and ‘objectively’ measured according to EV theory and objective factors, since it does not verify the very fundamental principle of Giles, Bourhis

and Taylor's theory (1977) which is the "ethnographic group" that uses this language as its native tongue. It is, therefore, needful to add a complementary theory to fill in the gaps of EV.

The SV theory states that: "...the broader term *sociolinguistic vitality* should be adopted to account for such languages; more so, given that (real) EV generally translates into SV." (Mann, 2000:469) Mann posits that a language which lacks an ethnographic group may be used for some socio-communicational activities among the speakers.

The low status, demography and institutional support that French lacks, for example, in the Touat area are the main factors that inhibit its spread and vitality within the speech of the natives. Yet, it may show some signs of *progressive vitality* (Mann, 2000) (4) if the speakers feel a need to use it.

1.5 Defining Sociocommunicational Needs

Socio-communicational Needs (Mann, 2000) can be defined as the daily use of language for oral or written interaction between members of the speech community. Yet, this language does not have any formal/official purpose within the community although used in certain formal domains. Mann defines socio-communication as follows: "This term is used...to mean casual, everyday language communication between members of a speech community, even within formal domains, but which, in principle, has no formal/official purpose." (2000:472)

We notice that Mann's definition applies well to Zenete as it is used for oral communication and lacks the official/formal purposes that 'Arabic' has, for instance. This fact is made clearer through the tentative configurations about the vitality of the three language varieties that we have in Table1.

Table1: Tentative configurations about the vitality of three language varieties in the Touat (Modelled on Giles, Bourhis and Taylor 1977)

Group	Stat us	Demogra phy	Institution al support	Overall vitality
Arabic	High	High	High	High
French	Low	-----	Medium~Low	Low
Zenete	Low	Medium	Low	Low

In Table2, we also set tentative domain usages for the three language varieties within the local Touat speech community. This table gives us a clearer idea about the relative vitality of Zenete as compared to the ‘real’ vitality of ‘Arabic’. It also gives us a clear picture about the ‘nominal’ vitality of French within the same social context:

Table2: Domain usages for ‘Arabic’, French and Zenete in the Touat (Modelled on Mann 2000:467)

Domain/status	‘Arabic’	French	Zenete
1. <i>Official/National Language status:</i>	+	-	-
2. <i>Sociocommunication:</i>	+	-	+
3. <i>Codified/Standard:</i>			
3.1 <i>Linguistic research:</i>	+	-	-
3.2 <i>Standard orthography</i>	+	+	-
4. <i>Established literature:</i>	+	-	-

<i>5. Educational status:</i>			
<i>5.1 Primary level:</i>			
<i>5.1.1 subject:</i>	+	+	-
<i>5.1.2 medium of instruction:</i>	+	+	-
<i>5.2 Secondary level:</i>			
<i>5.2.1 subject:</i>	+	+	-
<i>5.2.2 medium of instruction:</i>	+	-	-
<i>5.3 University level:</i>			
<i>5.3.1 subject:</i>	+	-	-
<i>5.3.2 medium of instruction</i>			
<i>6. Media use:</i>			
<i>6.1 State (Wilaya):</i>	+	+	+
<i>6.2 National:</i>	+	+	-
<i>6.3 International:</i>	+	+	-
<i>7. Social prestige:</i>			
<i>7. Social prestige:</i>	+	+	-
<i>8. Authenticity & identity:</i>			
<i>8.1 Ethnic:</i>	+	-	-
<i>8.2 Social:</i>	+	-	-
<i>8.3 National:</i>			
<i>9. Science & Technology</i>			
<i>9. Science & Technology</i>	+	+	-
<i>10. Religious activities:</i>			
<i>10. Religious activities:</i>	+	-	+
<i>11. Courts of justice</i>			
<i>11. Courts of justice</i>	+	-	-
<i>Total</i>	20	10	04

Table2 shows the ‘nominal’ vitality of each language variety. The total number of pluses for each reflects the ‘real’ disparity that exists between them at the social level. ‘Arabic’ remains the most vital and most important means of communication; this is clearly revealed through the 20 pluses it ‘objectively’ scores.

Although Zenete scores the least through those objective factors, it is 'subjectively' more valued than French by the natives, as will be shown in the two field researches.

2. The First Field-research

The questionnaires used in this research aim at measuring the vitality of 'Arabic' (MSA), French and Zenete in the Touat speech community. The questionnaires are given to a sample of speakers chosen at random among University students (classes of 2nd and 3rd year English in 2006). The participants are both males and females. This category of age is composed of young adults aged 18 to 25 years.

The questionnaires are based on Harwood, Giles and Bourhis's (1994) *SEVQ*; they address questions about the linguistic vitality of 'Arabic', French, and Zenete as well as questions dealing with the attitudes of the speakers towards these language varieties. These are:

- What is the vitality of 'Arabic' and French according to the speakers' sex?
- What is the vitality of 'Arabic' and French in such domains as the home, the street, etc.?
- Does the regional locale have an impact on the speaker's perceptions of the vitality of 'Arabic', French, and Zenete?

Thanks to the results, we show that the vitality of the concerned language varieties is variously perceived in southern Algeria. The young people are sensitive to the competition that exists between the majority and the minority with regard to their positive or negative social identities. As such, they give a plain idea about the vitality of the various languages and language varieties in opposition within their speech community. Our concern is, thus, "to understand what it is that determines and defines these attitudes" (Garrett, Coupland and Williams 2003; Abd-el-Jawad 2006).

Our study draws upon Shaaban and Ghait's (2002) research with Lebanese university students about their perceptions of the

ethnolinguistic vitality of ‘Arabic’, French and English. The difference between that study and the present one lies in the choice of the participants and in the selection of the language varieties (‘Arabic’, French, and Zenete in our case).

The questions dealing with language attitudes of the young speakers towards the three language varieties are based on Zahn and Hopper’s (1985) tripartite hierarchy of judgements. From the first, referred to as ‘superiority’, we draw ‘rich’ and ‘scientific’ and avoid ‘prestigious’, for it receives stereotyped answers on the parts of the participants. From ‘social attractiveness’, we choose ‘useful’ as it may divulge the speaker’s own perceptions of the usefulness of language varieties both at the individual and societal levels. The last judgement of the questionnaire is ‘difficult’. It is taken from Zahn and Hopper’s third level: ‘dynamism’.

2.1 The First Sample

The questionnaires are filled in by boys and girls, students of the department of English, University of Adrar. Throughout the questionnaires, the word ‘Arabic’ means MSA in formal context and situation. It also means local dialectal variety in informal domains of use such as the home, the street, and so on. The first sample breakdowns as follows:

Institution	Males	Females	Total
<i>University of Adrar</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>44</i>

In the next section, we interpret the questionnaires. The results inform about the young people’s social and linguistic attitudes towards their original language, towards a local mother-tongue and towards a foreign language, i.e. ‘Arabic’, Zenete, and French respectively.

2.2 Questionnaires Interpretation

The results are split into three parts. The first part reports two different answers to two different questions: the first one is about the participants' perceptions of the linguistic vitality of 'Arabic', French, and Zenete while addressing old people. The second answers are about the students' perceptions of the vitality of 'Arabic', French, and Zenete while addressing the mother. That is to say, the questions concern the use of language in an intimate situation, which involves the use of the least monitored language variety: the mother-tongue.

The second part illustrates the scores concerning the students' perceptions of the *Ethno linguistic* vitality of 'Arabic' and Zenete at home. It is tackled from different perspectives, among which the students' perceptions of the linguistic vitality of 'Arabic' and Zenete according to their sex, as well as according to the area where they come from.

The third part compares the *Ethno linguistic* vitality of 'Arabic' to the *Sociolinguistic* vitality of French. Two different questions are asked: the first concerns the students' attitudes towards 'Arabic' and French according to their sex. The next one deals with their sensitivity to the vitality of both language varieties in the mass-media.

2.3 Part One

2.3.1 Linguistic Vitality of 'Arabic', French, and Zenete with Old People

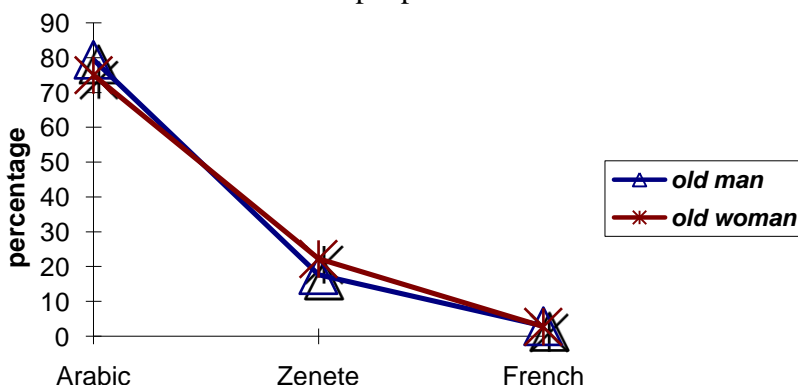
When we compare the use of language with interlocutors, the university students present the same tendencies. They address an old man and an old woman in 'Arabic'. Concerning Zenete, the students admit that they infrequently use the local dialect to talk to old people. The difference being the frequency of use of the latter language variety: there is a more frequent use of Zenete with old women than with old men. Since old women did not and do not attend neither formal nor informal schools, they speak Zenete from birth for everyday communication. Therefore, their children

address them in that language variety. Concerning French, the informants have a low percentage of use of this foreign language. The results are reported in the next table and graph:

Table3: Percentages of use of Arabic, French and Zenete to address old Touat people

	Arabic	Zenete	French
old men	79.41	17.64	2.94
old women	75	22.22	2.77

Graph n°1 : students' use of language to talk to old people



These results attest that Arabic is more frequently used than Zenete. This argument is substantiated by the insignificant use of Zenete. It is made use of to talk to old people who are, for the most, illiterate or less educated.

2.3.2 Linguistic Vitality of ‘Arabic’, French, and Zenete to Address the Mother

Zenete is a stigmatised language variety. The young speakers avoid using it in intimate situations with their mothers, like reported in the next table. They prefer speaking in the larger group’s mother tongue: ‘Arabic’. French is admittedly not the language of intimate verbal transmission. Although negatively perceived by the youngsters, it scores higher than Zenete in this domain of language use.

Table4: Percentage of use of the three language varieties with the mother

	Arabic	French	Zenete	Total%
Mother	85.26	8.42	6.31	100

The young speakers’ attitudes towards their mother tongue and the foreign language are a matter of beliefs as well as motivation. Learning a foreign language underlies personal efforts and aspiration to achieve certain goals in society. It is subject to the learners’ motivation orientations, interest in the foreign language, as well as attitudes towards the language. If the student desires to learn the language to integrate the foreign language’s society and culture, he will be well motivated and will exhibit higher performance and competence in that language. (cf. Spolsky’s Conditions 48 & 49 to learn a Second Language, 1989)(5) But if the student tries to learn the foreign language because it is a means to get a job, he will show less performance and competence than in the first case.

2.4 Part Two

2.4.1 Ethnolinguistic Vitality of ‘Arabic’ and Zenete in the Home Domain

The results are as follows:

Table5: Percentage of use of Arabic and Zenete in the Home domain

Domain of use	Arabic	Zenete	Total %
Home	94.18	5.81	100

The table makes it clear that the young speakers use ‘Arabic’ at home, and shows that Zenete is seldom put to use (5.81% of the students) within the same domain.

2.4.2 Ethno linguistic Vitality of ‘Arabic’ and Zenete at Home according to Sex of Speaker

When sex of speaker is considered, we notice that the girls make use of Zenete more than the boys. However, the scores prove that the females’ use of Zenete is not as important as their use of ‘Arabic’ (6.77% vs. 93.22%, respectively). The next table reports the scores:

Table6: Percentage of use of Arabic and Zenete according to sex of speakers

	Arabic	Zenete	Total%
Males	96.29	3.7	100
Females	93.22	6.77	100

2.4.3 Ethnolinguistic Vitality of ‘Arabic’ and Zenete at Home according to Regional Origin

When location is taken into account, we find that Zenete is not used in the Touat and the Tidikelt areas. The young Gourara speakers use both their mother-tongue (Zenete) and the larger community’s language variety (‘Arabic’) at home. The table illustrates the scores obtained:

Table7: Percentage of use of Arabic and Zenete according to regional origin

	Arabic	Zenete	Total
Gourara	76.19	23.8	100
Touat	100	0	100
Tidikelt	100	0	100

2.5 Part Three

Young people hold passionate feelings towards correctness and purity of languages (cf. Cameron, 1995: 236). These social and sociolinguistic attitudes, which are fostered onto them right from early childhood, reinforce social inequalities particularly if ‘prestige’ is a social and constant variable discriminating between the languages in presence.

Purity and correctness cause social stigmatisation and linguistic disadvantages among the users. Their will for a ‘prestige-based correctness’ (cf. Myhill, 2004:391) causes their rejection of some language usages. Their linguistic awareness is influenced not only by their parents, but also by the school, the media and the various socio-cultural concepts related to the various language varieties.

2.5.1 Linguistic Vitality of ‘Arabic’ and French

The answers are analysed through Zahn and Hopper’s hierarchical system of attitudes and judgement towards languages. The results are as follows:

Table8: Students' attitudes towards Arabic and French

Judgements		Arabic	French	Total
'dynamism'	difficult	19.35	80.64	100
'social attractiveness'	useful	61.94	38.06	100
'superiority'	scientific	29.41	70.58	100
	rich	64.28	35.71	100

The students acknowledge that French is more scientific than Arabic, since French is among the means of expression of scientific and technological developments. They class Arabic as a rich language, for it is the language of the Koran.

In ethnolinguistic terms, the scores obtained confirm that in the educational domain 'Arabic' is more valued than French. Yet, French remains the most appropriate medium for topics such as technology and science.

2.5.2 Linguistic Vitality of 'Arabic' and French in the Mass-media

The perceived vitality of 'Arabic' and French is also tested in the domain of the Mass-media. The results are reported in the following table:

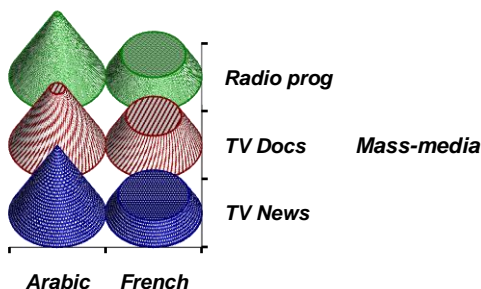
Table9: Vitality of Arabic and French in the mass-media

	Arabic	French
TV News	79.12	20.87
TV Documentaries	66.29	33.7
Radio programs	73.86	26.13

The table shows that the students rank 'Arabic' (i.e. MSA) as the most appropriate means of communication for the mass-media. The French language, on the other hand, does not receive higher scores compared to 'Arabic' in the same situations of use. The only significant score for

French is in matter of TV documentaries (s=33.7%). The next graph illustrates the results:

Graph n°2: Students' Perceptions of the Vitality of Arabic and French in the Mass-media



From an ethno linguistic point of view, these scores prove that 'Arabic' is perceived by the young speakers as the most suitable means of communication for the mass-media. The fact that they fare 'Arabic' higher than French gives us an idea about the impact of 'Arabisation' on the young people. It does also inform us about the role and impact of the environment in fostering such attitudes towards 'Arabic' and French. At the level of the radio, the local network does not broadcast programmes in French; all the programmes are in 'Arabic', apart the 02.00 to 03.00 pm news bulletins which are delivered in Zenete or in Tamachek (i.e.: Tuareg). These results give a further interpretation; it concerns the level of bilingualism of the concerned students. To measure this, a new field-research is undertaken and is described in the next section.

3. The Second Field-research

3.1 The Second Sample

The informants are 1st year university students from the department of English. The marks they obtained in the exam of French of the Baccalaureate of 2008 are picked up from their admission files. The sample breakdowns as follows:

Situation	Boys	Girls	Total
<i>University of Adrar</i>	21	57	78

We notice that the number of girls is more than twice that of the boys. This disparity is also found in the marks obtained in the exam of French, as will be shown in the next lines.

3.2 Analysing the Marks

The analysis of the admission files bring about various results and interpretations. To have a clearer picture of the trends, and in particular the level in French, the following tables are illustrative:

Marks of French	boys	girls	Total
-10	21	34	55
+10	00	23	23
Total	21	57	78

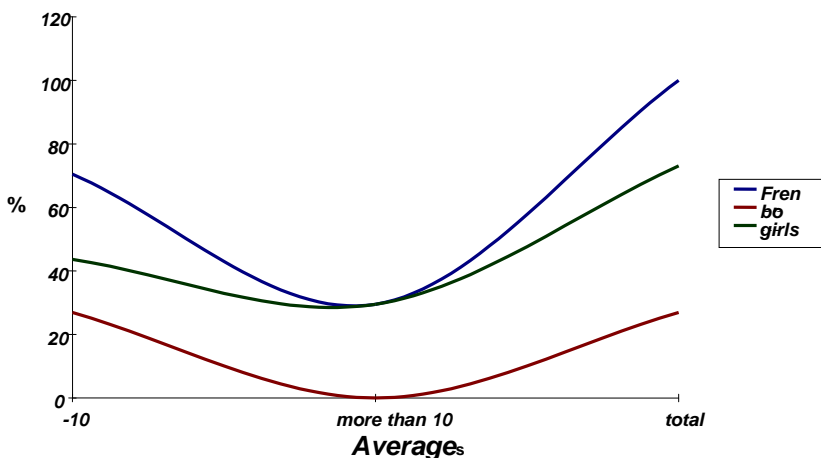
% of averages in French	boys	girls	Total
-10	26,92	43,58	70,51
+ 10	0	29,48	29,48
Total	26,92	73,06	100

A straight and striking outcome of the analysis is that all the boys (n=21) have less than 10/20 in the French exam (i.e.: 26.92%).

That is to say, no one of them has an average mark in this matter. On the opposite, the girls (n=57) come up with three different results; first, they score both above and under the average. Second, the number of those who do not have the average is more important than that of the boys (34 vs. 21, respectively) and than that of the girls who have the average (n=23). And third, among all the registered students, they are the only ones to have average marks in French in the Baccalaureate of 2008. Hence, in the light of these results, we can understand that the students' level of bilingualism is almost absent and nil for the boys. More than that, the girls do not have a higher level of French bilingualism, but only a certain number of them. As such, one can say that the students give us an example of "L2 avoidance" to French.

4. Discussion

Graph n°3: Percentages of averages obtained in French, Baccalaureate 2008



Overall results of the linguistic vitality of 'Arabic', French and Zenete in the Touat point out to various conclusions:

-the ethno linguistic vitality of ‘Arabic’ as a dominant language is well attested.

-Zenete, as a native mother tongue, is losing ground within the speech communities verbal repertoire and symbolic functions as language of the home.

-French is a language variety restricted to scientific domains of use such as education, only. That is to say, the sociolinguistic vitality of French in the Touat area and in the speech of the youngsters is quite low.

-‘Arabic’ is perceived as the most appropriate linguistic tool for formal situations of language use. It is the symbol of identity, and of a long literary tradition and heritage. As such, it is judged as ‘richer’ than any other language variety.

However, and this is often the reason, there may be hindering factors that inhibit learning foreign languages. There are societal attitudes which cause the learners’ avoidance of one language or another. In the case of the Touat speech community, learning a foreign, in particular French is less valued than knowing ‘Arabic’. This is verified in the marks that the students obtained in the French exam of the Baccalaureate of 2008. We see that the male students do not have averages in French; this may be due to the impact of their society on their language attitudes and to the fact that the number of speakers of French is insignificant in the Touat area. Hence, the boys verify Spolsky’s “Condition 49: linguistic divergence” (cf. note 5)

From another angle, the results of the Baccalaureate show that the female students have divergent tendencies. The first is that most of them do not have averages in French, as is the case for the boys. And the second is that some girls scores well in that exam. Two interpretations can be given to this case. One of them is that some girls respect their society’s desires, among which avoiding

the learning of French. The other is that some other girls show a desire to learn foreign languages, such as French, to climb up the social ladder, or to be able to speak in a language different from their mother-tongue. It may be also the fact that their parents encourage them to learn foreign languages. As such, the girls verify Spolsky's "Condition 48: Linguistic convergence" (cf..note 5)

Notes

1. Fishman's main components of ethnicity are:

-paternity: i.e. "the recognition of putative biological origins"

-patrimony: which 'relates to how ethnicity collectivities come into being and to how individuals get to be members of these collectivities' (1977:20); and

-phenomenology: i.e. the meanings attached by the actors of an ethnicity to the descent-related being (paternity) and behaving (patrimony) (1977:23)

2. Bourhis, Giles, and Rosenthal (1981) designed the SEVQ based on a 22-item questionnaire.

3. To predict social behaviour, Allard and Landry's (1986) theory sets the following beliefs:

1. **General beliefs**: 'provide information concerning persons, objects, events or situations, in the past, present and future' (175)

2. **Normative beliefs**: 'rules and standards of a moral, aesthetic, and social nature' (175)

3. **Personal beliefs**: 'provide information concerning a person's self, habits, feelings, sensations and aptitudes, in the past, present and future' (175);

4. **Goal beliefs**: 'provide information concerning a person's desires and goals' (175-176)

4. Mann (2000) says that: "A language will show good and/or progressive vitality, in contexts where there is a

Sociocommunicational need for it, even if it has low status, low demography, and low institutional support” (p:470)

5. According to Spolsky (1989), there are two conditions that may explicate linguistic convergence and divergence. These are:

“Condition 48

Linguistic Convergence condition (typical, graded): Prefer to learn a language when

(a) you desire the social approval of its speakers, and/or

(b) you see strong value in being able to communicate with its speakers, and/or

(c) there are no social norms providing other methods of communication with speakers of that language, and/or

(d) your learning is reinforced or encouraged by speakers of the language.

Condition 49

Linguistic divergence condition (typical, graded): Prefer to learn a language if

(a) you wish to stress your continued membership of your own language community, and/or

(b) you wish to stress your dissociation from speakers of the language, and/or you wish speakers of that language to learn your language.” (1989:142)

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