

Endangered Languages: the Case of Taznatit in Gurara

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Zenete or Taznatit as pronounced by the Zenete, is one of the Berber varieties in Algeria (Taqbaylit, Tashawit, Tamzabit, Tashalhit, ...) which is spoken in the major urban centres in the region of Gurara, in the south of Algeria. However, since the independence of Algeria in 1962, the status of Taznatit has been changing because of social, political and economic reasons. The paper attempts to trace the evolution of Taznatit from the independence to present day focusing on two distinctive phases; the first, covers the period from 1962 to the Amazigh Spring in 1980, in which light is shed on the official language policy in Algeria and the efforts of Mouloud Mammeri to save Taznatit from extinction. The second phase covers the period from the Amazigh Spring to the present day, and it is devoted to the changes in language policy in Algeria focusing on the establishment of official institutions to promote Tamazight in all its varieties including Taznatit. The aim of the study is also to check the degree of vitality of Taznatit using the indicators defined by the UNESCO's Ad Hoc Group on Endangered Languages. The research is based on a survey consisting of 10 questions involving a sample of 100 participants from different areas in the region of Gurara. The analysis of data of the survey has shown that Zenete is critically endangered.