

Gender, Socialisation and Chaouia Shift in Progress

Sociolinguists have long recognised the role of gender in transmitting the heritage language in situations of contact (Canagarajah, 2008; Cavanaugh, 2006; Gal, 1978; Koufogiorgou, 2003; Winter & Pauwels, 2005, among others). Coates (2016) argues that in bi-/multi-lingual communities, linguistic preferences become vital in evoking and (re)constructing gendered identities through their association with masculinity and femininity, authenticity and prestige. Tamazight literature reports women as the main, if not the only, bearers of language maintenance (Becker, 2006, 2014; Bouhania, 2014; Hoffman, 2008; Sadiqi 2014; Thiriez, 1986).

This paper explores the shift away from Chaouia/ Tashawit to the use of Algerian Arabic in Batna (northeast Algeria) in light of recent socio-economic transitions. It focuses on the gender differences in language choice and considers how socialisation and cultural ideologies regarding men's and women's relationship to language shape those decisions. Building upon representations of masculinity and femininity, I explore the ways in which these gendered practices constrain or restrict Chaouia use among working-class speakers.

I use a qualitative approach with an embedded quantitative element to analyse interviews, fieldnotes from participants' observation in different settings, and surveys (153 females and 151 males). I draw on multiple site data that cover domestic and educational settings and social networks in Batna to examine the interplay between language socialisation at home, language choices at school and gender identities.

The increase in cross-ethnic contact with the larger Arabic-speaking society has introduced significant reconsiderations of social and linguistic priorities in the community. The findings show a clear impact of parents on the acquisition of a gendered pattern of language choices, with boys being addressed in Chaouia and girls in Algerian Arabic. This pattern is further reinforced at school, but also challenged with teaching Tamazight in the milieu. Moreover, as females' networks reflect a more ethnolinguistically heterogeneous nature, the traditional link of Tamazight to femininity is renegotiated to generate a discourse of linguistic responsibility and blame for identity loss.

Key Words: Chaouia, gender identities, language maintenance, socialisation, gendered practices, networks, identity

References

- Becker, C. (2014). *Amazigh arts in Morocco: women shaping Berber identity*. University of Texas Press.
- Becker, C. (2006). Amazigh arts in Morocco. *Women shaping Berber identity*.
- Bouhania, B. (2014). Zenet, an endangered language variety in southern Algeria. *International journal of language and linguistics* 2(2-6): 6-9.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (2008). Language shift and the family: Questions from the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora 1. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 12(2), 143-176.
- Cavanaugh, J. R. (2006). Little women and vital champions: Gendered language shift in a northern Italian town. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 16(2), 194-210.
- Coates, J. (2016). *Women, men and language: a sociolinguistic account of gender differences in language*. 3rd ed. Routledge
- Gal, S. (1978). Peasant men can't get wives: Language change and sex roles in a bilingual community. *Language in society*, 7(1), 1-16.
- Hoffman, K. E. (2008). *We share walls: Language, land, and gender in Berber Morocco*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Koufogiorgou, A. (2003). *Vlach-Aromanian in Metsovo: A sociolinguistic investigation of a case of language shift in Greece* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Essex).
- Sadiqi, F. (2014). *Moroccan feminist discourses*. Springer.
- Thiriez, P. (1986). En flânant dans les Aurès. *Éditions Numidia, Ain M'lila*, p33-p40.
- Winter, J., & Pauwels, A. (2005). Gender in the construction and transmission of ethnolinguistic identities and language maintenance in immigrant Australia. *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, 25(1), 153-168.