

Words in Contact: Arabic-Chaouia Contact, Ethnic Identity, and Lexical Change in the Aurès .

التقاء الكلمات: التقاء العربية و الشاوية، الهوية العرقية، و التغيير المعجمي في منطقة الاوراس
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le résumé :

This study seeks to investigate the influence of Arabic on Tachawit dialect in two speech communities in L'Aurès; namely: Batna and Oum El Bouaghi, and to explore its socio-cultural motives. The researcher collected data from 489 Chaouia participants who differ on many sociocultural and geographical backgrounds. Through a series of multivariate analyses, this study elucidated the inextricable interplay between Arabic-Tachawit contact and lexical change, and showed how speakers deploy Tachawit words to index their affiliation with Tachawit identity and culture. The results showed that speakers who live in predominantly rural areas are more immune to Arabic lexical borrowing, whilst speakers in urban areas are more likely to adopt Arabic loanwords. The use of Arabic loanwords increases in the speech of the youngsters and declines in the speech of elderly speakers, a pattern which mirrors ongoing linguistic change. Finally, the research discussed the role of mobility along with migration in the diffusion of loanwords into urban landscapes.

Key Words: Lexical change, Tachawit, loanwords, language contact, variation.

ملخص :

يهدف هذا البحث الى دراسة تأثير اللغة العربية على اللهجة الشاوية في ولايتي باتنة وأم البواقي في منطقة الاوراس وإلى دراسة الاسباب الاجتماعية والثقافية للتغيير اللغوي. جمع الباحث البيانات من طرف 489 متحدث باللهجة الشاوية من مختلف الخلفيات الاجتماعية والثقافية والجغرافية. بعد الاستعانة بإحصائيات التحليل متعدد المتغيرات، اكدت هذه الدراسة العلاقة بين الالتقاء اللغوي بين الشاوية و العربية و تغير اللغة، و اوضحت كيف يستعمل المتحدثون بالشاوية المفردات للتعبير عن انتماءاتهم القوية للهوية و الثقافة الامازيغية. اثبتت النتائج ان سكان الناطق الريفية اكثر استعمالا للمفردات الشاوية، بينما يستعمل سكان المدن كلمات عربية في اللهجة الشاوية. كما اثبتت النتائج ان فئة المراهقين يستعملون الالفاظ العربية المقترضة اكثر من الكهول و الشيوخ في كل مناطق الريفية و المدن. و في الاخير تطرق البحث الى مناقشة دور الحراك السكاني و الهجرة الداخلية في انتشار الالفاظ المقترضة الى المدن
الكلمات المفتاحية: تغيير الالفاظ، الشاوية، الألفاظ المقترضة، التقاء اللغات، التنوع.

Introduction :

That there is a link between interethnic contact, geographical mobility and speech change is crystal clear. Research works of Labov (1963) and many subsequent dialectologists (Britain, 1997; Chambers & Trudgill, 2004; Chambers, 1995) revolutionized our understanding of contact induced changes in variationist sociolinguistic paradigm. Traditional dialectologists neglected the importance of intra- and interlinguistic differences in contact situations and focused on documenting obsolete dialect norms in isolated regions in order to “search for earlier, perhaps purer, forms of language and dialectologists’ search for the isolated, old-fashioned varieties that were thought to be throwbacks to the more authentic language of the “folk.” (Johnstone, 2011, p. 205-204). As of 1960s, dialect surveys, both large scale and small scale, provided several scientific breakthroughs and methodological innovations which, quite remarkably, yielded valuable insights into the dynamics of linguistic change and diffusion. On closer inspection, many regional dialectologists tackled the role of mobility, migration and urbanization in the development of new regionally and ethnically marked varieties and adoption of new speech forms in rural and urban areas (Al-Wer, 2007; Boberg, 2010, Kerswill, 2013; Kerswill, P. & Williams, 2000).

Yet, in multiethnic North African countries there has been a little interest in the mechanisms of Ethnolinguistic variation and change in Berber dialects in rural and modernized communities. In addition, patterns of lexical borrowing in Tachawit among Algerian Berber expatriate groups are under-researched. Further, the role of salient Ethnolinguistic dialect features and code-choice in preserving ethnic boundaries is unexamined. For this, this study seeks to systematically investigate the inextricable interplay between Arabic-Chaouia contact and lexical replacement in many rural and urban dialects in two Aurès cities, Batna and Oum Elbouaghi. We set out the task to discuss the impact of geographical mobility in the transmission of Arabic loanwords into different Berber groups. Finally, in keeping with Eckert’s (2008) notions of speaker ‘Agency’, this research addresses the ways in which speakers deploy salient Tachawit terms to mark their sense of affinity and affiliation with Chaouia identity, and by extension, Amazigh culture.

1-Research on Linguistic Contact in Multicultural Communities:

Variationist sociolinguists have long been, still, concerned with the structural outcomes of linguistic contact situations in monolingual and multilingual settings. Sociohistorical conditions, along with urbanizations processes and population movements, yielded significant sociolinguistic outcomes. Auer (2007) distinguished between two types of contact-based linguistic change. Contact between two dialects, or linguistically related varieties would result in complex phonological, morphological and syntactic changes in the linguistic system, ranging from style shifting, dialect accommodation to Koine formation. Contact between distinct

languages, or linguistically distant varieties would yield various sociolinguistic outcomes, such as lexical borrowing and code-switching (Winford, 2010).

In the last two decades, dialect geographers examined, in detail, patterns of ‘Long Dialect Accommodation’ (Dubois, S. & Horvath, 1998; Mallison, C. & Wolfram, W, 2002; Trudgill, 2004). Dialect Accommodation is a type of dialect change “which may occur in (groups of) speakers who change their place of living more or less permanently within the same language area.” (Auer, 2007, p. 109). Expatriate groups tend to actively substitute some of their native dialect norms with socially and regionally salient forms. In other contexts, migrants may also adopt prestigious variants instead of the stigmatized variants in the host society (Auer, 2007). Researchers have also been interested in studying the development of new varieties, or Koinés, along with their processes and social motives in many European and Arabic communities-e.g., Kerswill and Williams’s (2000) work on the ‘New Town koine’ in Milton Keynes, England (2000); and Palva’s (1982) work on Arabic urban vernacular speech.

Lexical borrowing is, undoubtedly, the most remarkable linguistic change in cross-linguistic situations (Chambers, 1995). Linguists usually distinguish between borrowing and other related concepts, such as ‘Transfer’, ‘Imposition’ and ‘Substratum Effect’. Borrowing refers to the process of ‘Importation’ of new forms, be they phonological, lexical or syntactic, from another language into one’s native language (Matras, 2009), whereas ‘Substratum Influence’ (or Transfer) refers to “the influence of an L1 or other primary language on an L2” (Winford, 2010, p. 170). A plethora of research projects surveys were conducted to explore the aspect borrowing, its mechanisms and sociocultural motives. Nagy (2011), for instance, found that a sizable number of Italian loanwords were borrowed into Faetar and Cellese immigrant speech communities in Toronto city, Canada. In Maghreb countries, a large number of loanwords were imported from many languages, such as Turkish, French and Arabic, especially those related to religion and education (Kossmann, 2013). Many of the those borrowed words, Kossmann added, were modeled on the phonological and morphosyntactic system of Maghrebian dialects-e.g., the verb ‘izum’ imported from the Arabic word ‘يصوم’, meaning ‘to fast’ in the Islamic religion, and ‘البرتفالي’ from the French ‘portefeuille’, meaning ‘a wallet’. Apart from borrowing, language contact studies have also been concerned with investigating patterns of Code switching which refers to making conversational moves between two languages in one speech conversation (Gardner-Chloros, 2009; Troike, 2003). Although enormous book length introductions and studies were devoted to examine patterns of Arabic-French code switching in Maghreb varieties, Arabic-Berber code-switching was neglected in Berber linguistic literature (Hamza, 2007; Kossmann, 2012b). Kossmann (2013) noted that Arabic-Berber code switching, compared to Arabic-French switching, is less remarkable in daily social

interactions, and hence “provides less interesting material for the theoretical study of codeswitching” (p. 39)

2-The Sociolinguistic Profile of Arabic-Berber Contact in Algeria:

Before the seventh century, North Africa was inhabited by many Amazigh ethnic groups who used to speak indigenous Berber varieties in day-to-day interactions and economic transactions. The Islamic conquests, which took place from the seventh century until the twelfth century, resulted in extensive contact between Arabs and indigenous Berbers, and which in return resulted in crucial sociohistorical and sociolinguistic outcomes (Kossmann, 2013). Sociolinguistically, classical Arabic and standard Arabic, because they are emblematic of ‘Arabness’ and ‘Islamic identity’, gained a foothold in many social and political arenas as codes of prestige, education and administration. Indigenous Berber varieties, conversely, became underprivileged, stigmatized as ‘old-fashioned’ and characteristically ‘rural’.

During the French colonization, Sayahi (2014) noted, a ‘Francophonizing Policy’ was enacted in order to maintain the ethnic and linguistic boundaries between ‘Imazighen’ people and Arabs in many rural and urbanized cities. Since the eve of independence in 1962, the ‘Arabization’ policies resulted in the total marginalization of Berber culture and varieties from all social domains, strengthening the high, prestigious status of standard Arabic in all social and political arenas. Kossmann (2013) noted that the use of Standard Arabic spread into a wider social spectrum, ranging from media, schools and other formal contexts. As a reaction to the long ‘political oppression’ of Berber, several academies were established which called for the official recognition of Tamazight cultural heritage, and many scholars sought ways to ‘purify’ the Berber varieties from Arabic loanwords. In 2001, Berber was officially declared a ‘national language’, along the official Standard Arabic. (Kossmann, 2013) Many Berbologists and laypeople considered the official recognition of Berber as a ‘linguistic boost’ that would strengthen ethnic pride and solidarity among ‘Imazighen’ in Algeria. In the last decade, standard Berber gained a foothold in many domains, such as in media (official TV channels, such as Beur TV and Tamazight TV4), and in education (it is taught in 38 cities).

Sayahi (2014) noted that urbanization processes and massive geographical mobility changed the the sociolinguistic fabric of Arabic-Berber contact in North Africa. In Algeria, for instance, the expatriate Berber groups, who moved into the urban areas, became Arabized especially in Aures regions, such as Batna and Oum Elbouaghi. Kossmann (2013) added that modernization and migration are major impetuses for language shift among Berber speakers, most notably youngsters, in most urbanized regions.

3-Method:

3-1 Sample and Setting:

As noted, L'Aurès is, by its very nature, a multicultural community. The aforementioned historical conditions, along with processes of modernization, yielded pervasive changes in the social fabric of many cities in the Aurès region. Batna and Oum El Bouaghi cities became multilingual landscapes, and many pervasive patterns of linguistic change, dialect convergence, and patterns of language shift took place in many rural and urban areas. For this, the present study sets out the task to address the following questions:

- Do Maghrebian Arabic and Tachawit diverge or converge linguistically?
- Are Chaouia speakers in urban areas more amenable to patterns of Arabic lexical borrowing than speakers in rural areas?
- To what extent is ethnic identity construction associated with patterns of Ethnolinguistic change in the Aurès region?

It is argued that the Chaouia speech norms in rural areas differ linguistically from the speech norms of Chaouia speakers in urban areas. Said differently, rural villagers use less Arabic loanwords than urban Chaouia speakers. Using ‘a friend of a friend’ technique (Tagliamonte, 2006), the researcher used his personal networks as pathways for recruiting potentially more contacts.

First, he sampled family members, friends, and then asked them to recommend other people with similar characteristics, and who may wish to participate in the study. Participants who inhabit in distant villages, and who were unable to meet the researcher in person, were asked to answer an online questionnaire. Taken together, the sample yielded a geographically and socially diverse picture of Batna and Oum Elbouaghi multiethnic landscapes.

Table 1: Stratification of participants by age and regionality.

Age Groups	Regionality	
	Rural	Urban
Adolescents (18-21)	22	33
Young Adults (22-29)	159	133
Adults (30-54)	64	65
Elderly (55+)	7	5
Sub-total	253	236
Grand Total	489	

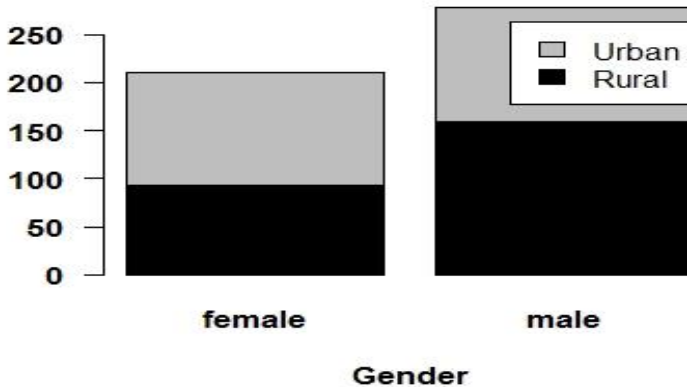


Figure 1. Gender and regional distribution of participants.

A total number of 684 participants took part in this research project. 195 incomplete questionnaires were excluded, leaving us with 489 questionnaires for data analysis. Table 1 and figure 1 illustrate the socio-demographic information of participants. 236 participants reported that they live in urban areas, whereas 253 reported that they live in predominantly rural regions, such as Arris and T'kout in Batna; AinFakroun, Meskiana in Oum El Bouaghi. As for gender factor, roughly 57 % (278) are men, and 43 (211) are women.

The grand mean age of all participants is 28.1, divided into four age groups; namely: adolescents (18-21), young adults (22-29), adults (30-54) and elderly (55+). The four consecutive age groups represent an age continuum that ranges from the youngest generation to the oldest generation. Adolescents and young adults were recruited because they are considered, Eckert (1998) noted, the focal stage of linguistic innovation and diffusion. Elderly and middle aged speakers, conversely, tend to be conservative, linguistically, and retain most of their archaic dialect norms (Llamas, 2007). The sample, also, is made up of 130 mobile and 359 non-mobile speakers. Taken together, this socio-demographic heterogeneous sample allows us to plot patterns of lexical variation and change against different regional and social factors in L'Aurès.

3-2 Research Tool: Questionnaire

The questionnaire is written in Standard Arabic and is divided into two main parts. Part one, entitled 'Informant Information', consists of four items that seek to solicit information about participants' age, gender, demographic origins, residence and linguistic environment. Part two is devoted to the 'Linguistic Tasks', which consists of 42 lexical variables along with their Arabic and Tachawit variants. By

way of example, respondents would read a brief description of the variable ‘blue color’ (اللون الازرق), and then they are expected to opt for the lexical variant they most use in their social interactions (e.g., ازرقِي, ازنزاري or both terms).

As for lexical variation index scoring, we coded participants’ answers on a 2 points scale, that is, Tachawit variants are assigned 2 points, Arabic variants are assigned 00 point, whilst mixed responses (both terms) are assigned 1 point. Each respondent’s lexical variation index is counted by dividing the total score by the number of lexical variables (42). Taken together, the general mean score of whole sample will be plotted against different regional and social factors; namely: regionality, gender, age and mobility.

4-Results:

4-1 Effect Size:

Table 2 displays the proportion of lexical variation attributed to variation in four social variables:regionality, gender, age cohort and mobility.Remarkably, there is an association, though medium (Cohen, 1988), between the lexical variation indexes and regional distribution in both cities: Batna city eta-squared (η^2)= 0.08; Oum El Bouaghi eta-squared (η^2) = 0.11. Conversely, the effect size for other variables is relatively small, except for age cohort in Oum El Bouaghi which seems to be large (η^2 = 0.17).

Table 2.Association between lexical variation and four socio-demographic factors.

Grand Mean: 1.10		Number of Tokens: 489
Factors	<u>Batna</u> Eta-Squared (η^2)	<u>Oum El Bouaghi</u> Eta-Squared(η^2)
Regionality	0.088	0.115
Age-Cohort	0.054	0.173
Gender	0.061	0.009
Mobility	0.012	0.004

Villagers who inhabit rural and close-knit communities, such as AïnKercha, Arris and T’kout, scored the highest lexical variation mean scores. Rural participants in Batna scored 1.50, whereas rural counterparts in Oum El Eouaghi scored 1.08. Unequivocally, this indicates that Tachawit words are still preserved regionally in most rural areas. In contrast, urban participants in both cities scored less overall

mean scores. This indicates that urban speakers, compared to rural speakers, are more amenable to lexical change, which is attributed to extensive interethnic contact with speakers of Arabic descent in urbanized cities.

4-2 Multivariate Analysis: Stepwise Regression

The next step is to build a regression analysis of some salient lexical variables in the data. The researcher sets up the task to run different steps in Rbrul program (Johnson, 2009), such as step-up and step down, in order to determine the most, statistically, significant socio-demographic factors in the use of Berber words. The social factors which are not, statistically, associated with these words are automatically factored out in Rbrul program.

The variable ‘night darkness’: ‘سلااس’ vs. ‘ظلمة’

Table 3 displays the social constraints on the use of two competing variants: the Berber term ‘سلااس’ and the Arabic equivalent ‘ظلمة’. The former was selected as the application value in regression analysis model. Regionality and gender are the most significant social determinants of ‘سلااس’ use ; age-Cohort and mobility are factored out from step-up and step-down analyses. Rural factor, it must be noted, favors the use of the Tachawit word in both cities (Batna, Centered Factor weight= 0.873; Oum El bouaghi, Centered Factor weight= 0.647).

Table 3. Significant Social Constraints on the Use of the Lexical Variable ‘night darkness’.

R ² = 0.596 Number of Tokens: 90 Oum Elbouaghi			R ² = 0.185 Number of Tokens: 399 Batna	
Regionality (p= 0.0000164)			Regionality (p= 0.0000751)	
Factors	Tokens	Centered Factor Weight	Tokens	Centered Factor Weight
Rural	43	0.873	210	0.647
Urban	47	0.127	189	0.353
Gender (p= 0.204)			Gender (p= 0.00751)	
Factors	Tokens	Centered Factor Weight	Tokens	Centered Factor Weight
Male	42	0.378	236	0.599
Female	48	0.622	163	0.401

Application Value: ‘سلااس’

The Arabic variant is frequent in the speech of Berber speakers in urbanized areas and regions with extensive interethnic contact-e.g., AinTouta in Batna city. As for gender, the response ‘سلااس’ is associated with female participants in Oum El Bouaghi (Centered Factor weight = 0.622) and with male participants in Batna (Centered Factor weight= 0.599).

On closer inspection, the word ‘سلااس’ is pronounced differently in different regions. It is pronounced as ‘هالاسث’/helest/ ‘تلااست’ /teles/ and ‘الاست’ /elast/ in several rural communities in Oum El Bouaghi. In some Batna rural regions, it is

realized as either 'هالست' /helest/ or 'سلاس' /seles/. In keeping with same line of reasoning, Chafik (1996) noted that in Moroccan Berber speech communities, it is realized as 'تيلاس' /tiles / or 'تالاست' /teləst/.

The variable 'fog': 'ثاقوث' vs. 'ضباب'

Stepwise regression analysis reveals that regionality, age cohort and gender are strongly associated with the response 'ثاقوث'. Mobility, however, is factored out from step-up and step-down analyses runs, because it is statistically significant for the use of the berber term. As table 4 shows, the response 'ثاقوث' is mostly favored by rural participants in both cities. It is also frequent in the speech of the oldest generations; namely: elderly (batna= > 0.999; Oum El Bouaghi= 0.532) and adults (Oum El Bouaghi= 0.780).

Like the Tachawit variant 'سالاس', 'ثاقوث' is noticeably extensive in the speech of male participants in Batna (centered factor weight= 0.571) however, it is highly frequent in the speech of female participants in Oum El Bouaghi (centered factor weight= 0.622)

Table 4. Significant Social Constraints on the Use of the Lexical Variable 'fog'.

R ² = 0.596 Number of Tokens: 90 Oum Elbouaghi			R ² = 0.653 Number of Tokens: 399 Batna	
Regionality (p= 0.0000164)			Regionality (p= 0.000065)	
Factors	Tokens	Centered Factor Weight	Tokens	Centered Factor Weight
Rural	43	0.873	210	0.628
Urban	47	0.127	189	0.372
Age-cohort (p= 0.0153)			Age-cohort (p= 0.0212)	
Factors	Tokens	Centered Factor Weight	Tokens	Centered Factor Weight
Adolescent	20	0.428	36	0.017
Young Adults	2	0.532	245	0.018
Adults	21	0.780	108	0.024
Elderly	2	0.532	10	> 0.999
Gender (p= 0.204)			Gender (p= 0.00267)	
Factors	Tokens	Centered Factor Weight	Tokens	Centered Factor Weight
Male	42	0.378	236	0.571
Female	48	0.622	163	0.429

Application Value: 'ثاقوث'

4-3 Cross-Tabulations:

The second step is to examine, in detail, the interplay of the variables 'night darkness' and 'fog' in relation with two social factors, and to discuss the sociocultural embedding of each term in the Aurès community. By building cross-tabulation analyses in Rbrul program (Johnson, 2009), we will be able to draw a

clearest image about the trajectory of lexical changes, identifying the exact social sub-groups which are on the lead of the change in the speech community.

Table 5 displays the cross-tab results of the two competing variants: ‘سالاس’ and ‘ظلمة’ plotted against two factors of regionality and gender. We opted for these two social variables because they are the most, statistically, significant determinants in the logistic regression analysis. In Batna city, the Tachawit ‘سالاس’ is remarkably maintained in the speech of all age-groups, both in rural and urban areas. Proportions of ‘ظلمة’ use are very low in all social groups, most notably among rural males (only 3 tokens) and rural females (12 tokens). Likewise, in Oum El Bouaghi, both male and female villagers tend to use the Tachawit variant much extensively, whereas urban females are at the leading edge of ‘ظلمة’ use, a pattern that indicates that they are more amenable to Arabic lexical borrowing.

Table 5. Gender and Regional variation for the lexical variants ‘سالاس’ and ‘ظلمة’ in L’Aurès.

Total Number of Tokens: 489				
Batna Oum Elbouaghi				
Social Factors :				
Gender and Regionality سالاس ظلمة سالاس ظلمة				
Male, Rural	134	3	16	7
Male, Urban	79	20	13	6
Female, Rural	61	12	16	4
Female, Urban	67	23	12	16
Sub-Total	399		90	
Total Number	489			

Remarkably, findings in both cities reveal that ‘ثاقوث’ is strongly associated with rural areas and oldest generations, whereas the alternative Arabic ‘ضباب’ is associated with predominantly urban areas and younger generations. Table 6 shows that the proportion of the Arabic ‘ضباب’ use decreases as one moves up in the age continuum until it entirely eclipses from the speech of elderly groups. Urban young adults are at the leading edge of ‘ضباب’ use in both speech communities. These results indicate patterns of ongoing lexical replacement, whereby the Tachawit ‘ثاقوث’ will be replaced by the Arabic loanword ‘ضباب’.

Other lexical variables: ‘evening’ and ‘salt’

Further, unlike the variables ‘fog’ and ‘night darkness’, other lexical variables entirely eclipsed regional and, most notably, urban regions. For example, 16.83 % of participants use the Berber ‘ثامديث’ (evening), which is only preserved in a few isolated, close-knit regions. The majority of participants tend to use the Arabic

equivalent ‘اعشويث’ instead. Similarly, almost all Oum El Bouaghi participants, both rural and urban, use the Arabic variants ‘الريح’ and ‘الملح’ interchangeably for the variable ‘salt’. In Batna city, however, roughly 20.37 % use the Berber term ‘هيسنت’ (or هيسنت). It seems that ‘هيسنت’ is still preserved regionally in some rural areas in the Eastern parts of Batna, such as Arris, Tkout and Ghassira.

Table 6. Age and Regional variation for the lexical variants ‘ثاقوث’ and ‘ضباب’ in Batna and Oum Elbouaghi speech communities.

Total Number of Tokens: 489					
		Batna		Oum Elbouaghi	
Social Factors : Age-cohort and Regionality		ضباب	ثاقوث	ضباب	ثاقوث
Adolescents, Rural	6	10	0	7	
Adolescents, Urban	8	12	13	0	
Young Adults, Rural	32	105	7	15	
Young Adults, Urban	60	48	24	1	
Adults, Rural	11	40	2	11	
Adults, Urban	21	36	4	4	
Elderly, Rural	0	6	0	1	
Elderly, Urban	0	4	4	0	
Sub-Total	399		90		
Total Number	489				

5-Discussion:

The overall distribution of most lexical variables reveals a strong association between regionality and lexical change in L'Aurès community. Chaouia Speakers in regional, isolated areas seem to be resistant to lexical borrowing, whilst Chaouia speakers in urban areas are more amenable to the influence of Arabic. This is attributed to, on the one hand, the degree of interethnic contact between speakers of Berber descent and speakers of Arabic descent, and to ethnic identity construction and affiliation, on the other. Predominantly rural regions, such as Arris, Tk'out ,AïnFakroun and AïnKercha, and which are inhabited by a large number of Chaouia speakers, retain most of the Tachawit words, and use Tachawit variety in their day-to-day social and economic transactions. Further, villagers, especially elderly and middle-aged, tend to contract strong ethnic ties with other Chaouia peers in their

social networks, a pattern which serves as an ethnic boundary against lexical transmission and spatial diffusion into rural areas.

Conversely, in predominantly urban areas, speakers are less immune to linguistic innovation and are more likely to adopt Arabic loanwords, such as 'الربح' or 'الملح', 'ظلمة', and 'اعشويث' instead of 'هيسنت', 'سالاس', and 'امديث', respectively. Urbanized regions in L'Aurès are, by their very nature, multicultural settings, whereby speakers of Berber descent interact much frequently with speakers of Arabic descent, and thus are more prone to import Arabic loanwords. In addition, the nature of ethnic ties contracted by Berber speakers play a major role in the transmission of loanwords into Berber social groups. Unlike rural speakers, urban Chaouia speakers, especially youngsters, contract weak, loose ethnic ties, interacting with speakers of different ethnic origins, such as Berbers and Arabs. Some migrant Chaouia speakers noted that their ethnic and friendship networks consist of only peers of Arabic descents. These weak ethnic networks, it is believed, facilitate the diffusion of many Arabic loanwords into the speech of Chaouia speakers in urban areas. The results also revealed that highest lexical variation indexes are strongly associated with adults and elderly speakers, whilst the lowest variation indexes are associated with young adults and adolescents, most notably in the urban areas. The use of Arabic loanwords increases in the speech young adults and adolescents in the urban areas and declines in the speech of elderly and adult speakers in all rural and urban regions. Thus, the youngest generations are at the leading edge of lexical change in progress. These trajectories of lexical changes indicate a general pattern of gradual language shift from Tachawit into Maghrebian Arabic dialect in urban regions and interethnic contact landscapes.

Constructing Berber identity:

Is the degree of interethnic contact adequate to account for patterns dialect assimilation and shift in Aurès region? Ethnic construction, along with network ties and interethnic contact degree, played a crucial role in maintaining Tachawit words in most regional dialect. Said differently, because language and ethnic membership are inextricably linked, rural villagers retained most of their Tachawit dialect norms, indexing their strong affinity and affiliation with Tamazight culture. Youngsters, rural and urban, have opposing ethnic orientations towards Chaouia identity and, by extension, Berber cultural heritage. Unlike rural youngsters have strong ties with Berber identity and culture. In contrast, urban youngsters in Batna and Oum El Bouaghi perceive Tachawit as emblematic of 'rural life style', 'quaint', 'old-fashioned' and 'harsh'. In fact, this is consistent with Hazen's (2000) work on 'local identity' vs. 'expanded-local' identity in the speech of three ethnic groups in North Carolina. Further, several expatriate families in the urban areas perceive Tachawit as 'unimportant' and 'useless', encouraging their children to use the Maghrebian Arabic (Darija) in daily social encounters. These attitudinal and socio-psychological

motives played a major role in increasing the process of Arabic lexical borrowing and language shift in the Maghrebian Arabic speech in many urban areas.

The Role of mobility:

Multivariate analyses revealed that mobility, compared to regionality and age, is insignificant in explaining the dynamics of lexical variation and change in L'Aurès region. On closer inspection, however, participants who lived in different rural regions retained most of their Tachawit speech norms. A small proportion of mobile speakers, who moved from rural areas into urban cities, scored low lexical variation indexes, a pattern that corroborates the role of geographical mobility in lexical replacement among individuals. When expatriate Berber groups moved into urban areas, they conformed to the speech norms of host community, that is, urban speakers. In the course of time, they became less immune to borrowing and more prone to import Arabic words into their speech habits.

Conclusion:

This research cast light over the intrinsic association between lexical borrowing and global socio-demographic factors in many rural and urban settings in L'Aurès. The aforementioned findings revealed that, while rural speakers maintain their native Berber words, urban counterparts, most notably youngsters, are more amenable to lexical change. It was also stressed that the massive geographical mobility and urbanization processes, which occurred in Batna and Oum El Bouaghi cities in the last three decades, have entirely shaped the sociolinguistic makeup of many Berber dominant landscapes and triggered language shift from Tachawit into the Maghrebian Arabic dialects. Finally, although this study cast light over the role of geographical mobility in the linguistic change among some Berber migrant speakers, future research projects are needed to examine, in detail, the role of '*geographical mobility*' and '*mundane mobility*' in explaining patterns of dialect accommodation and language shift among larger migrant groups and ethnic enclaves in L'Aurès.

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