The Minority Language: Tamazight in the Linguistic Landscape of Algiers, Algeria

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Abstract: The study of the linguistic landscape focuses on written messages in the surrounding geographical area, to understand issues such as multilingualism, minority languages, and language maintenance. This study contributes to the field primarily by considering the linguistic landscape of Algiers, with a special emphasis on Tamazight as a minority language and its usage in three main urban streets in Algiers, the Algerian capital. For data analysis, we adopted the framework developed by Cenoz and Gorter (2006). Some 342 photographs of street signs were quantitatively and qualitatively examined to generate an adequate description of Tamazight and its status in the linguistic landscape of Algiers. On most signs, the state's language policy favorably exhibits the state language, Arabic, which is typically positioned uppermost on many vertical multilingual signs. This hierarchical structure clearly depicts the importance given to each language, and suggests why Tamazight, as the language of a minority group, lacks visibility both quantitatively and qualitatively. This structure underscores the fact that Tamazight has the symbolic function of exhibiting a hidden meaning about the hierarchies and power relations between the majority and minority groups in Algeria, to show tolerance of, and solidarity with, the minority Berber group.

Keywords: Arabic, minority language, street signs, Tamazight

1. Introduction

The study of the linguistic landscape (LL) is the study of visual and written messages surrounding the public in a given geographical region, as experienced in everyday life. As stated by Landry and Bourhis (1997: 25), LL is "[t]he language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings [which] combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration". One main goal of researching a LL is to identify the status of the minority language in public spaces and describe how this language is distributed in the street signs of a given territory. As Landry and Bourhis explained (1997: 25), this indicates that "the visibility of written language in the public spaces has informational and symbolic

functions". Research on LL in relation to minority languages is also an attempt to understand the motives and uncover the ideologies behind the presence and/or absence of the minority language in public spaces.

1.1 Tamazight in the sociolinguistic context of Algeria

Algeria, like other North African countries (Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya), is comprised of both Arab and Berber (also known as Imazighen) populations, and both groups have *de jure* official languages. Thus, the Algerian speech community consists of two linguistic groups, the Arabic-speaking majority and the Berber minority scattered across the country (Bouhmama and Dendane 2018: 69).

In 2002, the Algerian government recognized Tamazight as a national language, and it can be taught in the schools of Tamazight-speaking regions. Years later, in 2016, the late president of Algeria, Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, introduced a bill to amend the Constitution, officially recognizing the Tamazight language as the official language spoken by Berbers in Algeria. With this recognition, Tamazight's status was promoted to reflect the identity of the Berber people in Algeria (Kouidri 2017: 11). Berber has many major sub-dialects such as Kabyle, Tachawit or Chaouia, Touareg, Tumzabt (Chaker cited in Kouidri 2017: 5).

1.2 Aim of the study

Algeria lacks research on how the minority language, Tamazight, is used in the linguistic landscape and how it is shaped and affected by the language policy of the state. Thus far, no proper study has been conducted to ascertain either the effect of Tamazight as a minority language or the influence and impact it has on the linguistic landscape in Algeria. The aim of this study is to provide an understanding of one of the language practices in Algeria, which is the adaptation of the minority language, Tamazight, and its application in public spaces by describing and analyzing the emergence of Tamazight on road signs, to determine its functional interpretation as applied by the state and its population.

1.3 Problem statement

Despite the Algerian government recognizing local languages such as Arabic and Tamazight, particular linguistic inconsistencies remain between the adopted linguistic policy and public language practices. More specifically, the linguistic practices used on street signs draw a different picture of the linguistic policy of the state, creating a discrepancy between the policy and language practices used in the LL of Algeria.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study is the first to investigate the status of Tamazight in the LL of the Arabo-franco (non-Berber) city of Algiers, by uncovering the hidden meaning of its usage on street signs in comparison to other languages. As the capital, Algiers represents the interface of an Arabo-francophone country which has recently recognized Tamazight as the second official language after Arabic. The findings of this study may help Algerian policymakers to acknowledge the linguistic rights of a

multilingual society, including minority and local languages alongside foreign and international languages, in public domains.

This study was conducted to show that examining the relationship between language policy and the visual representation of language in the streets is an appropriate way to define the linguistic situation of Algeria. Spolsky (cited in Hult 2018: 340) states that "the real language policy of a community is more likely to be found in its practices than in management". Furthermore, the current study shows that the increased appearance of the minority language in public domains not only endows it with prestige but also prevents it from language shift and loss. Finally, we underline the obvious correlation between the usage of minority language in public spaces with the inextricable and subsequent link to its preservation and application.

2. Literature review

The LL can be defined as "the use of language in its written form in the public sphere" (Gorter 2006: 83), while the meaning of a sign in public spheres can be viewed as "any piece of written text within a spatially definable frame" (Backhaus 2006: 55). Landry and Bourhis (1997: 25) distinguish between two types of signs: 'private' and 'government'. They argue that the former are characteristically non-official signs, usually put up by commercial enterprises, private organizations and businesses, and shop owners, which generally include shop names. In contrast, government signs are official ones put up by the national or regional government, such as street names, road signs, institution names, national agencies, metro and bus stations, schools, and universities. Private signs are referred to as bottom-up signs, whereas government signs are top-down signs; these are the most adequate terms to use when considering language planning and language policy.

LL studies have reported a significant difference between the two types of signs concerning their linguistic profile. For instance, bottom-up signs show more linguistic diversity and exhibit diverse linguistic traits, while top-down signs characteristically reflect the language regime of the state. Understandably, top-down signs are always written in the official language as the one recognized by the state (Landry and Bourhis 1997; Backhaus 2006; Cenoz and Gorter 2006; Qudeisat and Rababah 2021; Al Ghbari 2025).

LL research goes beyond studying linguistic features in the public space to purely sociolinguistic issues which reveal the status and prestige of the languages displayed in the LL. According to Landry and Bourhis (1997: 25), the power of certain groups in a given community is reflected in the predominance of their language on public signs compared to other languages. They argue that, when the language on public signs is under the influence of a particular group, the dominant language, as a corollary, becomes a threat to the minority languages; this social behavior is enacted by the dominant group upon the minorities inhabiting the given territory.

LL studies are particularly interesting as they focus on the way minority languages are treated in public spaces as well as on how the presence and/or absence of these languages mirror their prestige and status. Coluzzi (2016: 4–7) analyzed

102 units in the LL of Brunei, a Southeast Asian country, focusing on the status of the minority language in both official and non-official signs. The results of the study showed that, while Malay and English appeared on official signs, Chinese, the minority language, was found only on the non-official signs. It is interesting that Brunei has only adopted three major languages even though others are present in the country. This is commonly attributed to the low status of these minor languages. It is true that Chinese is a minor language in Brunei but it is equally true that Chinese enjoys a high status. Coluzzi (2016: 9) posited that Chinese is a prestigious minority language in Brunei because of its literary tradition, usefulness, and the fact it is used globally by millions. He added that other minority languages are excluded because of the nature of their literary tradition and because these languages do not have a writing system.

Likewise, Mezgec (2016: 70–71) investigated the status of the Slovene minority language in the LL of Italy vis-à-vis the official language. The study focuses on the relationship between LL and the sociolinguistic context in the area in which Slovene groups are present. Mezgec (2016: 79–82) found that the Slovene language is clearly struggling to maintain its status in the presence of the national language, which is predominant on public signs. The predominance of Italian over Slovene is explained by the former's high status as recognized by the government. The data obtained, however, showed that the very limited use of Slovene can be noticed only regarding private signs because the government controls the public ones. The author also highlighted that Slovene groups should be aware of the importance of the visibility of their own language in their public spaces in Italy, at least in the private signs which are not government controlled. The study concluded that the private Slovene sectors in Italy could promote the use of Slovene in the LL of Italy and potentially benefit from this.

Cenoz and Gorter (2006: 71) studied the LL of two multilingual cities: Donostia-San Sebastian in the Basque Country (Spain), where the state language is Spanish and the minority language is Basque; and, Ljouwert Leeuwarden in Friesland (the Netherlands), where the state language is Dutch and the minority language is Frisian. The researchers analyzed data from over 207 photographs of street signs in terms of the numbers, types and characteristics of the languages found on bilingual and multilingual signs. The main difference between the LL of the two cities is the placement of the minority language on road signs. For example, in the case of Ljouwert, Frisian is positioned after both the state language and the international language of English. However, in the case of Donostia, Basque is placed between the state language and English, which takes third place. The study's results also showed that more signs are written in Basque than Frisian. This indicates the status of the minority language in each state and their efforts to protect the minority language. As such, there are significant differences between the two contexts regarding the official language policy and its relation to minority languages (Cenoz and Gorter 2006: 71).

LL issues are key considerations in the field of language policy and planning (LPP). In the words of Landry and Bourhis, "It is in the language planning field that issues related to the notion of linguistic landscape first emerged". Cenoz and Gorter

(2006: 68) said that the language policy of the state is essential because it contributes to the presence and/or absence of a language in the LL of the country. The explicit and direct relationship between LL and LPP indicates the attempt to manage language use in public spaces.

Academic research dealing with LL and LPP can be categorized into three main areas. First, most LL studies address the relationship between visual language use and its sociopolitical context. In this case, LPP does not manage the production and construction of signs in public spaces, but it somehow affects the ideological context in which the LL is located. In this regard, studies have highlighted the correlation between LL and politics. Kasanga (2012: 553) investigated the LL in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, finding that the presence of the Khmer language on public signs is directly linked to the official status endorsed by the government. Likewise, the widespread and visually prominent use of English compared to French on street signs was interpreted as a natural reaction to a sponsored state policy which favors English, in contrast to French, which is identified as the language of colonialism.

Secondly, and conversely, LL can reflect and (re)shape the language ideology of the area in which it is located, such that LL can be seen as a kind of policy making. The names of streets, places, towns, and villages have a symbolic function that mirrors the historical events, political power, and ideological tendencies of the community. For instance, a massive Italianization program was instigated by the Italian government when the German-speaking region of the South Tyrol was first occupied by Italy in World War I. In some cases, the names of places were translated from German into Italian, and in others whole names were changed and replaced with Italian or Latin names. After World War II, the German-speaking community in South Tyrol was given special provision to save German ethnic and cultural features. One result of this new policy was the reintroduction of the German language side by side with Italian for the names of places (Dal Negro 2009: 208–209).

Sloboda (2009: 183–184) likewise mentioned the case of the Hungarian majority in the former Czechoslovakia as an example of how a state uses the LL as a way to impose ideology. Directly after the fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia, the Hungarian language was used for names of streets, places, towns, and villages. The national Slovak government at the time rejected such "Hungarianization" and ordered the removal of minority language road signs, considering them illegal. The Slovak parliament then introduced a new law that regulated the replacement of signs in ethnic minority languages. This significant hierarchy of signs shows that the state's ideology supported the dominance of the Slovak language in the LL. Thus, the cases of Germany and Slovakia represent two diametrically opposed viewpoints, demonstrating different ways in which state language policy and language ideology are reflective of LL.

Finally, LL researchers generally suggest implications and solutions for LPP based on their findings. For instance, Coluzzi (2009: 11–13) conducted a study on the LL of Italy to investigate the presence of local regional minority languages in the LL of two different cities, Milan and Uddine. The researcher focused on the role of language planning activists in maintaining a given language using the LL of a

given area. The results showed that the LL of the chosen cities was monolingual with a few signs in English. This corroborates the findings of Gorter (2007), who reported that Italian is the dominant language in the streets of Italy; thus, the absence of local languages in the LL of Italy caused the author to stress the importance of including these languages in the LL in order to maintain them. Gorter also recommended that local and minority languages should at least have some visibility in the LL alongside official and other prestigious languages, such as English, to avoid pushing the local languages aside.

The top-down (governmental) versus bottom-up (private) distinction is usually made when approaching LL from an LPP perspective. The authorities have the power to control the languages in the top-down signs in the LL, and indeed the bottom-up signs generally have more linguistic diversity, which might be interpreted as greater freedom of expression. However, some governments have regulated the LL by imposing rules and requirements on non-governmental signs. For instance, the Canadian province of Quebec is well known for its laws regulating public language use in the LL (Bourhis and Landry 2002: 124–125). Managing language use in street signs, public texts, notices, and advertisements is considered one way to control discourse in public spaces (Scollon and Scollon, cited in Al-Hyari and Hamdan 2019: 941). In this way, LL can be seen as a true reflection of policymaker ideology.

3. Method

The scope of this study is limited to certain streets to ensure a wider LL perspective and adequate presentation of the subject matter. The streets selected are: Hassiba Ben Bouali Street (1100 m), Larbi Ben Mhidi Street (750 m), and Didouche Mourad Street (600 m). These are relatively the largest commercial and industrial streets in Algiers. They are of interest as they combine urban and commercial features and consequently require diverse road signs for each sector. Snapshots of the street signs were collected within an area demarcated by two consecutive traffic lights. This method was inspired by the work of Backhaus (2006), who used traffic lights as geographical reference points to limit the sample area for more reliable data collection.

Collectively, the data consist of 366 street signs: 140 from Hassiba Ben Bouali Street, 116 from Larbi Ben Mhidi Street, and 110 from Didouche Mourad Street. The first level of analysis focused on all bilingual street signs, the appearance of Tamazight on the signs, and the number of occurrences on a single sign in relation to the type of sign (official/ non-official). Thus, the data were quantified by the following characteristics:

1. All the languages used on the signs
2. Frequency of using Tamazight on all signs
3. Frequency of using Tamazight on official signs
4. Frequency of using Tamazight on non-official signs.

At the second level, the signs were qualitatively considered to ascertain the representation of Tamazight in the LL of Algiers, according to the coding scheme developed by Cenoz and Gorter (2006). This is probably the most adequate scheme for quantitative and qualitative analysis. Signs were thus categorized by the following variables:

1. Languages used on the sign
2. Status of signs (official/non-official)
3. Order of languages on bi/multilingual signs (first/most prominent language)
4. Font size on bi/multilingual signs
5. Amount of information on bi/multilingual signs
6. Translation of bilingual and multilingual signs.

4. Results and discussion

It is necessary to emphasize that the sampled signs were counted in terms of the languages they displayed. When the sign had two or more languages, each language was counted separately. For instance, a sign written in two languages, e.g., Arabic and French, was counted twice, once as a sign with Arabic and again for French. In this analysis, 24 signs were excluded from the data because they exhibited only proper names such as brands or other names. Determining, classifying and analyzing the language of proper names can be challenging, especially for brands from cross-cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For example, the American sports brand Nike is named after the Greek god of victory, which begs the question of whether 'Nike' should be considered Greek or American due to its widespread use in English-speaking contexts (Edelman 2010: 71). Accordingly, for signs holding brand names alongside other text, only language which was explicitly non-brand text was counted, and the brand name was considered linguistically neutral.

From the identities of the languages found on the street signs, it can be said that the LL of Algiers is linguistically diverse, as Arabic, Tamazight, French, and English were found. Arabic appeared in 254 of the 342 signs (Sign 1, below), followed by French, the lingua franca, which appeared in 242 signs (Sign 2). Table 1 shows that the second lingua franca foreign language was English, with 39 signs (Sign 3). Remarkably, Tamazight was scarcely used, with just 20 signs (Sign 4). Arabic and Tamazight are present as the two official languages of Algeria, with Arabic being the native language of the majority (Algerian Arabs), and Tamazight the native language of the minority (Algerian Berbers). The presence of French can be explained by Algeria's historical links to the French via colonization and the legacy of francization, while the use of English is linked to its recognition by the state as the second foreign language in Algeria. This status is conferred by the fact that it is the language of economic power and international communication.

Table 1. Language frequency on the street signs

Language	Frequency	Percentage
Arabic	254	74
French	242	70
English	39	11
Tamazight	20	6

Sign 1. A street sign in Arabic and French

Sign 2. A street sign in French and Arabic

Sign 3. A street sign in Arabic and English

Sign 4. A street sign in Arabic and Tamazight

4.1 Frequency of Tamazight on all signs sampled

The fact that both Arabic and Tamazight are used on street signs in Algeria does not necessarily mean that this use is equal. The two languages did not have the same number of occurrences as they do not share the same high status. As shown in Figures 1–2, Arabic was predominantly and widely used on the street signs at 74 percent, while Tamazight was barely seen at just 6 percent. The scarcity of Tamazight might be to the public having a negative perception of such an uncommon language (Hattab 2021). Having its own writing system, Tamazight also remains a mainly vocal language, and its script is unintelligible to many.

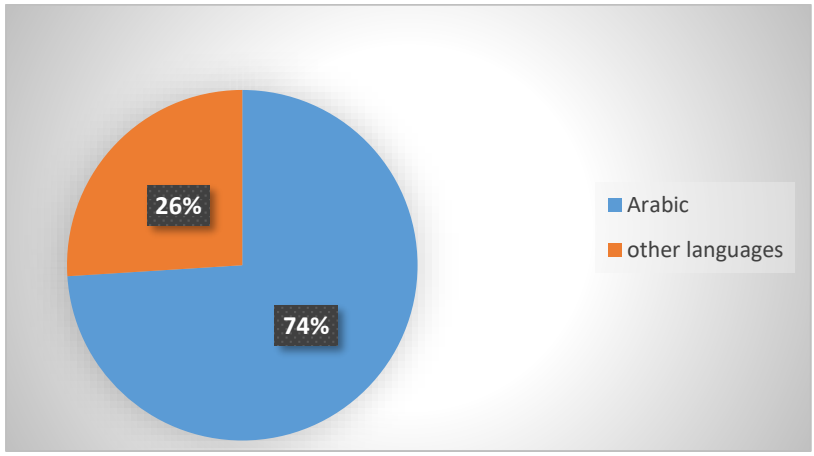

Figure 1. The occurrence of Arabic on the street signs

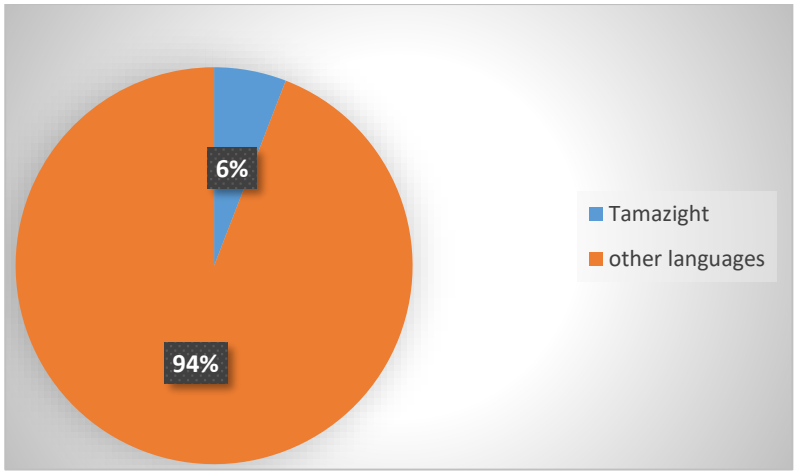

Figure 2. The occurrence of Tamazight on the street signs

As to how Tamazight is used with respect to the status of signs, the data collected were divided into two groups: official signs, or public signs put up by the government; and, non-official signs put up by private persons or enterprises. Official signs are indicative of the language policy of a country and are generally written in a high-status language, while non-official signs are typically less controlled by the state and display greater linguistic diversity (Landry and Bourhis 1997: 27).

4.2 Frequency of Tamazight on official signs

The analysis of data shows that Tamazight was never used on official monolingual signs, despite being considered the second official language of Algeria. Tamazight is spoken by a quarter of the Algerian population in the north of Algeria, specifically in Berber-speaking regions such as TiziOuzou, Bejaia, Bouira, Boumerdes, and Bordj Bouariridj. The capital of Algeria is an Arabic-speaking region in which Tamazight is scarcely used or understood (Hattab 2021), and therefore no Tamazight-only road signs will exist. Furthermore, capital cities are generally centers of tourist attraction and, as such, a familiar language would be expected. It is worth mentioning that Tamazight-speaking people represent only 21 percent of the Algerians who settled in Berber provinces such as Bejaia and TiziOuzou, away from the Arab capital city. Hence, Tamazight was found just fourteen times (4%) on bilingual official signs, alongside the state's first official language, Arabic (see Table 2).

4.3 Frequency Tamazight on non-official signs

Table 2 shows that Tamazight was also never used on non-official monolingual signs but was seen six times (2%) on the non-official multilingual signs alongside Arabic and French. In this case, French serves as a convenient lingua franca for Algerian Arabs who do not understand Tamazight, for Algerian Berbers who do not understand Arabic, and for Algerian immigrants who understand neither Arabic nor Tamazight; as such, we accept that capitals always attract people of different cultures and backgrounds, albeit of the same nationality.

Table 2. The frequency of Tamazight on official and non-official signs

Tamazight **Frequency**	Official signs		Non-official signs	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Monolingual signs (Tamazight alone)	0	0	0	0
Bilingual signs (Arabic-Tamazight)	14	4	0	0
Multilingual signs (Arabic-French-Tamazight)	0	0	06	2

If the same distinction between official and non-official signs is made in relation to the presence of the minority language, the data show evidence that this language faces tensions, at least in the non-official signs. To illustrate, Table 2 shows that Tamazight was more common on official signs such as governmental institutions than on non-official signs such as private shops. As Shohamy argues (2006: 110), the frequency of the presence or absence of certain languages in public spaces sends a message that some languages have superiority over others. This is clearly indicated by the frequency of Arabic in the streets of Algiers as it exceeds that of Tamazight. Nevertheless, although officially they enjoy the same status in

the Algerian constitution and have been given equal importance as both national and official languages of the state, their presence in the streets of Algiers is demonstratively uneven.

Arabic always appears much more than Tamazight. This also means that the state is very consistent in using Tamazight in the construction of LL, especially on official signs, but opportunities remain to improve the visibility of the minority language on private signs. The languages used on the official signs convey power and prestige as they are put up by the authorities (Bourhis and Landry 2002: 124–125) and confirm the language policy of the government. This is indicated by the predominance of the first official language, Arabic, on the signs compared to the second official language, Tamazight.

4.4 The status of Tamazight on bi/multilingual signs

Since Tamazight has never been used on monolingual signs on its own, it can be assumed that its status faces tension in Algeria; however, it was rarely found on bilingual and multilingual signs, along with either the first official language Arabic or with Arabic and the first foreign language French. The analysis of this study goes deeper to investigate the status of Tamazight in relation to these two languages (Arabic and French) to investigate the hierarchies and the power of each language in the Algerian LL in comparison to the minority language, Tamazight.

4.4.1 Language order

The way two or more languages are arranged in a single sign is indicative of preference. For instance, the first language from the top on a multilingual sign is considered more prominent compared to the third. Scollon and Scollon (cited in Al-Hyari and Hamdan 2019: 941) developed three types of language order regarding signs. In the first case, the preferred language is placed vertically above the others. Second, the preferred language is placed horizontally on the left and the less preferred languages are placed on the right. If, however, two languages of different writing directions are present on one sign, such as European French, written from left to right, and Semitic Arabic, written from right to left, then each language has equal prominence, as seen in Sign 5 below. Third, there is the center-margin order, whereby the preferred language is placed in the center of the sign and the less preferred languages are placed at the margins.

Incidentally, Tamazight never appeared as a first language on either official or non-official bi/multilingual signs; rather, it was always positioned under Arabic (Sign 4). If we apply the hierarchy of language placement, we can say that the second official language, Tamazight, lacks the same prestigious status in the LL as the first official language, Arabic. Otherwise, the two official languages may have equal prominence if the sign inscribers write both Arabic and Tamazight texts in a horizontal Arabic-Tamazight order, since Arabic script is read right to left and Tifinagh script is read from left to right. In Sign 5, for instance, Arabic and French have equal prominence on the sign.

Sign 4. A street sign written in Arabic and Tamazight

Sign 5. A non-official sign exhibits a horizontal Arabic-French order

4.4.2 Font size on bi/multilingual signs

On the sampled bilingual and/or multilingual signs, texts in all languages were coded by size, with language written in a larger size tending to be the preferred one on the same sign. The minority language, Tamazight, also never appeared in a larger font size than any other language on the same sign. On all the sampled signs, Tamazight was written in the same font size as the other languages, indicating that all the languages on the sign enjoyed the same degree of influence. However, the order of languages adds another layer of interpretation, as mentioned in the previous section. We have seen that Arabic enjoys a higher degree of influence compared to Tamazight. For example, in Sign 6, Arabic is used at the top; Tamazight, on the other hand, was never seen at the top of the sampled signs or in a larger font than Arabic, making it potentially inferior to Arabic.

Sign 6. A multilingual Arabic-Tamazight-French sign

4.4.3 Information quantity

On bilingual and/or multilingual signs, the amount of information given for each language was also compared to determine which language was preferred, with more information ultimately indicating a preferred status. Among all the sampled signs, there were no instances of signs where Tamazight text exceeded that of other languages. In other words, Tamazight texts on the multilingual signs had an equal amount of information as the other languages. Thus, if we take the amount of text information on signs as an indicator of language influence, we might easily infer that all the languages enjoy the same status without exception. Nonetheless, the order again underscores the superiority of Arabic over Tamazight (see Sign 7).

Sign 7. An official sign with a vertical Arabic, Tamazight and French order

4.4.4 Translation

Texts from different languages can be combined in several ways on the same sign, such as word-for-word translation (literal translation), partial translation (when the full text is given in one language but some parts are repeated in at least one other language), and code-switching and mixing (two languages are used interchangeably to form one text). Many signs included necessary literal translations of Tamazight into Arabic and/or French for texts, as shown in Sign 8, because the majority of Algiers inhabitants are not Berber and do not understand Tamazight. It should also be noted that written Tamazight may be hard for Tamazight speakers to understand on signs since not all speakers can read and write it. As noted, Tamazight is a more spoken language than a written one. To avoid arising issues, and to maintain their status in the LL of a given area, minority languages must be standardized and taught in schools so that they can be read and written, and then they will be used on street signs (Cenoz and Gorter 2006).

Sign 8. A multilingual Arabic-Tamazight-French sign

While we may find translations from an official language (e.g., Arabic and sometimes Tamazight) and a foreign language (French and/or English), we never find two or more foreign languages on their own, without the official language alongside. This denotes an endeavor by the state to ensure the application of the official language policy in all domains, including street signs. The translations found on the sampled bi/multilingual signs point strongly to Arabic and its predominance over other languages on road signs. Translation always occurred between the official language of Arabic and the foreign languages of French and/or English; in some cases, the Tamazight translation was also provided on the official signs.

The modest visibility of Tamazight in the LL of Algiers has a symbolic rather than informational function (Landry and Bourhis 1997: 25–27). This symbolic function entails a deeper meaning, through which one can determine a space's

social identity, hierarchies, and power relations within the symbolic function of the sign (ibid.) The inclusion of Tamazight on bi/multilingual signs is considered one way for Tamazight to gain gradual recognition, as desired by the Algerian state, to show solidarity and empathy with the Berber community. Ultimately, however, a close examination of signs written in Tamazight leads to the conclusion that the presence of Tamazight on road signs represents, to some extent, the state's intention to serve identity purposes and reinforce the equality of the linguistic and cultural communities of the Arabs and Berbers. With careful examination, the signs are used only to name cultural and entertainment institutions such as museums, cinemas, cultural rallies and the like.

5. Conclusion

The LL of Algiers mirrors the general linguistic policy in Algeria, which promotes the use of the first official language, Arabic. The order of languages on multilingual signs discussed in the data analysis shows the predominance of Arabic over the second official language, Tamazight. From the analysis of translations on the sampled street signs, Arabic enjoys a higher status and prestige because it is the language that is always translated into the other target languages of Tamazight, French and English.

The presence of Tamazight is infrequent vis-à-vis Arabic or even the foreign languages of French and English. Despite the state's recognition and efforts to integrate this minority language into the linguistic practices of the country, Tamazight's visibility on the streets of Algiers has a symbolic rather than an informational function. It is used only to show tolerance and solidarity with the minority group.

Algeria's linguistic policy does not control the use of language on street signs, particularly non-official signs. Private enterprises, sectors, and persons should take advantage of the freedom they have to change some ideas and ideologies gradually concerning language and identity. For instance, Berbers could use Tamazight names for their shops, written both in Tifinagh and Arabic scripts, to give the language sufficient exposure, familiarize the Arab majority with the language, and promote its acceptance.

To conclude, this study is thought to be the first aimed at analyzing the LL of Tamazight in the non-Berber city of Algiers, particularly the language usage on street signs. It thus contributes to the existing literature and may pave the way for future research on topics such as the presence of Tamazight on monolingual signs in the LL of a Berber-speaking province, or graffiti and its impact on social behavior.

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