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**SEMIOTIC AND DISCURSIVE DISPLAYS OF *TAMAZIGHT* IDENTITY ON
FACEBOOK: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF REVITALIZATION EFFORTS IN
POST-REVOLUTIONARY TUNISIA**

by

SOUBEIKA (Wafa) BAHRI

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Linguistics in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

2019

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Soubeika (Wafa) Bahri

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Linguistics in
satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

Semiotic and Discursive Displays of *Tamazight* Identity on Facebook: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Revitalization Efforts in Post-Revolutionary Tunisia.

by

Soubeika (Wafa) Bahri

Advisor: Cecelia Cutler

This dissertation examines the online discourses and semiotic resources employed by the Tunisian Amazigh community in their language and identity revitalization efforts on Facebook in wake of the 2011 Tunisian Revolution. Drawing on insights from discourse-centered online ethnography (Androutsopoulos, 2008), the frameworks of language iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure (Irvine and Gal, 2000), and the *tactics of intersubjectivity* proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2004), I argue that Tunisian Imazighen (sing. Amazigh) use Facebook to challenge hegemonic language ideologies that erase *Tamazight*. I propose the notion of *counter-erasure* as an ideological process used by Amazigh activists to contest Arabo-Islamic ideology, pan-Arabism, and Arabicization policies that pushed Tunisian *Tamazight* to a status of endangerment. Counter-erasure is also a means to reproduce an oppositional-ideological language discourse that corresponds to the hegemonic discourses of linguistic and cultural exclusiveness.

The analysis is based on longitudinal observations of the Facebook accounts of nine Tunisian Amazigh activists collected between 2016 and 2018, and is supplemented by 23 interviews and an online quantitative language survey among Tunisians. The analysis shows how discourse, multimodality, performativity, multilingualism, and multi-orthography are used

semiotically to construct Amazigh identity and to assert the legitimacy and vitality of *Tamazight*. By examining these semiotic practices, this dissertation demonstrates how computer-mediated discourse (CMD) on Facebook provides a space for language ideologies to be disputed, reproduced and reversed - even in the face of very low rates of language proficiency and the endangered status of the language.

The dissertation adds to an existing body of research on the sociolinguistics of digital communication with emphasis on the impact of Facebook interactions on language revitalization (Paricio-Martín & Martínez-Cortés, 2010), language activism (Feliciano-Santos 2011, Davis 2013), identity construction (Georgalou 2015), bi/multilingualism (Androutsopoulos 2008, 2013; Cutler & Røyneland 2018), and minority languages (Jones & Uribe-Jongbloed, 2013). Facebook is shown to be a key factor in the emergence of an indigenous Amazigh discourse in the years since the 2010-2011 Tunisian Revolution. In the process of identity negotiation, Facebook offers huge semiotic potential for triggering ideological shifts in how language and identity are conceived by Tunisians. The dissertation concludes that computer mediated discourse on Facebook can be a catalyst for linguistic and social change in the case of Tunisian *Tamazight* and beyond.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is with tremendous gratitude and appreciation that I acknowledge the generous support and invaluable help of my supervisor, Dr. Cecelia Cutler. This dissertation would not be possible without her guidance and encouragement throughout the years at CUNY-The Graduate Center. Ever since I met Cece in summer 2010 when I was just starting my application for this PhD program, Dr. Cutler has been very supportive of my research and career through her mentor, courses, feedback, and compassion. Cece, words cannot really express how much I owe you for being an exceptional advisor, professor, mentor, and friend.

I am also very thankful to the members of my dissertation committee Dr. Michael Newman, Dr. Miki Makihara, and Dr. Lotfi Sayahi who contributed so much to this dissertation through their insightful comments, suggestions, courses, and research.

Next, I would to thank you the Tunisian Amazigh community and the participants of Tunisian *Tamazight* revitalization project for allowing me to observe their Facebook pages and to interview them. I especially thank Nouri Nemri for his constant help and support since the beginning of my research journey. Many thanks to Illyes Rouine, Rafiq Khemira, Houcine Belgheeth,, Muhammed Khalfallah, Hajer Barbana, Slah Mimoun, A'arbia El-Bez, Hammadi Muhammed, Khalid khemira and all the Amazigh men and women who accepted to participate in my research and to share their views and approaches to the question of Tunisian *Tamazight* either in the interviews or during our private Facebook chats.

Thank you to the Faculty and students of the Linguistics Department at CUNY-The Graduate Center who have contributed immensely to my growth as a linguist and researcher. My special thanks is for Dr. Gita Martohardjono, Dr. Juliette Blevins, and Nishi Bissoundial. I also wish to thank Dr. Gregory Guy and John Singler from the Department of Linguistics at NYU for

helping me shape my research through the framework of Sociolinguistics. The foundation of my linguistics training first started with Dr. Janet Bing, Dr. Joanne Scheibman, Dr. Bridget Anderson, and Dr. Alla Zareva at the Department of English and Applied Linguistics at Old Dominion University in Virginia. For that I would like to thank each of them for their mentorship and for inspiring me to pursue a PhD degree with focus on Sociolinguistics.

I owe special debts of thanks to Dr. Suzanne Thomson. Without her most vital help, guidance, and empowerment, I, truly, would not have made it to America, pursued graduate studies, or become the person I am today. Susie, because I know that you will read this dissertation one day, I would like you to know that you are not only my role model for your intellect, class, and compassion, but also that person in the following idiom: “People say best friends are hard to find; That’s because the best is already mine”.

At last, I would like to thank the love of my life, Raja (Dr. Senthilraja Singaravelu), for being in my life.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION



We (Tunisians) we think in Tamazight but we speak in Arabic. We express our sadness and happiness in Tamazight.

1.1 Research Motivations

I was at a Christmas dinner with my uncle and his wife in their house where they used to live in Atlanta, Georgia talking about linguistics and potential research areas that I would be interested in for a Ph.D. degree. Describing the grammar of the colloquial Tunisian was among the options we discussed most. A turning point in the conversation was when my uncle asked, “If you are going to focus on Tunisian dialect, which variety you will be interested in most? You know, your grandmother, referring to his mother, speaks an interesting one”. I paused at first, as I did not understand why my grandmother’s variety would be interesting when it was highly stereotyped and a subject of social stigma for being spoken mostly in rural regions by uneducated farmers. I asked my uncle for clarification to understand his point. He responded, “It is indeed an interesting one. She uses many words you won’t find anywhere but in *Berber* language.” It was such a surprising moment for me to know that my grandma still uses *Berber* when I was taught at school that the language has been long extinct within the context of Tunisia. As it was quite hard to believe my uncle in the beginning, I asked him for examples of *Berber*

words that my grandma would use in the variety she speaks. With no hesitation, my uncle started listing the following terms: *ghofa* for ‘hair’; *ghonja* for ‘spoon’; *kruma* for ‘neck’; *fakrun* for ‘turtle’; *sqontri* for ‘freezing cold’; *darrig* for ‘to hide.’” “I can find more if you want to, you just need to give me some time to think about that”, he added.

This conversation evoked memories of my first history lesson at fifth grade. The title of the lesson was “Amazigh Inhabitants of North Africa”.¹ It was the first time for me to hear the term *Amazigh* and the only time for the teacher to use it as he strictly used the term *Berber(s)* in the rest of the lesson. He called them “first inhabitants of Tunisia, but never used words such as “indigenous”, “autochthones”, “natives”, or “ancestors” to refer to them. I recall the lesson was not too long and the teacher ended it emphasizing that the *Berber* language and people faced mass extinction thousands of years ago, leaving no linguistic nor cultural trace behind.

One year later since the Christmas dinner, I came across a shared article on a Facebook page entitled “*Tunisia’s Berbers test the limits of country’s newfound freedoms*” published on the Global Post, April 26, 2011. At that time, I came to realize that not only *Berber* words continue to exist in some Tunisian regional varieties, but people who identify themselves as Berbers do exist too. It was another eye-opening moment on an essential constituent of Tunisian historical, cultural, and linguistic identity that has been subject of a systematic and institutionalized censorship. In the interview given to the Global Post, a seventy-six-year-old Berber resident of the mountains near Matmata stated: “I’ve always wanted my kids to learn *Tamazight* (*Berber* language), but the government has never allowed it to be taught. We have never had any choice other than to teach it at our own homes.” Then there was the following line from the same article which drew my attention: “Tunisia’s ethnic minority population of Berbers, who live in these

¹ *Amazigh* is to the singular masculine form. *Imazighen* is the plural from *Amazigh*. *Tamazight* refers to the name of the language. The morpheme –en is the plural marker in *Tamazight*. The feminine marker in *Tamazight* is –t or the circumfix t--t. Thus, *Tamazight* is the feminine of *Amazigh*.

remote southern deserts known more for aging Star Wars locales than anything else, continue to battle decades of state restrictions over their cultural identity.” In fact, as many other Tunisians, I also knew that many memorable scenes in the film “Star Wars” (1977) were filmed in the region of Matmata and that the planet Tatooine was named after the governorate of Tataouine. Nevertheless, as most Tunisians, I had no idea that that region is Berber and continues to be inhabited by *Berber* speakers. All the realization I mentioned earlier were validated when I came across the Facebook page of Gildo, a thirty-five-year Tunisian man who identified himself as Berber and seemed to be so active about Tunisian *Berber*. The images below (Figures 1-4) represent some of his postings at that time. Gildo’s postings were not only performative acts of identity with pictures of himself or his communities, but also very discursive. They involved ideological practices and had the express purpose of promoting Amazigh identity and revitalizing the *Tamazight* language. Finding such images alluded to the existence of an unprecedented discursive-semiotic and linguistic practices taking place during the Tunisian Amazigh identity construction on the digital space of Facebook.



Figure 1.1: Gildo_Cultural_st_image1
Gildo waving the Amazigh flag in his home village Azrou

February 13 at 10:52pm · 🇲🇦

ayran yir imaziyen g zik



Figure 1.2: Gildo_Cultural_st_image2
Gildo performing his indigeneity by sharing a native American child's picture

February 11 at 10:38pm · 🇲🇦

بكل بساطة تفتشيشين ت ازرو و يفتخرن بامازيغيتهن



Figure 1.3: Gildo_Cultural_st_image3:
Gildo's debunking the myth of *Tamazight* extinction through pictures of younger generations. Arabic comment: "Azrou's kids take pride in their *Amazigheity*"



Figure 1.4: Gildo_Cultural_st_image4:
 [Gildo’s comment] The biggest lie that has ever been believed by people in history is: North African inhabitants are Arabs

Since then, I have been able to navigate many open Facebook pages of other Amazigh users and explore a plethora of Facebook activities that varied from performances, displays, and representations of Amazigh identity and cultural engagement to discussing the importance of *Tamazight* language and the best ways of revitalizing it within their community and the entire country. Following these Facebook pages daily made me rethink my own identity being a Tunisian who spent the first three decades of her life believing she was “purely” Arab. Motivated by more than the desire to redefine my ethnolinguistic background, I decided to participate in the linguistic revitalization work of the language. While I am still involved in doing descriptive work for the grammar of the language along with recording interviews, songs, and poetry with the speakers, observing how the Amazigh community employs the online discourse and other semiotic resources related to language revitalization as means of reconstructing their

identity called for more research on the language ideologies they express. Accordingly, I decided to focus my doctoral dissertation on the analysis of these ideological practices while examining Imazighen's Facebook interactions during the post-revolutionary period that are dramatically reshaping the social realities within the context of Tunisia.

1.2 Background

Tunisian Imazighen (sing. Amazigh), commonly known as Berbers or *Shleuh*, represent a conspicuous example of Indigenous people who have been systematically denied their identity and pushed into a perilous and disenfranchised socio-political position by a pseudo-homogenous nation-state (Janon, 2014) operating with a strong Arab-Islamic ideology since the Independence of Tunisia from French colonial rule in 1956. Because the term "Berber" is believed to have no basis in the *Berber* language and culture, many Berber speakers and scholars prefer the use of the terms "Amazigh" or "*Tamazight*" to refer to the Berbers and their language (Boukous 1995, Ennaji 1997). "Amazigh" is believed to mean "free man" or "noble man". Similar to many Indigenous peoples in the world, the Tunisian *Tamazight* faced discriminatory treatment for centuries: first during the rise and spread of Islam beginning in the 7th century; then during the later invasions of Beni Helel tribes from Egypt in the 11th century; under Ottoman rule in the 16th through the 18th century; subsequently under French colonial rule from 1881-1956; and finally under the spread of Pan-Arabism and the growth of Arabic nationalism beginning in the 1960's. A radical decrease in the number of *Tamazight* speakers has been the result, pushing the *Tamazight* language into endangerment. Alternatively, hegemonic languages, particularly Arabic, have been favored by state policies and ideologies. The imposition of the Arabic language through educational institutions entailed the gradual recession of *Tamazight*-speaking regions. According to Gabsi (2009), the Island of Jerba in the beginning of the twentieth century

was entirely Berberophone. Today, it is very difficult to find even one monolingual *Tamazight* speaker, never mind a bilingual individual who can speak *Tamazight* as natively as the local Tunisian dialect of Arabic. Finding native speakers of *Tamazight* in the few remaining *Tamazight* villages is a daunting task, made even more difficult because of the longevity of language contact: Tunisians had Imazighen ancestors who converted early (7th century) in history to Islam as their faith and to Arabic as their language. Moreover, calling the language spoken in the mountainous villages of the south “*Tamazight*” or “*Berber*” is very uncommon in Tunisia. Gabsi (2009, p.33) states that “the *Berber* dialects of the south, though known to be vastly different from Arabic, are vaguely classified by the state as ‘*dialectes montagnards*’ without any reference to their possible non-Arabic and hence politically subversive origin.”

The Tunisian Imazighen were able to garner some international attention at the 59th Session of the United Nations’ Committee for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in 2016 in Geneva in the form of a report submitted by the World Amazigh Congress, an international organization defending Amazigh people’s rights. Speaking about the discrimination against the linguistic and cultural rights of Tunisian Imazighen to the CESCR incited denouncement of the politics of Arabization and its role in negating Tunisian *Amazigheity* and denying the ancestral values and primary identity of Berbers. The report attested that for the pursuit of a pseudo-homogenous identity, toleration of socio-ethnic diversity and a pluralistic society were considered taboo topics in Tunisia post-Independence, which exacerbated the endangerment of the *Tamazight* language and culture.

The endorsement of Tunisian Imazighen linguistic and cultural rights by the CESCR was the result of intensive activism of Tunisian Imazighen during the last five years. It was not until the 2010-2011 Revolution when Tunisian Imazighen were first able to bring the uncomfortable

discourse on *Tamazight* linguistic and cultural identity to the table for negotiation. After the Revolution and more than ever, Tunisian Imazighen wanted to seize the opportunity provided by the sudden political and social transition to become engaged in the huge and complex work of Tunisian Amazigh identity construction and reconstruction. Performing this work has frequently forced many Tunisian Imazighen to confront a plethora of questions about their Indigenous authenticity (Bucholtz & Hall 2005), their minority status vis-à-vis the majority population, and their alignment versus disalignment and disassociation versus accommodation with Arab-centric Tunisian society. These questions generally have been raised due to a pervasive socio-cultural ideology continuously aimed at erasing Tunisian *Tamazight* linguistic input in *Tunisian Arabic*, cultural products, identity, and expressions of ethnicity, rendering them invisible in the Tunisian linguistic and cultural landscape (Gal and Irvine 1995: 974). In response to those questions, Tunisian Imazighen have adopted a number of linguistic strategies to disclose and index the erasure processes imposed on their language and identity in which social media, and Facebook in particular, have been playing a critical role. Using the same online platform, Tunisian Imazighen employ discourses and semiotic resources that take the form of “counter-erasure” processes as means of reclaiming their identity and revitalizing their language.

Amazigh interaction on Facebook reflects an awareness of social media as a valid medium of identity construction and exploration. It has become a very popular platform to discuss Amazigh identity and experience. Engaging in online interactions through Facebook allows Imazighen to define themselves by more than just the name “Amazigh.” Indeed, it has provided them with the opportunity to engage in self-authentication (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004) by creating linguistic content, imagery, signs, and symbolic representations to project an identity that was marginalized through centuries of erasure. Uncovering the multiple dimensions of

erasure and attempting to reverse its effects through counter-erasure or reversed erasure processes, characterizes much of the semiotic work that the Tunisian Imazighen have been carrying out through their Facebook interactions.

The goal of this dissertation is to analyze processes of erasure along with those of iconization and fractal recursivity of the *Tamazight* language and culture exercised by the Imazighen in the context of the nascent movement of Tunisian Imazighen in the post-2011 Tunisian Revolution. It is hoped that disclosing the erasure imposed on Tunisian *Tamazight* will be a first step in revitalizing the language, recognizing the Amazigh identity and language in the Constitution, and educating Tunisians about their Amazigh cultural and linguistic heritage. The goal of revitalizing a language in general is a very long and painstaking one. Although few efforts of language revitalization and maintenance have been effective and achieved complete success, Tunisian *Tamazight* seems to present a unique case; language shift started at very early point in history around the 7th century, and yet now, there are signs that it could be successfully revived and could gain a potential position in the linguistic market (Bourdieu 1991). The current work examines ongoing efforts to revive Tunisian *Tamazight* and provides a useful case-study of counter-erasure and language revitalization enacted through grass-roots efforts and social media campaigns.

Accordingly, this study seeks to find answers to the following research questions:

- 1) What role is social media (Facebook) playing in the spread of pro-*Tamazight* ideologies since the 2010-2011 Tunisian Revolution?
- 2) How are Imazighen using Facebook to reconstruct their language and culture in the face of Arab Nationalism? (E.g. counter-erasure).
- 3) What linguistic, discursive, and semiotic resources are they using to do this?

- 4) How have language ideologies shifted since the 2011 Revolution and what role has Facebook played in disseminating them?

The discourse of language and identity construction of endangered language communities is usually analyzed in relation to a number of forces including but not limited to culture contact, historical immigration, nationalism, globalization, and modernization. Contemporary transformations brought on by computer-mediated communication (CMC) and social media represents a new force that has amplified and enriched language and identity discourse of the endangered language communities (Lafkioui, 2013). Nevertheless, the growing role of CMC and social media in shaping the endangered language discourse, particularly that of indigenous languages, has not received enough attention in sociolinguistics. This study aims at making a contribution to our understanding of how social media plays a role in language revitalization while examining the situation of the Indigenous Tunisian *Tamazight* language through a sociolinguistic lens. This study is also unique in offering new perspectives on the impact of social media on building, displaying and performing the indigenous identity in North Africa, especially the one of endangered languages, such as Tunisian *Tamazight*.

While CMC has a tremendous impact on shortening distances, increasing contacts, facilitating interactions, and reducing isolation, connecting members of indigenous languages, especially endangered languages, seem to fulfill the same functions as offline mechanisms that serve to maintain boundaries and differences to create an online group identity. It is through these mechanisms that they either construct alignments with some and distinguish themselves from others, authorize or delegitimize themselves or others, and authenticate or denaturalize their actions and practices versus those of the “other” (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005). The use of multimodal discourse, language choice, multilingualism along with the set of beliefs, attitudes,

and ideologies that these linguistic forms take, represent examples of the mechanisms recruited by Tunisian Imazighen to develop their identity project. Irvine and Gal (2000) present erasure, iconization, and fractal recursivity as semiotic resources that a language community uses to attain linguistic and identity differentiation and normalize and rationalize those differences. Tunisian Imazighen seem to engage in an ideological discourse that corresponds in its outcome to the one of erasure, iconization, and fractal recursivity. This is what I call “counter-erasure”. Accordingly, my dissertation does not only contribute to endangered language-focused-CMC studies, but also to studies of reversing language shift.

The emergence of such a discursive strategy among Tunisian Imazighen is very much connected to the rise of the use of Facebook which has become an everyday activity for many of them since the 2010-2011 Tunisian Revolution. Thus, in addition to the survey and the 23 semi-structured interviews, the data used to examine the ideological forces of erasure and mainly counter-erasure in this dissertation come from Tunisian Amazigh Facebook pages containing a considerable number of multimodal texts. The remainder of this introduction will describe the outline of this dissertation.

Chapter 2 is an analysis of the etymological and typological background of *Tamazight* language along with a typological classification of Tunisian *Tamazight* and an overview of the villages where it is still spoken in Tunisia. This chapter also provides a description of the different languages spoken in Tunisia across history (from 1200 B.C.E-present) and the historical forces that have triggered the endangerment of *Tamazight* language.

Chapter 3 will outline the theoretical framework with which to approach the analysis of linguistic and identity erasure, and endangered language reversal shift. This present study is situated within two sociolinguistics fields: language ideology, and language-focused CMC

studies. In relation to the first, the semiotic processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure as proposed by Irvine and Gal (2000) will provide a solid basis to examine the data. This study will also use Bucholtz and Hall's (2004) model of *tactics if intersubjectivity*, which demonstrates how *identity* can be analyzed as an outcome of three pairs of inter-relational contrasts: *distinction versus adequation, authentication versus denaturalization processes, and authorization versus illegitimation*. In relation to language-focused CMC research, the study will provide a sketch of the development of CMC in language studies with a focus on the use of Facebook in identity construction and reconstruction in the context of endangered languages, and indigenous ones in particular. This section will also discuss the growth of Facebook in the context of Tunisian Imazighen during the last seven years since the 2010-2011 Tunisian Revolution and finish by addressing linguistic online ethnography as a new approach to language and identity studies.

Chapter 4 will offer a description of the methodology for data collection and the data itself. The data includes survey responses from 198 subjects, 23 semi-structured interviews with Imazighen activists, and longitudinal participant observation over two years of nine Facebook pages. Chapter 4 also describes the use of two methods of data analysis: qualitative content analysis (QCA) and discourse analysis (DA). A brief description of the two approaches to the study of textual data whether information taken from individuals' profiles, interactions among participants, or multimodal texts will make up a third section in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 contains an analysis of the survey data in which the participants describe their experiences using *Tamazight* in different settings, learning other languages based on their symbolic and economic value, language policies in Tunisia, the ideologies generated by these policies (Gal & Irvine, 2000), their relationship to the processes that have caused the erasure of

Tamazight in the linguistic landscape of Tunisia, and attitudes about the future of Tunisian *Tamazight*. The second section in this chapter is devoted to analyzing the Facebook data with more focus on Facebook profile pages. That includes background and cover pictures, introduction section features on the left side of the profile pages, and status. This section will also examine some of the wall posts involving meta-commentaries about the language and identity performance. The section will also investigate some of the interviews to illustrate the Facebook data analysis. Using Irvine and Gal's framework of language ideology and the three process of iconization, fractal recursively and erasure along with *the tactics of inter-subjectivity* proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2004), this chapter shows how 'counter-erasure' is exercised and in other moments, counteracted, through Facebook semiotic multimodalities.

Chapter 6 will be divided into two sections. The first focuses on the multilingual practices on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook. More specifically, it will examine how Tunisian Imazighen position themselves regarding the multilingual repertoires available to them. In doing so, the analysis will focus on the ideological associations embedded in the language choices that participants make. The second section is devoted to examining the script choices and the meaning-making that arises from these choices. In both sections of the chapter the analysis will be centered around Tunisian Imazighen re-creating and re-shaping the semiotic connections between specific national signs, the linguistic resources and their various indexical and symbolic links.

Chapter 7 synthesizes the findings of the previous chapters and evaluates the extent to which this study can contribute to the revitalization of Tunisian *Tamazight*. The chapter also lists some of the implications that the study aims to have achieved regarding the efforts of reversing language shift through the display of identity on Facebook.

Chapter Two

TAMAZIGHT IN ITS HISTORICAL AND LINGUISTIC CONTEXT



When an Arab defends his Arabism, they call him nationalist, yet, when an Amazigh defends his Amazigheity they call him racist (Kateb Yacine)

2.1 Introduction

The present chapter presents etymological, typological, and historical contextualization for the research question at hand. The interest in examining these three areas will enable a better grasp of the process of minoritization of *Tamazight*, which has led to its endangered status. Any form of language use in the context of Tunisian *Tamazight* is very bound up with issues of identity starting from the names used to refer to the people and language. Therefore, it is important to include some etymological analysis to understand how naming practices play a role in the erasure of Amazigh language and identity.

The typological affiliation of *Tamazight* has been debated through at least three contentious hypotheses. The existence of a controversy over the origin of *Tamazight* is often motivated by ideological intent. Hence, addressing these theories while presenting the most plausible one from the perspective of linguistic research will be of great interest to the analysis of this study.

Language contact and language conflicts go hand in hand in characterizing the sociolinguistics status of a given language. It has been always the case that there are strong

nations, societies, or communities with prestigious languages and weak nations, societies, or communities with less prestigious ones. Regarding indigenous languages context, and endangered languages in particular, the notion of prestige often contributes to the expansion and promotion of the major language whereas the less prestigious ones usually end up facing one of these two scenarios or both: bilingualism and linguistic nationalism (Sayahi 2014). While the former refers to the co-existence of the majority and minority languages, the latter is consistent with leveling identities and forcing linguistic assimilation. Therefore, reexamining the history of Tunisian *Tamazight* in contact with other languages is significantly pertinent to understanding the dominance of *Arabic* over *Tamazight* in the region, therefore, erasure of this language.

2.2 Etymology

The term “Berber” is historically presumed to have negative connotations. Etymologically, it is derived from the root “barbar,” which exists in many Indo-European languages and *Arabic*. The use of this term is usually related to the Greek term “barbaros,” which initially referred to anyone who seemed foreign or had a different language and culture than Greek (Ennaji 2005). The Romans attributed additional negative meanings to the term such as ‘uncivilized’ or ‘savage,’ which led to the use of the word ‘barbarian’ in modern English and other European languages. Yet, the term was not recorded as being used to refer to North African inhabitants either by the Greeks or the Romans. Rather, they were called other names, such as Numidians, Mauris, Moors, Libyans, and Mauritians. Arabs used the term ‘El-Barbar’ initially to refer to any African who did not speak *Arabic* in the medieval Islamic era. To illustrate, Ibn Battuta (1304- 1368), an Arabic speaking Muslim traveler and writer, frequently used variations of the Arabic term ‘El-Barbar’ to refer to inhabitants of East and Central Africa: “I traveled from Adan by sea for four days and arrived to city of Zaila, the city of the Barbara who are people of

the blacks...” (Ibn Battuta 1325 - 1368). Some historical sources argue that the Europeans were the first to equate the modern term Berber with the Indigenous people of North Africa. This argument is based on evidence found in literature and on maps from the sixteenth century throughout Western Europe (Prichard 1837). The term ‘Berberie’ was later used by the French when they took over North Africa in 1830’s. In the aftermath, the word Berber gained broader usage to refer to the *Tamazight* speakers in North Africa in particular, and English dictionaries defined this term accordingly since then. For example, in *the Imperial Dictionary of the English Language* by John Olgive (1885: 6), a Berber is defined as “a person who inhabits the mountains of Barbary and portions of the Sahara; the language spoken by Berbers has affinities with the Semitic language.” As noted above, Berber speakers and scholars prefer the use of the terms ‘Amazigh’ or ‘*Tamazight*’ to refer to the Berbers and their language (Boukous 1995, Ennaji 2005).

Contrary to these attested sources for the term, some blogs on *Berber/Tamazight* show evidence that the term could have roots in the language itself. The Tuareg tribes who are also considered Berbers, for instance, would use the term *iber-iber* to describe nomads roaming the Sahara (Josh 2012). In Kabyle, the Berber language of Alegria, the word *sberber* exists to refer to the clouds covering the sky or to anything that protects the body as a covering. In addition, there is a village located in the M'Chedellah district of the Bouira province in Algeria, called *Iberbaren*; but even more interesting, there is another village in Algeria called Tizi N'Berber, a Kabyle place name predating any modern usage of “Berber”, meaning roughly “The Pass of the Covered Land” (Josh 2012). Kabyle use of “Berber” to refer to the status of covered sky or land provides good evidence of the direct relationship between the term and its linguistic origins. The

origin of the term as a local place name is a plausible alternative to the historical interpretations that attribute the origin of the term to the Roman or Greek usage of ‘barbaros.’

In addition to the term having a meaning in the *Berber/Tamazight* language, several ethnographers who conducted fieldwork among the Berber/Amazigh such as Ernest Gellner (1972) reported that many groups living in the mountains and deserts refer to themselves as “Berber”. Based on the previous findings, the notion that the term “Berber” has a pejorative connotation when it refers to the people may not always be true. Berbers have been always told that the term “Berber” was given to them by Arabs who use it in the sense of “savage” and “unrefined.” Nevertheless, Berbers do not seem aware of the *Berber/Tamazight* etymological roots for this term. Thus, rejecting this term or finding it offensive could be simply viewed as a reactionary attitude based on whatever people are routinely told, not necessarily because the term has derogatory connotations. In the following sections of this study and in the dissertation, the emic terms ‘*Amazigh*’ (pl. Imazighen) as an ethnic designation and ‘*Tamazight*’ for the language of the Imazighen will be used. This is not because these terms are more accurate, but because they represent preferences of most of Amazigh people who have become involved in the current linguistic and cultural revival movements of *Tamazight*.

2.3 Typology

2.3.1 Tamazight Afro-Asiatic origin

Tamazight is a branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family, previously known as the Hamito-Semitic language family (See Figure 5 below). When Greenberg (1966) developed his approach to language typology, he challenged binary terminologies such as Hamito-Semitic because it seemed ideologically loaded; suggesting that the Semitic branch is in a relation of equality to the rest of other Hamitic languages (Kosmman 2013). Greenberg’s invention of

“Afroasiatic” has become the name of the language family in which we also find languages such as Chadic, Cushitic, Ancient Egyptian and Semitic. According to Kossmann (2013) the split between *Tamazight* and other languages, the Semitic ones in particular, occurred at least 6500 years ago. Today, the distance between modern *Tamazight* and Modern Arabic is similar to that between Modern English and Modern Hindi (Kossmann 2013).

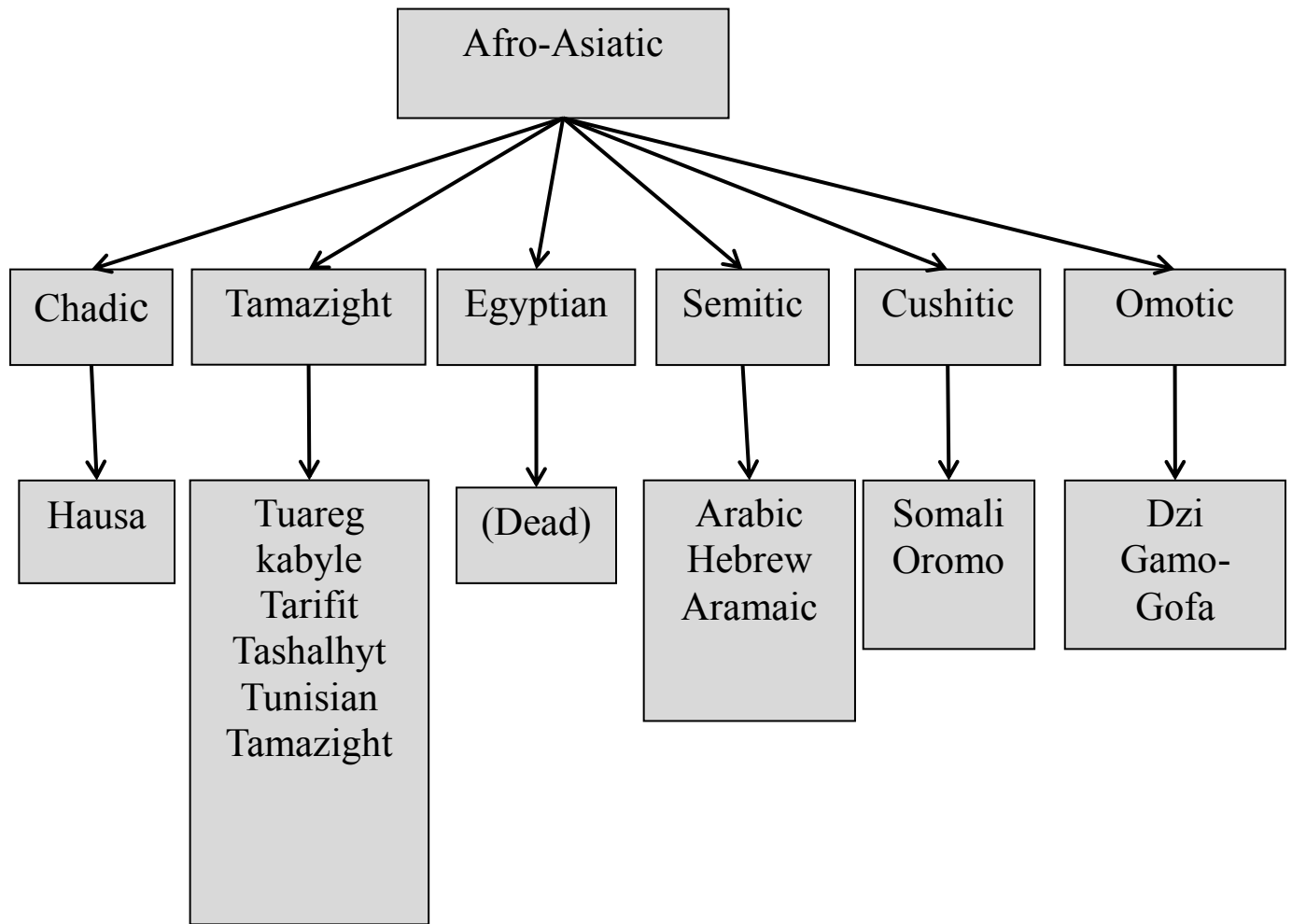


Figure 2.1: Afro-Asiatic language family tree.

Similarities between *Tamazight* and Arabic, however, are substantial and are the reason why some historians and anthropologists, such as Othmane Saadi (2007) believe that *Tamazight* is a dialect of Arabic. To support this hypothesis, which has strong advocacy particularly among

Pan-Arabists and nationalists, Saadi (2007) argues that Europe and North Africa were covered with ice before 1800 BCE, whereas the Arabian Peninsula enjoyed a climate close to that of southern Europe now. The ice melted in the former and drought hit the latter, so people eventually left the Arabian Peninsula and settled North Africa and southern Europe. He adds that Berber princes often claimed Yemenite origins(cf. Souag 2009).

Both arguments on which Saadi (2007) bases his hypothesis can be questioned for many reasons. First, North Africa was never covered with ice. According to Souag (2009), North Africa was more habitable before 1800 BCE than it is now. Recent archeological findings of animal skeletons and hunting tools made of flint stones from prehistoric times discovered in the region of Nafta in southern Tunisia prove that the existence of human in the region could date as far back as 80,000 years ago (Kapitalis 2016). The originally matrilineal traditions of many Imazighen and the lack of pre-Islamic attestations also provide evidence against the Yemenite origin claim (Souag 2009). The fact that people change their languages all the time also proves nothing about the origin of the language. The linguistic evidence shows that Semitic languages are spoken in Arabia and in the Middle East, but the common ancestor of *Tamazight*, Egyptian, and Semitic was likely located in Africa. As mentioned above, these three language families are quite closely related to Chadic (spoken in Nigeria and Chad) and Cushitic (spoken around the Horn of Africa). Based on the linguistic migration theory (Campbell 1998), when a language family splits up, it is more likely for the various daughter languages to stay close to where they started out and it is less likely for them to move very far or very frequently. This theory provides support for the interpretation that it is more likely that one branch left Africa, than those four branches each separately followed the same narrow path across Sinai or crossed the Red Sea (Souag 2009). Additionally, the use of grammatical similarities between *Tamazight* and Arabic

as a supportive argument to the claim that *Tamazight* descends from Arabic not only lacks validity, it also represents an example of erasure ideology (Irvine and Gal 2000). Assuming that any common word in *Tamazight* and Arabic comes from Arabic erases the role of *Tamazight* in influencing several aspects of the Arabic dialects spoken in North Africa.

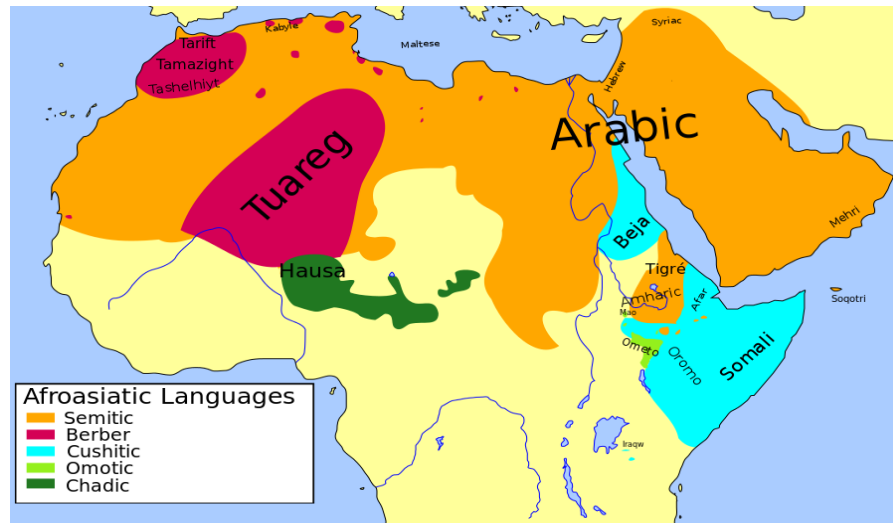


Figure 2.2: Afro-Asiatic languages distribution

In sum, *Tamazight* and Arabic are both Afroasiatic languages and it is not the case that one descended from the other. Both historical and typological approaches since Greenberg’s (1960, 1966) work seem to recognize the existence of a phylum called Afroasiatic and to agree on the division between Semitic and *Tamazight* as two distinct families within it (Diakonoff 1998; Ehret 1995).

2.3.2 *Tamazight* languages: classifications

Tamazight constitute a separate language family with no less than twenty-five languages and numerous regional dialects (Ethnologue 2009). Classifying the *Tamazight* family into different varieties, however, has proved problematic. Kossmann (2013) attributes parts of the difficulty to the fact that most of *Tamazight* is constituted of discontinuous varieties that are either neighbors, or are separated from each other by Arabic-speaking regions. Diakonoff

(1988:19-20) divided *Tamazight* into four main branches. The Northern branch includes *Tamazight* varieties spoken in Morocco and Algeria, such as Tashelhyt, *Tamazight*, Kabyle and Chaouia. The Eastern branch includes varieties that are spoken in Libya and Siwa Egypt. In the Sahara of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso we find the Tuareg *Tamazight* branch. The fourth branch is called Zenega and is found in Mauritania and possibly Senegal (See Figure 2.2).

Kossmann (2013) suggested a division of the *Tamazight* family into ten blocks based on geographical and linguistic grounds in which some of the blocks consist of languages while others do not (See Figure 2.3). The first block consists of Zenega *Tamazight* of Mauritania and Tetseret in Niger; the second of Tuareg of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger; The third is made up of *Tamazight* spoken in the south-central Morocco, such Tashelhyt, Central Moroccan *Tamazight* (the language in this block has been always called *Tamazight*, even before the modern political usage of this name to refer to Berber in general). The fourth block consists of the Northwestern Moroccan *Tamazight*, such as Ghomara and Senhadja; the fifth block is the one of Kabyle spoken basically in Algeria. The sixth is Nefusa *Tamazight* spoken in the western mountains of Libya, the seventh is the Libyan-Egyptian Oases *Tamazight* spoken near the Northwestern parts in Libya and in Siwa oasis in Egypt. The eighth is the one of Ghadames spoken on the Libyan-Algerian borders, and the ninth is Awdjila block in eastern Libya. The tenth block, Zenatic, is highly diversified (Kossmann 1999, 2013) with multiple *Tamazight* varieties. Among the most known are Tariffit *Tamazight* in North-eastern Morocco and Chaouia of the Auras spoken in the south of Constantine in Algeria and Mzabi spoken in the Algerian Sahara.

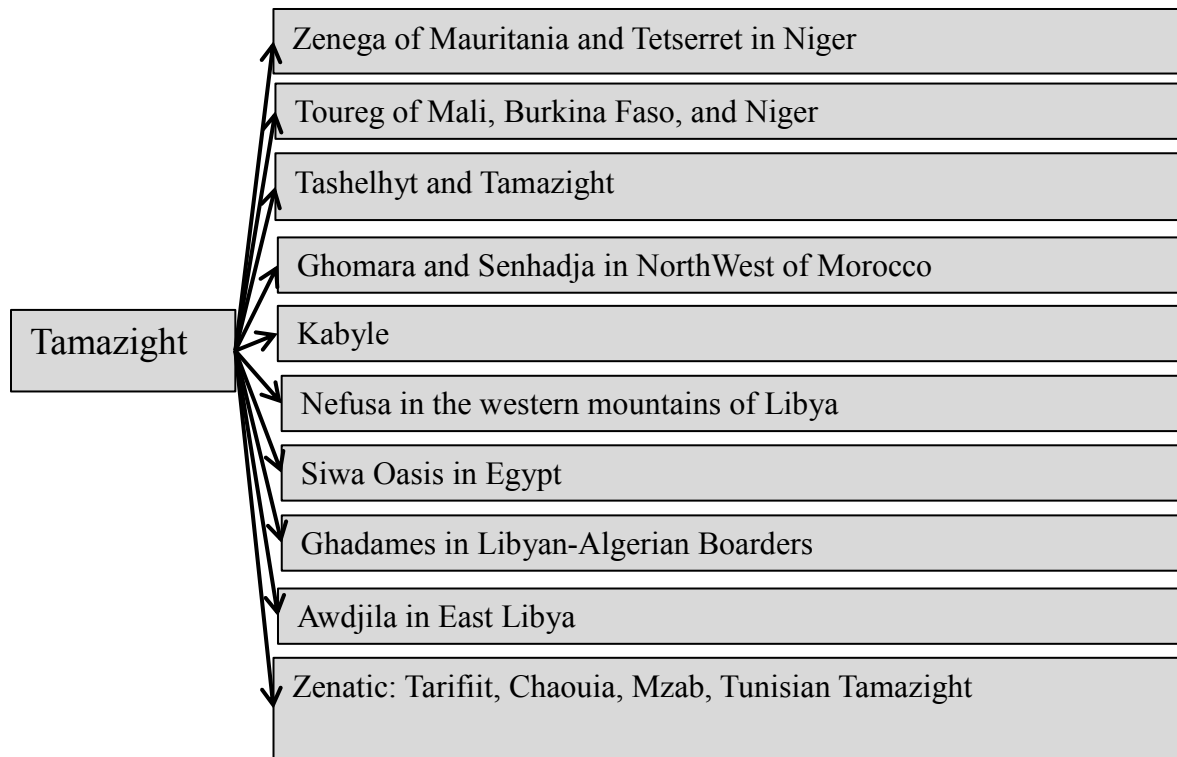


Figure 2.3: *Tamazight* Blocks

2.3.3 Tunisian *Tamazight* sub-classifications

Tunisian *Tamazight* is classified as belonging to the Northern branch using Diakonoff's model (1988) and the Zenatic block using Kossmann's (2013). Nevertheless, lexical and phonological comparisons between two *Tamazight* villages in Tunisia, Douiret and Zrawa in pilot studies I conducted (Bahri, 2016), reveal that while the former presents many similarities with the Auras variety in Algeria, the latter seemed to be closer to Nefusa in Libya. Therefore, it seems that Tunisian *Tamazight* takes an intermediate position between the blocks of Nefusa and Zenatic. This does not mean the two village varieties belong to two different languages of *Tamazight*. Rather, they form a continuum of varieties that overlap with each other across the borders of each village. Hamza (2007) supports this interpretation to a large extent arguing that Tunisian *Tamazight* varieties, despite some differentiation, all make up one language. When Tunisian *Tamazight* is compared to other *Tamazight* languages in the other countries of North

Africa, mainly Algeria and Morocco, it stands out as one language on its own. The percentage of mutual intelligibility between Tunisian *Tamazight* and other *Tamazight* languages is in the region of 63–72% (Hamza 2007). However, when Tunisian *Tamazight* varieties were compared with each other, they cluster around 83-98% in mutual intelligibility (Hamza 2007). Accordingly, Hamza (2007) concluded that Tunisian *Tamazight* can be considered one language, on the same level as the other main languages of the *Tamazight*.



Figure 2.4: Villages where *Tamazight* is still spoken in Tunisia (Joshua Project, 2017)

In an attempt to sketch a classification of Tunisian *Tamazight* dialects, Gabsi (2009) relied on two factors, their mutual intelligibility and geographical distribution. Each dialect was referred to by the name of the village where it is spoken (See Figure 2.5). In his model, he divided Tunisian *Tamazight* dialects into continental and Insular (spoken in the island of Jerba). The former group comprises *Tamazight* spoken in the village of Chninni, Douiret, and Guermessa. The three villages are located in the governorate of Tatouine, in the south of Tunisia. According to Joshua (2017) there are nearly 4,400 Imazighen in Tatouine. The Amazigh

inhabitants of Tataouine speak *Tamazight* with various levels of proficiency but do not write *Tifinagh* proficiently. Some of them use Arabic or Latin script to write *Tamazight* (personal communication with local informants).

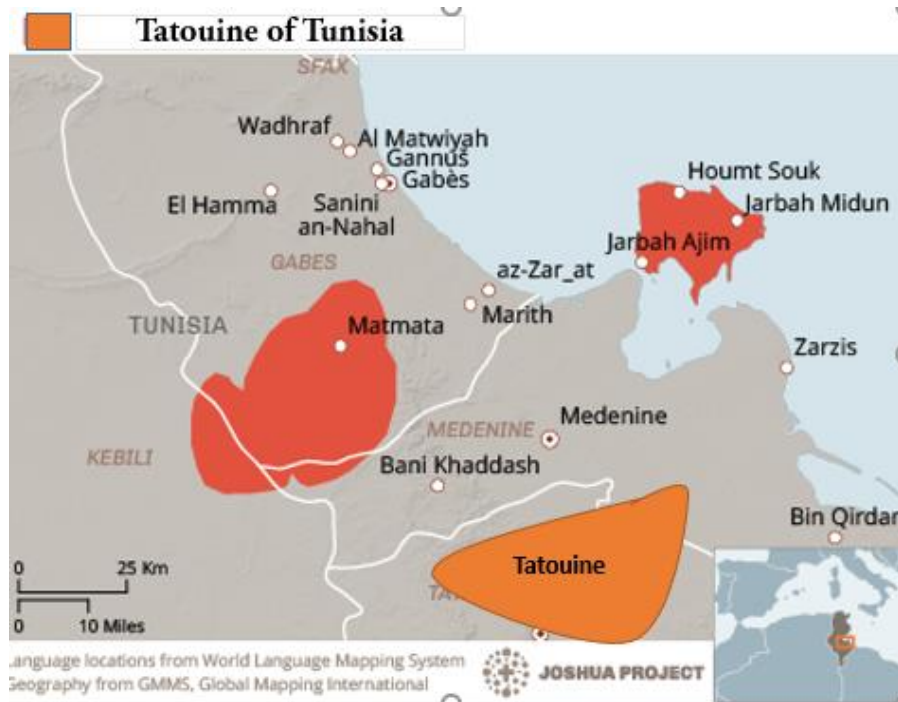


Figure 2.5: Tatouine in Tunisia (Joshua Project, 2017)

The continental group also includes *Tamazight* spoken in the villages of Tamazret, Taoujout, Zrawa or Azrou, and Sned. They are located in the city of Matmata in the governorate of Gabes, in the south of Tunisia. There are nearly 5,500 Amazigh in Matmata (Joshua 2017). Based on my communications with local inhabitants, the Zrawa, Tamezret, and Taoujout people are harmoniously united. They are very like one another in their customs and traditions. The Amazigh inhabitants of Zrawa are well-off economically as they have a large overseas population, mainly in France and Italy. They also hold employment in government jobs, private professions, and in privately owned projects in neighboring cities. The village of Zrawa also has a relatively known association to revitalize *Tamazight* language and culture. It is called *Azrou Association for Amazigh Culture*. Some Imazighen from Azrou claim to know how to write

*Tifinagh*². The Amazigh of Tamezret rely heavily on tourism. This has resulted in hardship and increasing poverty since tourism decreased dramatically following the 2010–2011 revolution and subsequent terrorist attacks against foreign tourists. The inhabitants of Tamazret speak *Tamazight* with variable proficiency (Joshua 20017). Taoujout is another village where Tamazight is still spoken. It is more likely to find native speakers in this village than in the rest of the villages (personal informant). It is about 7 kilometers away from Tamezret. The city contains one of the oldest Amazigh populations, which enhances its tourist appeal. My contacts inform me that the inhabitants also rely on farming and cattle herding. The Amazigh of Taoujout would also be described as economically marginal.

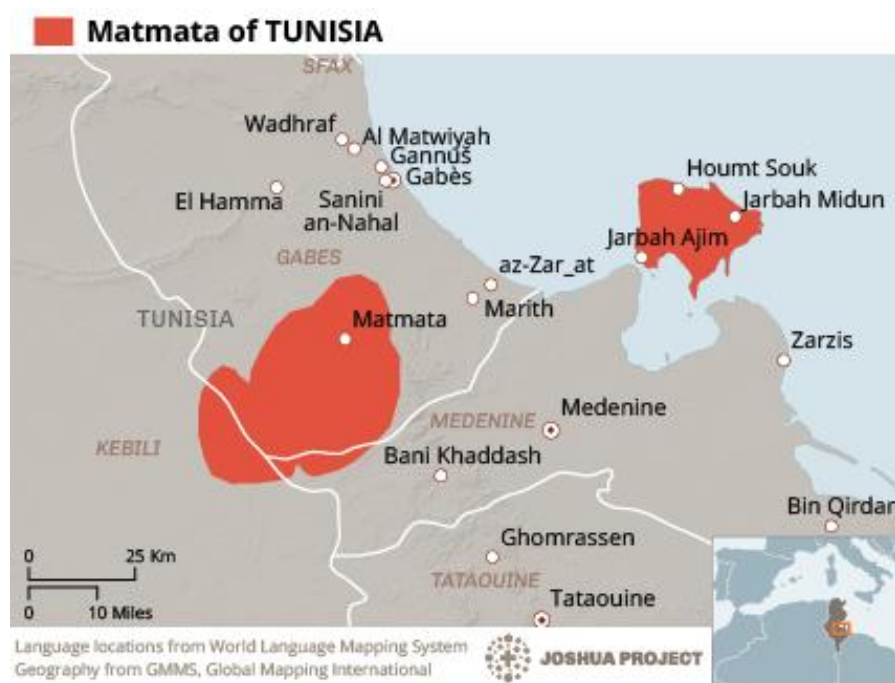


Figure 2.6: Matmata in Tunisia (Joshua Project, 2017)

The insular group refers to *Tamazight* spoken in the few villages in the island of Jerba, which is also located just off the coastline in the southeastern region of Tunisia. There are 15,000 Amazigh in Djerba, divided between four different towns on the island. Guallela (10,000), Tlet

²*Tifinagh*: The writing script of Tamazight

(500), Ajim (500), and nearly 4,000 in Sedouikech, including an Amazigh village called Oursighen, where 3,000 Amazigh live (Joshua, 2017). In general, many appear to have lost aspects of their traditional Amazigh identity. Amazigh clothing has changed due to integration with the Arabs of Djerba. Many now wear modern clothes making it difficult to distinguish Amazigh from other ethnic groups merely on outward appearances.

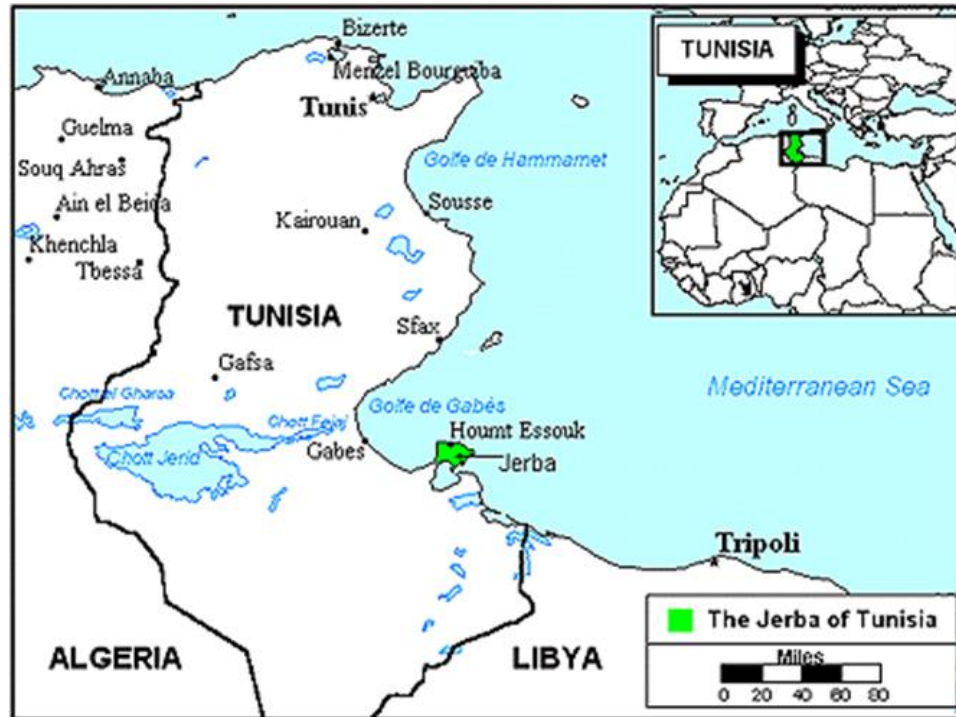


Figure 2.7: The Island of Jerba (Joshua Project, 2017)

According to my local sources, the Amazigh of Guallela and a minority of those from Sedouikech, especially within the village of Oursighen, have held on to their Amazigh identity and are proud of it. They are culturally and religiously conservative. Amazigh people in the Island of Djerba follow Ibadi school of Islam, unlike the general population in Tunisia and Imazighen in the other villages who are Sunni. There is a strong and close relationship between the Amazigh of Djerba and the Jews of Djerba. In the season of Jewish pilgrimage in Djerba, the Amazigh ensure the safety of the pilgrims. In return, the Jews consider the Amazigh of Djerba a

trustworthy people and interact with them commercially. The Amazigh of Guallela are potters and this profession has been passed on for generations. It is considered the profession of their ancestors and, therefore, not to be abandoned. With the passing of time, evolving material needs, and the difficulty of the profession, however, the youth have begun to search out work in industrial and commercial locations (Joshua 2017). The Amazigh inhabitants of Sedouikech work in agricultural commerce. They farm olive trees and produce olive oil. The inhabitants of the village of Oursighen are considered well-off. Members of the family may live abroad, often in Europe, sending back money to their families. All of the Amazigh groups in Djerba speak the *Tamazight* language with variable proficiency, but very few can write *Tifinagh*. The viability of the *Tamazight* language in the villages of Tlat and Ajim is tenuous with each passing generation. Only the elderly among these groups still speak it, however more fieldwork is needed in order to ascertain its true status.

2.4 Tunisian linguistic landscapes across history: *Tamazight* in contact

Before moving further in discussing the aims of the present study, it is important to have a grasp of who Tunisian Imazighen are and how their history has shaped their current reality and identity. Throughout mainstream recorded history, the Imazighen have repeatedly encountered powerful invasions to which their responses have ranged from resistance and retreat to embracing and assimilating in the new order (Maddy-Weitzman 2012, p.112). Such a context has perpetuated a historical narrative that exclusively retells the conquerors' acts, and portrays Amazigh populations as almost a-historic actors, their role as "protagonists in their own history" is lost in the process (Brett and Fentress 1996, p. 7). Negative stigma attached to Imazighen has been exacerbated by the hegemony of the ideology of Arabism during the post-colonial period (post 1956) and with the traumatic clashes and violence between the state and these populations.

Efforts to shift the negative discourse regarding the Imazighen are perceived as threatening to the national order.

The hostility towards the Imazighen in North Africa in general and in Tunisia in particular has been shaped over three important historical periods: the pre-Islamic conquest in the 7th century, the post-Islamic and pre-French occupation, and post-French occupation (Gabsi 2009). The 2010-2011 Tunisian revolution marks the fourth and most recent catalyst for reshaping Imazighen identity.

The overview of the four periods of history will not only help develop a good grasp of the linguistic situation in Tunisia, but also illustrate the history of contact between *Tamazight*, being the language of the autochthonous inhabitants and the successive new settlers of different ethnicities. Linguistically, contact between different ethnic groups often leads to language conflict (Nelde 1987). Language contact and conflict are seen as interdependently related processes, applicable both to individuals and to language communities. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how both are manifested and intertwined in the sociopolitical history of Imazighen in Tunisia.

Tunisia is known for its strategic geographical position between the eastern and the western basins of the Mediterranean. Its pivotal location has made it very appealing for many civilizations and cultures, which led to a great deal of linguistic complexity (Hamza 2007).

2.4.1 The Pre-Islamic history: Tamazight first contact with other languages

The Phoenicians appear to be the first people to have a contact with the indigenous people of Tunisia around 1200 B.C.E. While settling in Tunisia and building Carthage in 814 B.C. they brought with them their culture and language (Phoenician) and so Tunisia entered its first phase of language contact. Phoenician is a Semitic language that flourished alongside an

existing Afro-Asiatic language, which is Libyc. When the Greeks invaded Carthage as early as the 7th century B.C.E. and achieved multiple victories over the Carthaginians, their arrival did not have an impact on the balanced interaction of Libyc and Punic (Phoenician of Carthage) in a stable bilingual context. Presumably, Libyc was the language used by the masses and Punic was the official language and language of the elite (Hamza 2007). By the 2nd century B.C.E., the Punic wars had started between Rome and Carthage, and the latter was destroyed in 146 B.C.E. Libyc and Punic coexisted until this part of North Africa (some parts of Algeria and Libya, together with modern Tunisia) became a Roman colony from 146 BC to 5th century (Hamza 2007).

According to Hamza (2007), the linguistic situation in Tunisia entered its second phase sometime in the 1st century B.C.E. With the re-founding of Carthage in 44 B.C.E., Latin replaced Punic as the official language for several more centuries until the arrival of Arabs in the 7th century. Hamza (2007) notes that even though the Vandals occupied North Africa in the 3rd century, Latin and *Tamazight* bilingualism remained unchanged. A detailed description of how *Tamazight*, Punic and Latin interacted (what Diakonoff 1988 refers to as Libyco-Punic or the Berbero-Libyan) is unfortunately lacking in the literature. The little that is known about the cultural and linguistic interaction that occurred between Imazighen and the newcomers during this period (pre-Islamic) can be summed up in the following quote from Hamza's (2007):

Punic deities adopted by the Imazighen continue to be honored to this day, though in other forms. In the time of the Roman Empire, the religious cults of *Baal*, *Thanit* and other divinities became those of Saturn and Caelestis (Yver, 1937). Under the Romans, the power of some of these deities was transferred to the cult of living individuals. Emperors such as *Augustus* were celebrated every year on a certain fixed date and Tunisians still celebrate a festival bearing the name *Awassu* 'August' (Brugnatelli, 1998). A priest such as *ajlamen* presided over religious ceremonies, and games such as gladiatorial combats were a necessary complement to the festivals. In today's Tunisia, this has been replaced by games known as *alfantasia* involving horsemanship. Most of these festivals are paid for by the state (p. 78).

2.4.2 Post-Islamic History: Tamazight contact with Arabic

The arrival of Muslim-Arabs in the mid-7th C.E. and the introduction of Arabic, a Semitic language, marked the beginning of new period of language contact in Tunisia. The history of Arabic in Tunisia could be divided into two periods, in what is known in the literature as the pre-Hilalian and the Hilalian invasions (Barakat 2000). During the first invasion in the second half of the 7th century, Arabs came to North Africa from the Arab Peninsula as preachers of Islam. Hence the history of Arabic in Tunisia can be easily related to the history of Islam. Arabs first inhabited the already existing urban areas, such as Kairouan in Tunisia which represented the first Muslim settlement in the Maghreb (Sayahi 2014). This contributed to the development of vernacular forms similar to the ones spoken in the cities, also called ‘*sedentary*’ in Arabic dialectology (Versteegh 1997). During this period, only urban areas were Arabized. Rural areas where a large majority of Amazighophones resided were not Arabized till the start of the second Arab invasion in the 10th and 11th centuries. Hence, local dialects first took the form of what is now known as *sedentary Arabic* or pre-Hilalian Arabic (Sayahi 2014; Versteegh 1997). During the second wave of Arabization, which started with the Hilalian invasion in the 10th and 11th centuries, the Arabic tribes of Beni Hilal and Beni Sulaym came to Tunisia from Egypt. Consequently, Arabic extended its contact with more territories influencing both the rural sedentary populations and nomadic groups living in the desert (Sayahi 2014; Versteegh 1997). The linguistic features that developed during the second wave of Arabization had ‘*nomadic*’ characteristics (Versteegh 1997). Accordingly, the two processes of Arabization led to the emergence of two different types of Arabic dialects: sedentary and nomadic. In parallel with this linguistic change, the total conversion of Imazighen to Islam was accompanied by linguistic assimilation. Subsequently, Arabic -*Tamazight* bilingualism took root.

The religious and cultural factors favoring Arabic were strongly embedded within Tunisian society; by the time the Turks made Tunisia one of their regencies among other Arabic-speaking countries in the mid-14th century (Hamza 2007), *Tamazight* had been superseded by Arabic as the majority language. The importance of Turkish now must be considered within this complex linguistic context. Under Turkish rule, Turkish became the language of the court and the ruling class. Although an occupier language fulfilled the specific purpose of facilitating the rule of the country, Turkish was eventually given up by the Turkish Beys of Tunisia in favor of Arabic, the language of their subjects (Hamza 2007). It is important to note that during the time of the Turkish rule from the 14th century until the 'proclamation' of Tunisia as an independent Kingdom by the Hussainit dynasty of Beys³ in the early 18th century, the practice of the Ottoman Empire favored a policy of multiculturalism. Thus, except among the ruling class, knowledge of Turkish was not expected. Minorities such as Imazighen, Jews and Europeans were left to conduct their private and business affairs in their own languages. However, education and religious matters were the domain of Arabic as the ruling class at the time of the arrival of the Turks were of Arab origin or were Arabic speakers (Hamza 2007). In addition, most of the Turkish ruling class were themselves Muslim (Mansel, 1995). Thus, over many centuries, Arabic became the majority language at the expense of *Tamazight*. The Turks also facilitated the absorption of another ethnic element of Amazigh-Arabic origin from Andalusia into the population of Tunisia following the expulsion of Muslims and Jews from Spain in the late 15th century.

Muslims and Jews of Spanish origin were added to the ethnic landscape of North Africa. According to Hamza (2007), the Bey of Tunis gave fertile lands to some of these immigrants and to others, governmental posts in return for their expertise in administrative organizations or their

³ Bey: the governor of a district or province in the Ottoman Empire.

technical knowledge. Toponymical research shows that towns such as *Kalaat el-Andalous* and *el-Batan* bear names of their Andalusian founders (Ben Jaafer 1985)

From the year 1705 until the independence of Tunisia in 1956, the formulation of a Tunisian national identity began around the building of a modern nation known as Tunisia. The linguistic situation was relatively stable and the newly formed Tunisian government under the Hussainit Bey looked to the West for a style of government. The Beys ruled for about two centuries and a half. During the French colonial between 1881 until 1956, the Beys tried to construct a modern Tunisia while seeking advice from France regarding the modernization of the country (Hamza 2007). Thus, an element of western civilization was added to the existing components of Tunisian social identity.

2.4.3 Post- French occupation: Arabization continues

By the time the French made Tunisia a Protectorate following their occupation of Algeria in 1830, what was left of the Amazigh community in Tunisia had taken refuge in the remote and isolated regions of the country. The French language was a real competitor to the dominance of Arabic, since it brought with it a prestigious culture and was associated with advanced technology. It was considered a link to the more modern European and Western civilizations. Two languages (Arabic and French) and two civilizations (Arabo-Islamic and Franco-Western) shaped the linguistic topography of Tunisia for the next century (Hamza 2007). This language situation was and still is saliently apparent in the country's education system and cultural life. In between the two World Wars and after a period of a more or less stable bilingualism of French and Arabic in the educational establishments of colonial Tunisia, French culture and language replaced Arabic in both the secondary and higher education systems to become the main subject of study (Louis, 1972).

Stable bilingualism of Arabic and French was maintained in institutions and educational establishments for many years during and after the Protectorate. However, the rise of Arab Nationalism in the 1950s was a turning point for Tunisia following the line taken by the other Arab and North African countries in making Arabic the sole national and official language. Arabization rapidly extended to the executive and governing bodies of the Maghrebi countries following Algeria's independence in 1962, and the revival of Islam in the 1960s relegated French to second place status in Tunisia as well. An interesting linguistic situation developed in the new political context in which Arabic was given a much wider range than the one to which it was originally confined, namely the teaching of Arabic literature and Islamic principles. Consequently, French civilization and, to a certain extent, the French language, slowly declined in influence during the 1960s. With Pan-Arabism taking over, Pan-Arabic unity was realized and understood early in the form of a religious unity (Islam) (Daoud 1991). In other words, the Arabic speaking countries see themselves as one nation with one religion (Islam) reinforced by one language (Arabic). The major component of ethnic identity according to this ideology is religious identity.

The national goals of Arabization were successfully achieved in about a decade and a half after independence. This view is illustrated in the following statement, from the news magazine *Dialogue*, the mouthpiece of the ruling *Destour Party* in Tunisia:

“While the first two decades of independence were devoted to the spread of education [1960s] then to Arabization and Tunisification [1970s], the present decade is that of making choices for the future. The key issue is how to form the generation of the year 2000” (Hechmi, 1984, p. 16; author's translation from the original French).

The statement is made not only to describe the success of the Arabization policy in Tunisia, but also to imply that it was no longer a topic of public debate (Daoud 1991). What remained debatable, however, was which Arabic variety would be used. Being viewed as a

sacred language, Tunisians believe that Classical Arabic (CA) is their native language while Tunisian Arabic (TA) also called *Darija*⁴ is believed to be a degraded form of Arabic (Al-Baccouche 1990). In reality, CA has never served as the native language of Tunisians. It is used only for formal education and religious sermons. TA, in contrast, is the native language of the majority of the population. Despite the similarities, TA and CA still exhibit tremendous differences phonologically, morphologically, syntactically, lexically as well as in terms of their domains of use. While TA is a lingua franca used by all the Tunisians including Tunisian Imazighen, CA is limited to governmental, educational and religious domains. According to Garmadi (1968), contact between CA and TA led to the emergence of an intermediate variety called Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), that is influenced by French in style and structure while its oral form is an intermediate register between CA and TA. It is used more in mass media, literary magazine, lectures, and political speeches (cf. Al-Shalabi, 1984; Benikhalef, 1987). MSA in this context refers to the new variety practiced in Tunisia as opposed to the cover term for the “literary” or “educated” MSA. More recently, the label *Lahja Baydaa* “White accent” or “White” dialect of Arabic (O’Neill 2017) is coined to refer to this new variety of Arabic arising out from contact between the local spoken variety and CA. This new form of Arabic is understandable in the Middle East and Gulf countries, view that Maghrebi dialects are unintelligible to these regions.

Accordingly, the Tunisian linguistic situation during the post-colonial era and under the emphasis of the Arabization project encompassed CA, MSA and TA as main language varieties. Hence, Tunisia now sees itself primarily as an Islamic country, followed by an Arab country, and thirdly, as part of the North African Arabic-speaking region. The prevailing national discourse in

⁴ In chapter 5 and 6, TA or *Darija* is referred to by *Ettounsi* in adherence to L’Association Darija, which argues that the gap between CA and *darija* is so wide that it becomes almost two different languages. Thus, it high time rupturing with CA and view *Darija* as a seperate language which name is *Ettounsi*.

Tunisia has been that Islam and Arabic are the sole binding components of Tunisian national identity, negating the primary component of Amazigh identity in which the Tunisian national identity is embedded.

French was accepted as an official language in Tunisia after independence in 1956 and bilingualism in the education system was promoted. Institutions were left more or less to use the language that suited their affairs without interference from the state. In the post-colonial period, however, the Arab League's language policy of Arabization gained more support from the policy makers within the governments of North Africa; hence the balance was tipped in favor of Arabic as the sole national and official language of the North African countries. The Arabization policy and the creation of the Arab League of Nations anchored Arabic as the official and only national language of North Africa. French in the administration and government was slowly replaced by Arabic in the 1970-80s, further marginalizing the already disadvantaged Imazighen and their language. Nearly fifty years after Tunisia's independence, the country's language planners are still in a dilemma regarding Arabization, since much of higher education, particularly, scientific and technological subjects, are still conducted in French. Thus, these language strategists are left wondering what to do with regard to the remaining domains occupied by French and the influence of French culture (Daoud 1991). They cannot afford to totally Arabize all domains of life nor can they return to the 'stable bilingualism' that was seen during the years of the Protectorate (1881-1956). It seems no one in the political arena is willing to abandon the respective linguistic advantages of Arabic or of French. In the discussion of language planning and policies, and debate between Arabophone and Francophone groups, *Tamazight* has been ignored and has declined even further in favor of Arabic and to a certain extent French and other languages such as English.

2.4.4 Post-revolution 2010-2011

Prior to the uprising in 2010-2011, Tunisia had witnessed high levels of corruption and unemployment among young, often well-educated Tunisians. Simultaneously, political oppositions, media, and minority groups were all under strict state control and harshly suppressed. Any attempts to form a social movement or to criticize the government were regarded as divisive and threatening to the national unity and territorial integrity. This long-standing situation suddenly changed on December 17, 2010 when a street vendor named Muhammed El-Bouzizi from *Sidi Bouzid*, an economically disadvantaged city, immolated himself in symbolic reaction against the political corruption and oppression. Bouzizi's self-immolation sparked the Tunisian revolution.

The 2010-2011 Tunisian Revolution brought about unprecedented political movements and activism among the Amazigh communities urging for the defense, protection and recognition of Amazigh linguistic and cultural rights. As previously mentioned, Tunisian Imazighen throughout mainstream recorded history, have repeatedly encountered more powerful invading forces to which they either resisted or assimilated (Maddy-Weitzman 2012, p. 112). Subsequently, any discussion in relation to Tunisian Imazighen was extremely sensitive, to the point of being perceived as divisive and threatening to the national balance of power. Moreover, an Arab-centered nationalist agenda has been the main focus of the Tunisian nation-state since independence from France. According to Pouessel (2012, *L'Année du Maghreb*), in the 1970s, national leaders obliged school teachers to “*de-Berberize*” students, and the Arabophone pressure reduced Amazighophones from a majority to a minority in villages of the south. Because of these anti-Amazigh sentiments and the desire to extinguish Berber/Amazigh culture, getting an official census for the Tunisian Amazigh population is nearly impossible and all that is found are

estimates that calculate that only 1% of the populations are *Tamazight* speakers (Torres de Janon 2014).

Under post-independence Arabization, the undeniably Amazigh origins of Tunisia and its people were transformed into a remote and folkloric past, an unimportant fabrication of the national identity overpowered by the state-promoted Arabism. A study on official Tunisian educational textbooks by researcher Driss Abbassi (2008) relates how in schools, since independence, the country's Amazigh roots have been continuously pushed aside for the supposed essential *Arabness* of North Africa, with only a short recognition of *Tunisia's Amazigheity* in textbooks in the 1980s. References to this *Amazigheity*, however, almost completely disappeared once again starting in the 1990s with the rise of Pan-Arabism⁵. More recently, contemporary scholarship has continued to play with the very political and misleading ideology that presents Tunisian Imazighen as a minority descending, most likely, from Arabs, through publishing or republishing books such as "The Berber minority in Tunisia" by Salem Labyath (2016), or "The Arabness of the Berbers: an introduction to the Arabness of Imazighen through their tongue" by Muhammed Boulouz (2012).

The marginalized situation of Tunisian *Tamazight* persisted until the uprising of 2010-2011 that shook Tunisia, North Africa and the Middle East. Since then, Tunisian Imazighen feel more empowered than any time before to demand greater rights and even argue for official

⁵ According to Antonius (1986) Pan-Arabism was closely tied with Arab Nationalism, which basically wanted a unified Arab country with lesser western political intervention. Pan-Arabism or Arabism started as a movement on its own. The movement found official expression after World War II in the Arab League and in such unification, attempts as the Arab Federation (1958) of Iraq and Jordan, the United Arab Republic, the Arab Union (1958), the United Arab Emirates, and the Arab Maghreb Union (see under Maghreb). The principal instrument of Pan-Arabism in the early 1960s was the Ba'ath party, which was active in most Arab states, notably Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen. Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, who was not a Ba'athist, expressed similar ideals of Arab unity and socialism. The decline of the movement started since the death of the Egyptian Leader. Nevertheless, its ideological principles continued to influence the social, political and linguistic orientations in North Africa and Middle East. It was till the 90s when issues of national identity had increasingly become very important, particularly with the emergence of Non-Arab ethnic minorities' movements such as Kurds in Iraq and Imazighen in North Africa.

recognition in the constitution. The quick and spontaneous appearance of their activism reveals the artificial nature of Tunisia's imagined homogeneity, the injustice these communities have witnessed under government suppression, and their willingness to speak up. In fact, it took only six months after the fall of the Tunisian's dictatorship to establish the first ever Amazigh association in the capital of Tunis on July 30, 2011 - the Tunisian Association for Amazigh Culture (*l'Association Tunisienne de la Culture Amazigh*). The main objectives of the association are to constitutionalize the cultural rights of the Tunisian Amazigh in order to protect the disappearing patrimony, safeguard the language, and assert Amazigh identity. Since then several other associations have been established such as the *Twiza Association for Patrimony, Solidarity, and Development* on October 31, 2011, *The Amazigh Association of Djerba* on July 12, 2013, *The Tunisian Association of Tamazight Woman*, September 23, 2015, and the *A'arbata Association of Gafsa*, September 14, 2016.

2.5 Conclusive remarks

Despite the explosion of activism in the post-revolutionary context, Tunisian *Amazigheity* continues to represent a controversial and uncomfortable subject in Tunisia. The new Tunisian constitution drafted on January 26, 2014 fails at inclusiveness by completely ignoring the rights of the indigenous Imazighen of Tunisia. Ignoring Amazigh rights is no coincidence; the new constitution, though not Islamist, is clearly written from the perspective of a pan-Arabist ideology (Mahjar Barducci 2014). In fact, even though Amazigh culture and language are rooted in the country's history, the constitution stresses only Tunisia's Arab heritage, noting that Tunisia is part of the "Arab Maghreb" (Al-Maghreb Al-Arabi) and that it is working towards achieving national unity. Post-revolutionary Tunisia remains insensitive to its Amazigh roots. Mahjar-Barducci (2014) writes in her editorial: Pan-Arabist Ideology in the New Tunisian Constitution:

This is disheartening! It is almost grotesque... turning its back on [adopting] a truly modern constitution that would be respectful of international law. There is no doubt that Tunisia has much to gain from the recognition of the Amazigh people as an indigenous people, and to render official its millenary language. The new constitution should be in tune with the international instruments, namely the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous people, which explicitly states, in its Article 3, indigenous peoples' right to self-determination (p. 3).

Alongside these negative public and governmental responses, the Tunisian Amazigh cause has been further hindered by other internal challenges, mainly significant fragmentation between *Tamazight*-speaking activists (who were born in Amazigh communities and claim to be factually 'ethnically Amazigh') and active Tunisians who do not speak *Tamazight*. While the former believe that member of the Amazigh movement must learn the language to be a part of it, the latter claim their *Amazighity* by referring to the history of the country (Torres de Janon 2014). The split also relates to the aforementioned division between activists who want to politicize the Amazigh movements and those that want to focus on the cultural part and language maintenance. Pouessel (2012, L'Année du Maghreb) states that Tunisian Amazigh mobilization, despite its young age, is already fragmented because of these reasons.

While holding different and contradictory approaches on the best strategies to revive *Tamazight*, Tunisian Imazighen agree on refusing to be referred to as a "minority group". They argue that calling Tunisia's *Amazighity* a "minority" is illogical, perpetuates misleading ideas of Arab/Islamic ideology, and most dangerously pushes for an erasure of the true essence of the Tunisian *Amazighity* (Suarez Collado 2013). Similar discourses of identity renaissance and resistance have been greatly empowered and facilitated by online platforms, Facebook in particular. According to Torres de Janon (2014), Tunisian Amazigh movement was not only limited to the virtual platform. Since February 2011, it quickly moved to the field by spreading successful calls for demonstrating and civil actions around the country (p.12). Failure to draw

public support was not unexpected back then as Tunisian Imazighen found themselves forced to walk on eggshells when using the term *Amazigh* in public discourse. “They ask us if we want to change the religion of our country; to change the language; to distance the people of their religion [Islam]” said Anis Mokni, a Tunisian Amazigh activist and one of the interviewees in Torres de Janon’s (2014) paper: Post-Revolutionary Civil Society Activism for the Invisible Tunisian Amazigh”. In sum, Tamazight language and identity owes much of its visibility in the public discourse in the context of Tunisia to Facebook. The following chapter will focus on the relationship between language, ideologies, and online discourse with emphasis on Facebook by incorporating and reviewing some of the literature that examined and expanded upon this relationship.

Chapter Three

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS



An Amazigh good morning for the ethos of those who do not speak Tamazight: "language is the source of identity and cultural belonging for the individual" quoted from Prof. Khadija Saed.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the relevant theoretical frameworks and models on indigenous identity formation in the online social networking platform Facebook. The goal is to understand how Facebook turned into a key location for Tunisian Imazighen to perform most of the linguistic and ethnic identity work to revitalize *Tamazight* language and repair a long-erased Amazigh identity. Drawing on sociolinguistically informed studies of social media sites (SMS), language, identity, and semiotics, this chapter will provide a discussion of all these notions and highlight the thread that ties all of them to the research question at hand. This includes investigating the role of social media in the spread of pro-*Tamazight* ideologies since the 2010-2011 Revolution and that of Facebook in specific in assisting with the construction and reconstruction of Tamazight language and culture in the face of Arab Nationalism. To this end, the major analysis will focus on examining the linguistic, discursive, and semiotic resources they are using along with their impact on language ideologies shift since the 2011 Revolution in the context of Tunisia.

The chapter explores the relationship between the linguistic constructions of identity on Facebook and semiotic resources and practices that community members adopt. The main goal in

this part is to show how Facebook has become a key-representational tool not only for interpersonal and intra-group communication, but also as a key site for acts of linguistic and identity differentiation. Research on the ideology of differentiation calls attention to the role of semiotics and to processes of erasure, iconization, and fractal recursivity (Irvine and Gal, 2000) in allowing members of a group to distinguish their ethnolinguistic identity from others. Overviews and descriptions of how these processes are re-appropriated on Facebook and even reversed in the context of language revitalization will be discussed in an attempt to provide a conceptual and theoretical approach for the data analysis in this dissertation.

To address these points, I begin by an ‘avant-goût’ example of *Tamazight* language and identity erasure through a Facebook discussion between one of my participants and a famous Tunisian historian. Then, I will examine linguistic situations where erasure and silencing are applicable to the situation of Tunisian *Tamazight*. I will focus mainly on examples of situations of other *Tamazight* languages as the ones spoken in Morocco, Algeria, and Libya. I follow with a brief review of the key notions of identity, language and its shift. I specifically address the impact of the linguistic ideologies on language shift and their implications for ethnolinguistic minorities. The overall implication is that language contact often leads to language conflict (Jahr 1993) which consequently can develop into language shift or loss. Tunisian *Tamazight* represents an example of language contact leading to critical language endangerment (Bittenburgh 1999, Gabsi 2007). To better understand how this has happened, I will draw on work on the intersection between language ideologies and the semiotic practices of erasure. Irvine and Gal (2000:38) argue that erasure is the process in which ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistics field, renders some persons or activities invisible. The discourse of language revitalization is more of an ideological discourse about the people than it is about documenting the language and

fostering the actual use. In such cases, members of the dominated linguistic communities join language mobilization movements under certain ideological conditions and engage in their own form of erasure in constructing narratives that reverse the narratives that led to the endangerment of their language. Hence, these responsive erasure processes will be employed under the form of what this dissertation calls “*counter-erasure*”. It is within this framework that I will analyze how Tunisian Imazighen employ various semiotic practices on Facebook to construct and reconstruct their language and identity.

The second section of this chapter addresses the development of the sociolinguistics of social media discourse and how identity work and linguistic practices have been researched through various approaches to CMC. Since the social network site Facebook is a major data resource in this study, reexamining some of the literature on the growth of this site and its usage in language-focused research will make up part of this section as well. The role of Facebook in catalyzing social mobilization and influencing change in the context of Tunisia has been extensively studied in academia (Marzouki et al. 2012, Nur-Muhammad et al. 2013, Prevet 2017). There is a general agreement that Facebook has provided an unprecedented platform for politically controlled minority groups to communicate their voices, among which we find the Tunisia black community, the Tunisian Jewish community, and especially the Tunisian Amazigh community (Pouessel, 2012). The last part of this chapter will present a brief survey of some of these studies.

3.2 Section one: Language ideologies

3.2.1 Tunisian Tamazight language and erasure: an avant-gôût

Questions of who can claim to be Amazigh are highly controversial in the context of Tunisia today. Similarly, claims of Amazigh people to an indigenous identity are highly

debatable. The idea that many Tunisians have ethnolinguistic roots in Amazigh culture continues to be a subject of widespread denial. As mentioned in earlier chapters, pan-Arabists argue that Tunisian identity is essentially ethnically Arab. If they had to describe how this identity was first shaped, they would consider the Carthaginian (Phoenician) component as the beginning. According to many pan-Arabists, the new Amazigh movement and claims to an Amazigh identity are emergent of either over-romanticized or imagined interpretations of Tunisia's ethnogenetic and linguistic history. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 from a Facebook conversation between a famous historian in Tunisia and one of the participants in this study (Firmus) illustrate some of the complexities surrounding Amazigh identity in present-day Tunisia. The conversation was shared on Firmus' wall. In Figure 3.1, the historian states that Lybic (ancient term for *Tamazight*) is not a language, but a group of local dialects that are weak and inefficient. He adds that the size of the *Tamazight* lexicon is so small that it can barely express the simple ideas of primitive life. In contrast, the historian privileges the existence of what he calls "Carthaginian language" in Tunisia's history. He argues that it was spoken all over North Africa as demonstrated in several inscriptions found in Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria. Even though the Carthaginian (Phoenician) language is totally dead within the context of Tunisia, he still calls for some governmental support for this language while remaining completely silent on *Tamazight*. The content of the post includes more than one semiotic mode. To foreground the Carthaginian element and erase the Amazigh one in the process of crafting Tunisian identity, the visual pictures of Punic/Carthaginian inscriptions are added to complete the verbal meaning, and also to legitimize and ratify it.

لغة قرطاج

لما تعرّفت أساطيل الفينيقيين على لوبة وهو الاسم تسمت به ربوع قبائل شمال أفريقيا الممتدة من وراء السرت الأكبر إلى المحيط الأطلسي فهي الربوع التي تقاسمها ليبيا وتونس والجزائر والمغرب الأقصى. ذكرت لوبة في الآيات والأوديسة ونزه المؤرخ اليوناني جيرودمس بالقبائل اللوبية مشيرا إلى ربوعها وإلى بعض عاداتها وتقاليدها ووردت أخبار عن لهجاتها وقد كانت عديدة ضعيفة محدودة الفاعلية لا تتجاوز متخصيات العيش البدائي فلا عرو أن صيطن لغة الذين أتوا على متن سفنهم من المشرق ومن مدينة صور تحديدا وأقاموا مستوطنة محاذية لغرية تسمى وثيقة ثم جاءت مجموعة أخرى مستفيدة من خبرة المهاجرين السابقين وأنشأوا قرطاج وعمّوا جسرا عملاقا بين كلعان ولوبة وبين شرق المتوسط وعربه فصرّبت تجارب المشرق القديم إلى عرسي المتوسط وإلى سواحل شمال أفريقيا. بقيت لهجات اللوبيين في حدودها المحلية كما هو شأنها اليوم رغم بعض المحاولات ولعل أقدمها تلك التي تعود إلى مستكشفين وأبدانهم تتجلى تلك المحاولات في نقاش بونية لوبية عثر عليها في دقة وهي مدينة لوميديّة من شهبيرات المدن في المملكة اللوميديّة ومن أشهر تلك النقاش تلك التي يستأثر بها متحف البريطان في لندن وقد ابتزّها قنصل بريطانيا ثوماس ريد Thomas Read سنة 1842 ولم يتردد في خدم المعلم لينتزع منه النقشة الثمينة. ليس من واجب المملكة المتحدة تقديم اعتذار رسمي إلى الدولة التونسية المبتزة وقد كانت انذاك في مختلف الميادين فأسرّة؟ انتشرت الآن لغة قرطاج في كامل ربوع شمال أفريقيا من عرسي القنصر الليبي إلى أقصى المملكة المغربية مروراً بتونس والجزائر. وشاهد على تلك نقاش بونية تم العثور عليها والتقاطها والكتب عليها المختصون عجماً وتحليلاً ونشراً ومزال بعضها يترقب التصحيل والدراسة. ليس من واجب الدولة التونسية الاهتمام بهذه اللغة والعمل على تكوين الأملر الكفاء لتكتب على هذه العروج من تراثنا اللوبي؟ بلي!

محمد حسين فدمغر



Figure 3.1 Firmus_It_image 5
Language of Carthage

The Phoenicians came into contact with the Libyc regions and those were tribal regions in North African extending from behind The Great Sirt to the Atlantic Ocean encompassing territories shared by Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. This region -Luba- was mentioned in the Illiad and Odyssey along with the Lybic tribes, their rituals and traditions. There was also information about the dialects spoken by these tribes. They were numerous but weak and limited in use; and could barely describe the aspects of primitive life. That's why it was easy for the language of those who came from the east on their boats...to establish Carthage [and] to dominate. They also, built bridges between Canaan, Lybic regions and the Middle East which helped the ancient eastern knowledge travel to the western parts of the Mediterranean and North Africa. The Lybic dialects remained stagnant and undeveloped as it is nowadays despite several attempts to revive them [...] As for the Carthaginian language, it spread everywhere in North Africa from the western parts of the territory to the far end in Morocco, passing by Tunisia and Algeria. This is verified through the Punic inscriptions engraved in many places and documented and studied by

many specialists who continue to do so. I wonder how it is not among the duties of the Tunisian government to pay more attention to this language and train more people to write on this language so that we protect our Punic heritage? (Author’s translation of Arabic text above images)

Figure 3.2 shows a verbal comment by Firmus (one of the participants in this study) in response to the historian’s post (Figure 3.1) about Amazigh identity being nothing but a product of an over-romanticized history.



Figure 3.2: Firmus_comment12
Firmus’ response to the historian’s post in Fig. 3.1

Amazigh participant responding to Historian: With all my respect Dr., you don’t know the ancient Lybic nor the changes it has undergone which continue to date. When you say that it is a poor language that cannot express abstract meanings and that its vocabulary is limited to household expressions and nothing more we should question whoever pushed the language to a status of impoverishment. There is no a doubt that those are the consequences of the long erasure and suppression that this language has encountered; and yet its richness is beyond what you can imagine. I am saying this because of I am a son of the language and because it is hard to construct an identity for North Africa based on foreign identities no matter how you try. Take the Italians, for example, they do not claim themselves to be Greek even though the Greeks existed

for as long as the Phoenicians in Carthage. I am sorry that the ideas you are trying to disseminate are the same as the ones that El-Baa'th (Arab Socialist Party found in 1947 in Iraq used in this context as a generic name of Arab Nationalists) employed to suppress, attack, and humiliate our language. Both Punic and Latin languages disappeared. The only language that remained in our country is our historical Tamazight. Can you tell us where is your Punic today? Have a nice day!

Historian: Your response is highly sentimentalized, I respect that but I don't accept it.

Claims that Amazigh identity is a fundamental component of Tunisian ethnolinguistic identity are often contested as shown in Figures 3.1 and 3.2 from Facebook. Contested claims to being indigenous are studied in a large body of literature on ethnic group situations similar or close enough to the one of Tunisian Imazighen (Clifford 2013; Feliciano-Santos 2011; Haley 2007; and Cornel 2003). In studies of Latin America indigenous activism, Feliciano-Santos (2013) reports there are several emic approaches to indigeneity that differ from the ones of the ethnographers studying those communities. She adds that "the circumstance of ethnic formations and practices of different indigenous movements varies in terms of agendas, circumstances, tactics, associations, practices, demography, among other things" (p.9). These studies help explain the emic approach that this dissertation adopts by relying on the insiders' understanding of terms, such as indigeneity and ethnicity rather than on the outsiders' - researchers and anthropologists- definitions of these terms.

In studying several ethnic groups on China, Hathaway (2010) states that indigeneity among these groups is not viewed as a natural category, but a political and social category that is often in a continuing process of emergence (p.302). Hence, all ethnic groups in China could be considered indigenous. In proposing a dynamic definition of indigeneity, ethnic groups who face racism, discrimination, will be permitted to reposition themselves "out of domestic and local struggles, and into a position of transnational solidarities, rights, and participation in dynamic social movement" (p.303). This is interesting when compared to Tunisian Imazighen's

definitional restrictiveness of the term. Being indigenous for Tunisian Imazighen constitute only Tunisia's inhabitants whose ancestors fought the Arab conquerors in the 7th and 11th centuries, retained by and large their own languages, and/or all Tunisians who speak *Ettounsi* – commonly known as Tunisian Arabic, which is believed to be influenced by *Tamazight* (see Chapter 6). Other ethnicities are deemed non-indigenous if they have no history of conflicts with the first Arab comers.

In her studies of *Taíno*, an indigenous population of the Caribbean, Feliciano-Santos (2017) defined at least five ideological positions framing their ethnic and indigenous claims. With respect to *Tunisian Tamazight*, the position described by the author below is very helpful in understanding how Tunisian Imazighen engage in reclaiming their indigenous identity on Facebook platform:

They privileged an ideology of *Taíno* language as a collection of words and scripts that performatively, indexically, and iconically linked past *Taíno* to current *Taíno* social actors, where using these words was understood to establish a *Taíno* discursive space... The act of reclamation here was to access *Taíno* language and worldviews through lexical items and to demarcate these from Spanish through the use of separate scripts (p. 15).

Chapter 5 and 6 will elaborate further on how the use of *Tamazight* lexical items or script choices, their production, and use can semiotically accentuate linguistic differentiation and alignment.

3.2.2 Languages under erasure and comparable situations to Tunisian Tamazight

To understand the complexities of current discursive approaches to Amazigh language and identity, it is important to address some of the literature relevant to the issue of similar identity, particularly in indigenous and minority communities. Linguistic hegemony imposed by the nation-state and the value assigned to the language by the speakers themselves represent two

main factors that cause language endangerment. Hegemony as defined in the literature refers to the ideological process by which state institutions produce and reproduce ideological consensus to legitimize language dominance (Gal 1998; Phillips 1998; Woolard 2009). Kirschen (2013) cites two examples of nations where propagating hegemonic language ideologies among speakers of minority languages, such as Judeo-Spanish, became a fundamental requirement to fit it within the broader national linguistic profile. Therefore, to be Israeli for instance, one should speak Hebrew and to be Turkish, one should speak Turkish. The last example is a good segue into sketching out conditions of resistance to linguistic hegemony in the case of Kurdish language and/or other Tamazight varieties spoken in Morocco, Algeria, and Libya.

3.2.2.1 *Kurdish language*

In Turkey, the relationship of Turkish to minority languages such as Kurdish is worth elaborating on further for the striking similarities it holds to Arabic linguistic nationalism and its implications for Tunisia's ethnolinguistic minorities. Indeed, since the 19th century, Turkish linguistic policies have been based on a project that puts language under the state control and circulates the same standardized language to the public as a means of keeping a homogenous nation. Establishing Turkish language as a primary referent of identity and deploying it as means to produce a sense of the nation has become a central objective of the state since 1930's (Aslan 2007). The extension to produce a state language forced the assimilation of the Anatolian's local languages and dialects. Only Kurdish has been able to resist the state suppression for the past century. The pressure on the Kurdish citizens to assimilate was exacerbated in 1980 when Turkish was constitutionally declared as the official state language and the publishing and spreading of written materials in any other native language was banned. Attempts to deny nativeness to Kurdish language and people have never ended for purposes of eradicating Kurdish

identity and consequently a Kurdish future. As Turkey had ambitions to join the European Union (EU), several reforms were made that seemed on the surface to be in favor of minority languages such as allowing TV programs in minority languages and facilitating the learning by Turkish citizens of minority languages (Aslan 2007). Nevertheless, the decision to allow these programs were accepted only on the condition that “there would be no children’s programs, no minority languages teaching programs, and that the all programs would be subtitled or simultaneously translated into Turkish” (Aslan 2007). This implies that the learning of Kurdish by children was perceived as a threat to the nation’s linguistic homogeneity. Turkish nationalist rhetoric has become much more direct then ever after the coup attempt of July 15th, 2017. Based on a blog published on *Identity Hunters* by Uygur Baspehlivan (2018), the state of emergency in Turkey saw many Kurdish language TV channels and newspapers shut down restricting the public’s access to the language. These acts were taken under the pretext that these institutions were linked to what is called the terrorist group of Kurdistan Workers’ party (PKK). Accordingly, by establishing a link between Kurdish language and terrorism, an indexical relationship between this language and its speakers is being shaped. In this context, the entire Kurdish linguistic group is associated with terrorism, which produces the perfect conditions for a total domination of the linguistic territory by the state. State efforts to delineate the capacity of Kurdish to be learned as mother tongue continue with the return of Kamal Atatürk’s linguistic nationalism and the promotion of only one identity in Turkey today.

3.2.2.2 *Tamazight in Morocco*

Comparably, to be a Moroccan, Algerian, or Tunisian has been and continues to be associated with speaking Arabic. Institutional and national attempts to acknowledge the Amazigh element or reclaim *Amazigheity* as a principal component of the national culture and a cultural

heritage across all stages of each of these countries' histories and civilizations have repeatedly shown that they are simply state strategies to sabotage the Amazigh movement and turn living Amazigh culture into static folklore (Silverstein & Crawford, 2017).

In Morocco, *Tamazight* speakers are estimated to make 40% of the population and yet, since the 1950's Amazigh cultural identity and language have been viewed as divisive forces within Moroccan nation. Not only that but they have also been framed as a threat to the Islamic religiosity of the people and the holiness of Arabic language as Arabic is regarded as not only the language of nationhood, but also of "paradise". Amazigh opposition to the imagined Moroccan homogeneity took several forms over the years, pushing the king in his 1994 Throne Day speech to acknowledge that Amazigh "dialects" are among the components of Moroccan history and they should be taught at school. Despite the radical acknowledgement by the king in favor of a pre-colonial and pre-Islamic Amazigh heritage, *Tamazight* was still portrayed as dialect not a language in his speech, which stems from nationalist ideologies that portray *Tamazight* as inferior to Arabic. On October 17, 2001 more reforms took place regarding the three major *Tamazight* languages spoken in Morocco: *Tashelhyt*, *Tarifit*, and *Tamazight*. This was embodied in the establishment of the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture (IRCAM). This seemed as a promising policy to shift the discrimination against Imazighen and their language since *Tamazight* would no longer be treated as a challenge to national unity, but as evidence of the democratic and modernist Moroccan society that the king was trying to propagate to his western allies. The institute incorporates several research centers charged with linguistic standardization, pedagogical development, artistic expression, anthropological analysis, historical preservation, translation and media promotion, and communication (Silverstein 2004).

Teaching *Tamazight* at public schools was in practice as planned by the king upon his inauguration as the new monarch of the kingdom of Morocco in 2003. In 2011, *Tamazight* was recognized as one of the official languages in Morocco. Despite all these policies, *Tamazight* has remained a marginalized language in the kingdom for it has been all controlled by ideologies that delimit real empowerment of the language. According to Silverstein & Crawford (2017), the decision to include *Tamazight* in the curriculum is important symbolically but “there is a gap between the symbolic value of *Tamazight* and the pragmatic way in which *Tamazight* will be functionally important for people” (p. 5). For example, when IRCAM’s researchers thought about standardizing the writing system of *Tamazight*, they were forced to select an innovated form of *Tifinagh* when most of the *Amazighophones* use Arabic and the Roman alphabet to write in *Tamazight*. The decision was derived in part from the fear of the threatened Islamist retaliations should the Roman alphabet be adopted. Hence, the choice of *Tifinagh* was motivated by political compromise rather than a genuine recognition of its cultural value. The introduction of *Tamazight* in Morocco also failed due to the poor training of teachers, the creation of standardized *Tamazight* that does not correspond to any spoken language, and to confining *Tamazight* teaching mainly to rural areas and exclusively to the Amazigh community (Silverstein 2004).

In sum, Moroccan political reforms to maintain the *Tamazight* language and identity have engendered counter results that exacerbate a long standing urban-rural divide, further marginalization of rural *Amazighophones* and increasing dominance of what *Tamazight* linguists and militants call “Arabo-Islamic Imperialism” (Chaker 1989; Thomas 2010; Maddy-Weitzman 2014). The creation of IRCAM and several other associations has not changed nor lessened the main forms of official linguistic and cultural discrimination in the Moroccan legal and education

system. In this sense, policies and planning made in this context have served as only a visible symbol of an emerging, state sanctioned society intended to please international observers (Silverstein & Crawford, 2004). On a local level, however, the IRCAM has led to only more divisiveness and separatism, which will only help the agenda of the monarchy gain more power over two opposite Ethnolinguistic groups: Imazighen and Arab nationalists. The state of Moroccan *Tamazight* is better described in Silverstein (2013, 2012): “Amazigh identity and language are more recognized than ever before in the country’s history, but this recognition is unlikely to stem the language’s decline” (p. 15).

3.2.2.3 *Tamazight in Algeria*

The status of Moroccan *Tamazight* is not very different from that of *Tamazight* varieties spoken in Algeria, particularly, *Takabylt*. As soon as Algeria obtained independence in 1962, the Arabo-Nationalist regimes have made it clear that no other identity, language or culture other than Arab would be given official recognition. The main objective at that time was to erase *Tamazight* language and culture (Achab, 2012). The politically hostile stance against *Tamazight* was stated directly in the presidential election campaign in 1999 by Abdul-Aziz Bouteflika: “Never, ever, will *Tamazight* be recognized as official in Algeria” (Achab, 2012). This political plan continues to represent a major ideological reference that always frames any reform regarding the *Tamazight* question and identity. Thus, when *Tamazight* was officially recognized as a national language alongside Arabic in the revised 2002 constitution, Arabic and Islam have remained the primary identifiers of the Algerian people in terms of ethnicity, language, and religion. *Tamazight* teaching was encouraged only in the Amazighophone regions, such as Tizi-Ouzou and Bejaya. In a second revised version of the constitution in 2016, *Tamazight* teaching extended to most provinces in Algeria, and yet has remained completely optional for students

(Souag 2018). Moreover, it was introduced starting from the fourth grade while education in earlier years has remained in Arabic (Achab 2012).

By attempting to expose the ideological tendencies underlying this policy, it is possible to argue that the Algerian education policy makers do not really care for teaching Amazigh children in their mother tongue as much as they care for Arabizing them linguistically and culturally (during the first four years) before they get introduced to *Tamazight*. Language policies that explicitly or implicitly marginalize and suppress certain linguistic varieties, as in the case of North African language policies versus *Tamazight*, will always have an influence on the local discourses produced and reproduced about this language (Groff 2018). This conforms to the definition of language ideologies definition given by Irvine and Gal (2000, p. 402) as “the ideas with which participants and observers frame their understanding of linguistic varieties and map those understandings onto people, events, and activities that are significant to them”.

In this regard, the following paragraph is a translation of a video made by Naima Salhi, an Algerian MP on February 2018, upon the dissemination of the Kabyles’ demand that *Tamazight* should be a required school subject in the context of Algeria. The video continues to spread on different social media outlets as it sums up various inferiorizing, downgrading, and stigmatized attitudes that *Tamazight* has faced over the centuries. The video was translated from Arabic to English by Lameen Souag on his blog “*Jabal Elloghat*” on February 17, 2018.

So, don't impose on me a language - it's not a language anyway - don't impose on me a language that isn't a vehicle of science; don't impose on me a language that isn't recognized, isn't understood by people outside; what good is it to me? Study science with it? It doesn't have - it isn't a vehicle of science. Study technology with it? It isn't a vehicle of technology. Go abroad with it, to speak to people abroad? They don't know it and don't understand it. For God's sake, what good is it to us?

When it comes to the Arabic language - and oh, what a language! - which is the

world language, which more than a billion people speak, they say we won't study it; a language which has billions of books, and billions of manuscripts, and billions of - everything - you say you won't study it and don't need it. Then you bring me a dead language, which doesn't have letters, and doesn't have meanings, and doesn't have words - you want to hold me back with it so you can make progress - and you go off, and eventually you get to the point, and you tell me: Me, I'm studying English, and I'm studying German, and Spanish, and Turkish, and you all don't know them. You're going to hold me back with this?

My little daughter was studying in a private school where most of them were Kabyles. She naturally learned the language with them, because her classmates' parents taught them to speak Kabyle so it would continue and spread. So, my daughter, with the best of intentions, learned with them. She'd come and speak it, and I never asked her "Why?" I didn't shut her up; I left her free to do as she likes. But now that we've gotten to the point where it's obligatory, I told her: Say another word in Kabyle (Berber) and I'll kill you, I'll discipline you if you say another word.

And I'm saying it plainly and challenging everyone: When we were going by intentions, innocently, we didn't say a thing; now that it's become "push me and I'll step on you", don't push me and I won't step on you. Now we're going to make it about who's stronger. And the stronger wins. The majority is stronger. You'd have been better off leaving it down to intentions. Now that you think you're so smart and coming out with insults against us, now I'll insult you.

People like me, and people who are real men, and those who don't accept humiliation and aren't used to it, and whose families aren't used to it, won't accept from you something like this. And I now forbid my children from pronouncing a single word in *Tamazight*. I mean the Frenchified Kabyle made by the MAK [the Movement for the Autonomy of Kabyle] and the treasonous terrorist MAK movement. And we need to demand that the MAK is a terrorist movement. (Author's translation).

Salhi's discourse is very reflective of common assumptions about *Tamazight*. In examining how languages or language ideologies are understood locally in the regions where they are found, understandings and language ideologies embedded in the discourse choice of human agents that relate in a way or another to that language, become visible and help define the linguistic ecology of a region (Makoni and Pennycook 2007). Erasure of *Tamazight* has been the result of the pseudo-homogenizing discourse and linguistic practices. As mentioned earlier linguistic policies

in Morocco and Algeria may seem generous in their acknowledgement of linguistic diversity from international perspective, but are restrictive considering local diversity.

3.2.2.4 *Tamazight in Libya*

Looking at the situation of *Tamazight* in Libya, the language was viewed as an inferior dialect of Arabic and even an invention of the colonizers. Gaddafi, the former president of Libya went even further to the point of calling it a “poison du colonialisme” (Brent, 2013). To illustrate how these linguistic ideologies were reproduced institutionally, Gaddafi launched a “Cultural Revolution” in 1973 under which any publications not in accordance with the principles espoused in his “Green Book” were destroyed. Accordingly, registration of non-Arab names was forbidden, Libya's first Amazigh organization was banned and anyone involved in their cultural revival prosecuted (Buzakhar, 2017). The Libyan example resembles to some extent the situation of Tunisian *Tamazight*. The existence of *Tamazight* was excluded even from the history books taught in schools. Besides, speaking *Tamazight* (more commonly known as Berber or Shilha⁶), is often not interpreted as speaking a distinct language, but rather an unintelligible or a stigmatized dialect of Arabic (Sayahi 2014). For more on the erasure strategies of Tunisian *Tamazight* see Chapter 5.

3.2.3 Language, identity, and ideologies in literature

Bucholtz and Hall (2005) argue that identity as a social category needs to be understood as an interactional achievement that can mark particular practices and people as similar to some and differentiated from others. With respect to the interactional aspect of identity, they propose that:

⁶ Shilha: a derogatory and racist term often used by Tunisians who identify themselves as Arabs to refer to Tunisian Imazighen.

Identity relations emerge in interaction through several related indexical processes, including: (a) overt mention of identity categories and labels; (b) implicatures and presuppositions regarding one's own or others' identity position; (c) displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles; and (d) the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups.

This is achieved through what they call the *interpersonal tactics of identity*, a series of meaningful practices and processes that serve to either establish resemblances or distinctions, to authenticate or denaturalize and to authorize or make illegitimate forms of social action. Through this focus identity is understood as an element of interactional situations rather than of individuals. Thus, a fundamental principle of identity formation relies on the relationality or *intersubjectivity* as called in Bucholtz' and Hall's framework where most of the interactions- Amazigh Facebook interactions in this study- and linguistic practices are involved in a discourse of relatedness. To better understand how patterns of resemblances or distinctions, authentication or denaturalization, and authorization or illegitimation can be used by the Tunisian Amazigh community to create, construct, and define their identity at different levels of contract with "other" identities, it is important to revisit the role of language ideologies in producing these patterns. This perspective informs much of my study in Chapters 5 and 6.

Language ideology offers a significant account to the analysis of language viewed as a social phenomenon or a system of linguistic structures. In studies of ethnicity, identity, and language revitalization, as in the one at hand, language ideologies do not only give background to the investigation of these issues, but become a central topic of investigation.

Ideologies about languages often form notions that intervene in structuring social hierarchies. For example, ideologies about the Arabic language in pre-Revolutionary (2010) Tunisia, often normalized speaking Arabic as the standard or the unmarked language, whereas they associate speaking other languages, such as French with a lack of patriotism (being the

language of the colonizer), and minority languages such as *Tamazight* with illiteracy, ignorance, and even paganism, leading the feeling that it should be eliminated (Al-Masude, 2014). Perceptions as such serve to legitimize the growth of power of the privileged group and enhance the material resources of preferred varieties while rationalizing the subordination of other language varieties (Leeman, 2009; Schmidt, 2002; Urciuoli, 1996). Daoud (1991) further states that Arabists of the 1960s, for instance, including Arab nationalists, Muslim activists, Arabic linguists, and teachers all shared the view that Tunisian Arabic (TA) and French – and obviously, *Tamazight* – represented a “permanent threat to the purity of Classic Arabic (CA). Such concern may be seen as a form of resistance and more likely an effort on the part of the pan-Arabists to retain their social prestige and privileges.

While Arabists as described above explicitly articulate the ideology they subscribe to, it is not always the case that individuals are aware of the ideology they advocate. In other words, speakers may not be able to articulate the ideologies to which they subscribe, nor be aware of the underlying assumptions and values (Leeman, 2009). Therefore, it is very common that speakers of stigmatized language varieties sometimes internalize dominant norms about the inadequacy of their own speech. Part of the power of language ideologies derives from the fact that they are naturalized and come to be understood as common sense, rather than a limited or one-sided way of seeing the world. Arabic in the context of Tunisia and North Africa in general, for example, became the language of hegemonic institutions not only because it is the language of the dominant group but also because as in Bourdieu’s (1977, 1991) words, it is “misrecognized” by the subordinated group as a superior language as well. Woolard (1998) explains further that “the misrecognition or revalorization of the indexical character of language may make discrimination on linguistic grounds publicly acceptable. Discrimination is accepted even by the speakers of the

language themselves. “Why do you bother coming to study our language? Our language is ugly”, commented a *Tamazight* woman from the village of Douiret interviewed by Gabsi (2011).

Once language ideologies and the interests they serve are rendered invisible or symbolically powerful (Bourdieu 1991), those who are negatively impacted by this power conspire unconsciously in exercising it: “symbolic power is that invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it” (Bourdieu 1991, p.164). In order to understand the work of ideologies in these situations, it is important to look at Gal & Irvine (1995). In their work, they highlight the striking similarities in the ways ideologies cause people to misrecognize differences between linguistic practices. Gal & Irvine (1995) note that when identifying linguistic varieties with ‘typical’ persons, the linguistic behaviors of others become oversimplified. They become viewed as the cause of speakers’ moral virtues and character rather than deriving from historical accident. Gal & Irvine offer the example of nineteenth-century Macedonia, which was unusually multilingual, with language use not falling within expected ethnic boundaries. Subsequently, outsiders positioned Macedonians as untrustworthy, as apparently shifting linguistic allegiances were construed as shifting political allegiances and unreliable moral commitments (Blackledge 2000). Gal (1993) points out that the symbolic association between a language and a social group cannot be natural nor a condition. A simple equation of “one language to one cultural, ethnic, national, class, generational, gendered or other identity” is clearly an oversimplification (Irwin 2009, p. 22).

Nevertheless, the formula that a “language equates an identity” has remained prominent in the case of Tunisia. To be Tunisian implies speaking Arabic as a mother tongue. Notice that speaking “Tunisian Arabic” only is still not sufficient to be accepted as Tunisian since the latter

is just a “low”, “rusty” and “unrefined” form of Arabic (Bassiouney 2015, Eltouhami 2015). Ironically, this formula seems to continue to gain ground even within Tunisian Imazighen in their counter-erasure practices. In other words, while the formula that language equates identity represents one type of erasure that Tunisian Imazighen have been dealing with, they ironically rely on the same equation in their “counter erasure” practices; for many, to be Amazigh means that one should speak *Tamazight*. The concept of counter-erasure in this study and in the context of Tunisian *Tamazight* could be defined as a strategy used by Imazighen to free themselves from any influence of the dominant Arabic identity. It could also refer to linguistic and cultural practices of a linguistic group to challenge the hegemonic and dominant representations through constructing positive and equally essentialist images of their community (Phyak 2015). To fully comprehend this, Irvine and Gal (2000) identify three ideological processes that are central to the assigning of social meaning to linguistic variation: iconization, factual recursivity and erasure. The coming chapters draw on this framework to analyze the ideologies that led to Tunisian *Tamazight* linguistic shift and the attempts to reverse this language shift.

In iconization, ‘linguistic features that index social groups or activities appear to be iconic representations of them, as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group’s inherent nature or essence’ (Irvine and Gal 2000, p. 37). This is shown in the example of Galician being depicted as archaic or conservative while Spanish is portrayed as innovative and progressive. As López (2007) shows, these representations are not objective descriptions but instead reflect and reproduce a larger ideological project to elevate Castile and naturalize both its political and linguistic dominance. Similarly, Urdu in the context of India was described as a Semitic language despite its Indo-Aryan origins during the nineteenth century. Advocates of such an argument based their opinions on the notion that Urdu script is “written in the Persian

script, which is ‘semi-Persian’ being loaded with Persian loanwords, because ‘the Persian of our day is half-Arabic’, and because of the presence of Arabic loanwords, they concluded that Urdu should be Semitic in its essence” (Ahmad, 2008). Defining Urdu in terms of its borrowed vocabulary while ignoring the linguistic structures that it shares with Hindi is not only an example of iconization whereby linguistic forms such as script and words are linked with social categories of “foreignness”, but also an example of erasure, which will be defined further in the coming paragraphs.

Irvine and Gal define fractal recursivity as “the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level” (p. 38). Thus, the same features that distinguish one group from another can also be used to discriminate within groups and subgroups recursively. For example, Zamudio (2014, p. 138) examined how Purepecha heritage speakers subtly differentiate themselves from other Purepecha, by strongly identifying as Purepecha in some respects, but distancing themselves from “Purepecha” traits they consider undesirable in other ways. They also differentiate themselves from other “real” Purepecha, in terms of higher proficiency in the language. Recursive distinctions are also apparent in the ideological construction of languages in the United States. While all non-English languages are seen as suspect, there is still distinction among foreign languages spoken in the United States, with Spanish viewed as the most dangerous because of its associations with low status immigrants. Similarly, just as French has been treated as better suited than Spanish for intellectual pursuits, we find European Spanish is favored over American Spanish varieties (Beaudrie & Fairclough, 2012).

Finally, erasure is the process whereby information that is inconsistent with a particular ideological representation is rendered invisible (Irvine and Gal 2000). Leaman (2011) gives the

example of the United States being portrayed as a monolingual, English-speaking nation, while it has always had a complex history of multilingualism. The status of indigenous Mexican languages in the US school bilingual programs, such as the one of Purepecha, represents another example of erasure since it is widely assumed that immigrants from Mexico and other parts in Latin America speak only Spanish, with no regard to the indigenous varieties spoken by many of them (Zamudio 2014).

3.3. Section Two: Discourse-Centered Online Ethnography and Facebook

3.3.1 Computer-mediated communication (CMC)

In this section, I first provide a sketch of the development of language-focused CMC studies and then address the notions of language in contemporary societies and in relation to new digital technologies such as social media. Secondly, I discuss the choice of an online ethnography framework and Computer-Mediated Communication approach to study identity and linguistic erasure of Tunisian *Tamazight*. Lastly, I address Facebook as new arena of identity construction and address its role a main catalyst of the emergent *Tamazight* identity within the context of Tunisia in a post-revolutionary era.

The use of internet-based technologies as a tool of research has changed the scenario of research methodologies since the 1990's. The computer-mediated construction of self, other, and social structure started to emerge as a new phenomenon for study. Now, communication does not simply refer to the transfer of information from a source of information to a receiver. Its functions are no longer limited to being expressive, connotative, or metalinguistic to establish the intentionality for the communicative act (Waugh, 1997: pp. 102-103). And it does not depend only on an immediate social context to structure the performance of the verbal interaction (Bakhtin (1981, 1986). CMC has rather given communication an alternative and a new

definition as the co-construction of a reality using systems of signs and rules (Ghiglione, 1986). The reality in CMC is asymmetrically co-constructed between participants who control when to terminate or continue the interaction depending on how “the receiver interprets the situation, what his aims are and the social rules that govern his behavior (Ghiglione, 1986). Consequently, CMC can be defined as a process by which a group of social actors in a given situation negotiates the meaning of the various situations that occur between them (Stasser, 1992). This means that CMC has changed the nature of social interaction. Individuals in an online setting must negotiate how to connect with others online, and find the social group to which they belong. When one’s group identity is found and established, the online connections become easier because a user is controlled by group norms as opposed to societal and individual norms (McLaugh & Vitak, 2011; Carr, 2011). A shift from focusing on self-presentation to focusing on achieving a deep immersion into the online group, such as Facebook is the consequence.

Androutopoulos (2013) divides CMC changes into three stages. Until the 1990’s CMC was restricted to interpersonal exchanges carried out on applications or modes, such as emails, mailing lists, and Internet Relay Chat (IRC). The early web era from the mid 1990’s to mid-2000s was marked by the emergence of the World Wide Web which introduced the personal webpages and personal blogs. These early types of CMC focused on linguistic features and strategies which were regarded as unique to the media. Central to this strand of research was that communication technologies and their affordances were prioritized in favor of other contextual and social factors when studying online language use. Furthermore, CMC data were often randomly collected and analyzed as detached from their discursive and social contexts.

From the mid-2000’s onward, we have entered the participatory web era in which people have become more active producers and consumers of the web content, particularly through

blogs and social media sites (Androutsopoulos 2013). The approaches to CMC during this (still emerging era) are informed by pragmatics, sociolinguistics and discourse studies (Androutsopoulos 2008:1). These more critical approaches do not only focus on analysis of the micro level features of online language, but instead emphasize situated language, linguistic diversity, how ways of communication are shaped by social ideologies, and how such ideologies are constructed in new media communication (Barton & Lee 2013:6). CMC development as described above has shaped what being called “the internet language”, what can be used as research material, and what counts as adequate resource for online data (Androutsopoulos, 2013). CMC studies now can focus on topics such as language variation and style, processes of innovation and change, language and social identities, multilingualism and code-switching as well as globalization. An important development from the early to the contemporary studies of CMC is the need to shift from a *medium-related* to a more ethnographically based *user-related* approach (Androutsopoulos 2006:421). A consequence of this shift of focus is that the search for features thought of as belonging to specific genres of CMC has been replaced by what Androutsopoulos (2006:421) calls contextual and particularistic analysis. Such analysis highlights the relation between the social contexts and online language use and how the social context is represented in the discourses in various types of CMC.

How language should be approached online using a Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) framework in (socio)-linguistics research poses some challenges that are worth discussing. These are related to the questions of anonymity and to whether CMC should be viewed as a text or place (Androutsopoulos, 2013). Anonymity is probably one of the most striking differences between the offline and online self-presentation as an individual or collective identity. While self-awareness offline happens more spontaneously or only when one comes in a

direct contact with others, identity construction in online environments is more deliberate and conscious (Markham, 2003). When factors, such age, race, gender, and class, which are usually used to divide people in face-to-face interactions are removed, people have equal status. Subsequently, individuals develop a sense of group identity (Lee, 2014). When individuals have a strong sense of group identity, it eases the need to establish strong connection to various members of a social group (Wang et al. 2008).

The first step towards producing an online identity involves the production of discourse, whether in the form of words, graphic images, or sounds. But as many scholars have discussed we understand ourselves only in concert with others (e.g., Bakhtin, 1981; Markham 2003, Zhao, 2008). In this sense, identity formation constitutes a public process that starts with the “identity announcement” made by the individual claiming an identity and the “identity placement” made by others who validate the claimed identity or refute it (Zhao, 2008). An identity is established when there is a “coincidence of placements and announcements” (Stone, 1981, p. 188). Therefore, in most computer-mediated environments, this process requires a more exhaustive, and yet cautiously chosen information to exchange or project in the online space; particularly because the ‘other’ is not co-present in the same physical space. In addition, the nonverbal clues (body language, voice quality, speaking style, prosody ...etc.) of the process are, for the most part, missing. The lack of socio-demographic information and spoken language data in the online space force the researcher to ponder whether to approach CMC data as text or space.

3.3.2 Online Ethnography

According to Androutsopoulos (2013), digital data could be adapted to sociolinguistics research when treated as written language that can be analytically examined as various other semiotic resources or discourse-level units (sentences, clauses, utterance...etc.); or when viewing

the CMC environment as discursively created space of human interaction which are dramatically related to the offline activities (Androutsopoulos, 2013).

This implies that in doing online ethnography, researchers can still use the offline space as well. Many online ethnographers have tried to blend them together (Baym, 2000; Kendall, 2002). Androutsopoulos (2008) defines online ethnography as “combination of the systematic observation of selected sites of online discourse with direct contact with its social actors’ (p. 2). In his discourse-centered online ethnography (DCOE) framework, Androutsopoulos (2008) defines two types of the online ethnography. The first type focuses on the observation of use of the online space in everyday life and screen data collection, then on doing offline ethnography by establishing contact with selected participants, such as through door-to door survey and interviews. Blended-data as such can be collected in parallel and simultaneously. The second type is concerned strictly with the everyday life online. In this type of online ethnography, the internet becomes the only site “where culture and community are formed” (Androutsopoulos 2008). Direct contact with the participants in this type of virtual ethnography becomes minimal.

Methods such as *online ethnography* (Androutsopoulos 2008) and *computer mediated discourse analysis* (Herring 2004) are useful methodological frameworks for studies of online language use, online discourse and specific media related phenomena. Yet, studies of peoples’ everyday language use of which CMC has become a central part calls for more holistic approaches allowing us to discover the connections between various linguistic and social aspects of peoples’ lives (Staehr 2014). My dissertation meets this call for a holistic approach by not examining social media as detached from other areas of life even though it is used as an essential part of the counter-erasure processes and *Tamazight* revitalization efforts. The social contexts and everyday life situations are significantly important to analyze and understand the CMC

communication. To do this I draw on a combination of online ethnography and offline interviews and conversations. My data collection in Androutsopoulos' (2013:241) terms can be characterized as *blended data* as I carry out ethnography that bridges online and offline situations. Finally, the data collection is informed by sociolinguistic methodology involving various sound recordings (i.e. interviews and recorded conversations) and principles from ethnographic methodology such as (online and offline) participant observation. This methodology, also called discourse-centered online ethnography (Gerogalou 2014), is more relevant for the present study particularly because the data collection constitutes longitudinal observation of Tunisian Imazighen Facebook pages while establishing contact with some of their owners. This approach was used in combination with content analysis approach (Hine, 2000; Herring, 2004).

3.3.3. Facebook: A review of its growth in research and number

3.3.3.1 Facebook in literature

One of the top social networking websites since 2004 has been Facebook. We see how Facebook has evolved and gained tremendous presence in people's life with the development and availability of the Internet. Peluchette and Karl (2010) explain that "Facebook provides an identity profiling platform that displays different kinds of personal information that can be posted on it such as favorite quotations, political affiliation, favorite music and education; and users have considerable freedom to provide such information or not and to post any other information or pictures of their choice" (p. 24). Hence, Facebook can function as a personal Website where individuals use their creativity to define themselves through "digital collages using symbols and signs to represent and express their self-concepts" (Schau and Gilly, 2003).

Nowadays, Facebook is also used as a platform for online communities that share interests in many fields, such as political, educational, scientific, commercial, or entertainment.

As for the research carried out on Facebook, most scholars have used it in sociological studies, often to identify the sense of community in the relationship between participants in social networking (Ellison et al., 2006; Baron, 2008). As Facebook has become one of the most widely used online social network sites, 71% of adults who use the internet, connect via Facebook according to the Pew Research Center survey report of 2015. Its use in (socio) linguistics research is subsequently growing (Zhao, 2008; Chen, 2013; Bolander & Locher 2015; Georgalou, 2017). One common area of research is on language and identity as “multifaceted” and “multilayered” performance and as emergent online when individuals use language and other modes of communication to engage in interaction (Bolander, 2016).

Through content analysis of Facebook personal profiles and status updates, Zhao et al (2008), for example showed that self-presentation was more explicit in the profile while more implicit identity construction was recognized in the status updates. Bazarova et al (2012) revealed that language style is employed and adapted by Facebook users depending on context and structure of interaction. The conclusion was that language style seemed to be influencing receivers’ interpretation of users’ self-presentation. Bolander and Locher (2010) found that language use on Facebook was influenced by the medium and social context of interaction. They also found that facebookers often follow a linguistic strategy called “creative language usage”, especially when the message they leave on the so-called “wall” is “a status update” action type (Bolander and Locher, 2010).

Individuals are seen as “social actors” who write longer and employ language creatively in status updates. For example, in a post such as “ [She] is in the office and trying to be as

productive as possible so she can actually go out and have some fun tonight!”), there are at least three actions detected: specification of location (the facebooker is in the office), reference to actions in progress (trying to be as productive as possible), and reference to future actions (so she can actually go out and have some fun tonight). In view of these actions, the participant is constructing her identity as an employee and as someone who enjoys going out (p.182). Bolander and Locher (2010) concluded identity performance work in status updates is more often achieved implicitly than explicitly. The creative use of language allows people to construct their identities by sharing “snippets of their lives” without being limited to restricted options to choose from (p. 179).

Being one of the most popular social network sites (SNSs) globally, Facebook has been regarded as “the world’s most frequently visited website” claiming over 1.4 billion active users globally as of April 2015 (Facebook statistics, 2015). Its popularity and recognition as the leader among all other social media tools in the web space makes it worth for investigation. Among scholars, Facebook is popularly known as a platform that offers endless opportunities for individuals to engage in self-presentation and impression management (SPIM) acts (Wang et al., 2010; Waggoner, Smith, & Collins, 2009). Other studies focus on the effects of self-presentation in both online and offline worlds (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Users communicate their identity by profiting from various applications offered by Facebook. Users manage their self-presentation through images that entails the uploading of photos, videos or audio and the changing of profile photos. Posts include creating profile with details of the user, updating status with information that gives a glimpse into the users’ mind, and engaging in conversations on wall posts.

The growing popularity of Facebook nowadays has sometimes made it even more important than any other communication methods. Research on the use of Facebook in the university for example, is more and more important; while emails are the most popular online genre for academics and administration, students now prefer to use social networking websites to communicate with their fellow students. Between 80% to 90% of the students on American campuses had Facebook accounts in 2006 (Baron 2008). Pérez-Sabater (2012) points out that Facebook was the most popular social networking site in their survey carried out at the University of Illinois, Chicago, during 2006–2007, where 79% of the students interviewed used it. Recently, Facebook has undergone a spectacular increase in users along with tremendous influence on changing people's political and social life all over the world.

According to Arab Social Media Report (2011), Facebook is the most popular social networking tool in the Arab-speaking regions and has continued to grow in popularity in recent years. According to the Arab social media report of 2015, it is the top preferred social media channel in the Arab region. Figure 3.3 illustrated the statistics of Facebook usage in the Arab World based on the Arab Social Media Report.

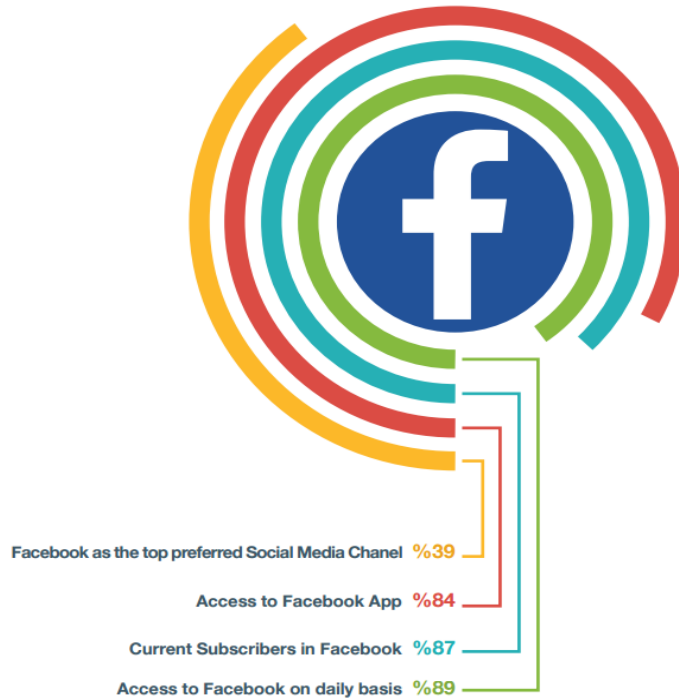


Figure 3.3: Statistics of Facebook usage in the Arab World (Arab Social Media Report, 2015)

3.3.3.2 *Facebook in Tunisia*

In Tunisia, Facebook has become an important forum of discussion and dissemination of information and opinions relating to a range of issues since the 2011 Revolution. According to Marzouki (2012), there were 3.6 million internet users out of an entire population of 11 million, during the political unrest in the country, of which 850,000 were active on Facebook. According to Wamda Newsletter on statistics of how Tunisians use social media, the number of Tunisian Facebook users reached 3.4 million with a penetration of 33% making Tunisia the 47th country in the world in terms of Facebook users in 2013. The growing numbers of Tunisian “Facebookers” during and after the revolution have transformed the online social networking platform into an alternative medium of real-world activism. Within days or even hours, governmental decisions, movements, causes or all kinds of news go viral throughout the online platform, gaining support, rejection, or discussions of thousands of Tunisians.

On the perception by Tunisian Facebook users of its usefulness to the whole ongoing revolutionary process, 80% of Marzouki’s participants agreed that Facebook plays the role of ‘catalyst’ that has accelerated the political, social, and cultural changes in the Tunisian society. In a survey conducted by the Dubai School of Government in March 2011 on the goals of using Facebook during the political uprising in Tunisia (shown in Figure 3.4), 31% of the respondents agreed that Facebook had been primarily used to raise awareness within their countries. One-third or 33% of Tunisians found it to be an efficient tool for spreading information to the world. Nearly a quarter (22%) of Tunisians stated that Facebook should be used to organize activists and actions. Less than 11% believed that Facebook is a means of entertainment.

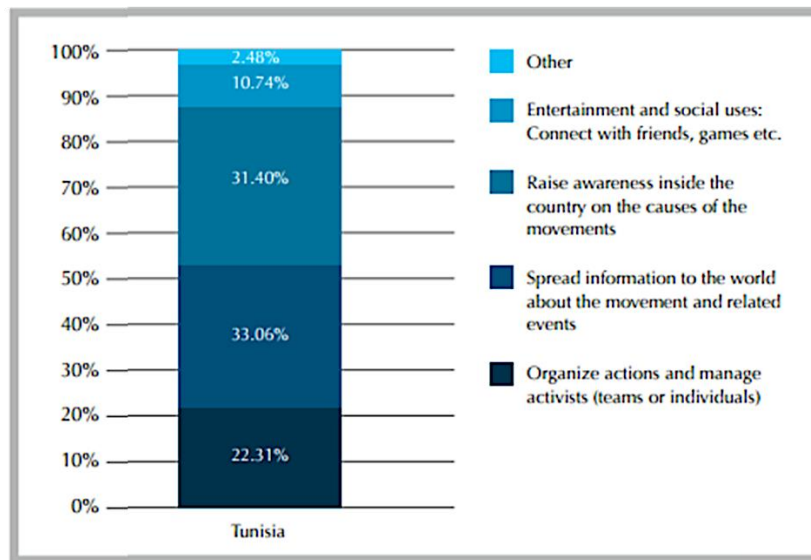


Figure 3.4: The main Usage of Facebook during the Tunisian Civil Uprising and events in 2011 – Arab Social Media Report, 2015)

The use of Facebook among Tunisian Imazighen to discuss issues related to their identity is a great example of post-revolutionary change. Hence, in designing a content analysis, the current study aims at examining the online communication that directly pertains to erasure of Amazigh language and identity. The Facebook data (long and short wall posts, comments,

images, and videos) will be treated as textual content which makes them appropriate resources for the purpose of this study.

To generate a dataset of postings on Facebook, the author followed the Facebook accounts of nine Tunisian Imazighen who were using Facebook regularly during the core data collection period (spring 2016-fall 2018). All the posts and comments were accessible to friends of the profile owners and to the author of this study. None of the pages is devoted precisely to promoting a business, religious teaching, sports, or education. All the Facebook participants selected publish posts for general purposes and Tunisian Tamazight issues. The data were obtained via screen shots of three types of Facebook postings: 1) wall posts either on the page of the owner or on a friend's Facebook page or "wall"; 2) discussion threads and those involve either comments on photos and images, or comments on wall posts; 3) "Articles" or long texts, which are longer posts like a blog.

3.3.4. Conclusive remarks

To sum up, the chapter offered a review of some of the research on language, identity, and ideology. These are the three major concepts that will appear repeatedly throughout the analysis of the data. To better understand how Tunisian Tamazight language and identity are constructed and reconstructed, two theoretical frameworks were highlighted. Irvine's and Gal's (2000) model of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure represents one of the highly influential models for how language ideologies operate during the work of identity formation and performance. Since identification work often generates various relations between concepts of agency, power, culture, and other issues, it was important to revisit *tactics of intersubjectivity* model, proposed by Bucholtz' and Hall's (2005). This model offers valuable perspectives to examine how Tunisian Imazighen form, place, and display their identity through the discursive and semiotic processes

they deploy on Facebook. To develop a grasp of how Tamazight identity is constructed discursively and how language ideologies are instantiated within Facebook, required reconsidering some of the research on the growth of CMC and Facebook in general and in the context of Tunisia, in specific. The chapter also looked at some of the studies on the transformation of Facebook into a discursive site in which language ideologies and identity issues can be investigated using a discourse-centered online ethnographic approach, as proposed by Androutsopoulos (2008).

Chapter Four

METHODOLOGY



There are no Arabs in North Africa; there are Imazighen who have been Arabized at gradable levels, Quoted form Safi Moemin, a researcher in Amazigh history and culture.

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the methodological steps and research strategies I used to design and conduct my study. The data of this study draw on two types of research methods. First, I approach my study as online ethnographic research. For that I use discourse-centered ethnography as proposed by Androutsopoulos (2008). According to this approach, data is collected through two sites: one is screen-based and the other is user-based. The former is done through longitudinal and systematic observations of the discourse practices and patterns of language use on online sites while the latter refers to material collected through contact with the users of those sites and the offline communication. A blend of the two sources of data by “going beyond the screen to include material over and above the log file data”, is a key component of discourse-centered online ethnography (Androutsopoulos 2008, Bolander and Locher 2013).

Following their lead, my data is collected through a combination of systematic observations of selected Tunisian Amazigh Facebook sites and semi-structured interviews with the users of those sites. In addition to interviews with the Facebook users I observed for this study, I also conducted more interviews with other members of the Tunisian Amazigh community. The extra interviews serve the purpose of better understanding and illustrating the discursive practices of the Facebook subjects.

The second research method is qualitative content analysis. Specifically, content analysis is a method that aims to elicit concepts or categories to describe a phenomenon (Elo & Kyngäs 2008). The main feature of content analysis is to classify words or text into smaller content categories (Weber 1990). In other words, it is based on adopting a thematic approach when categorizing the data. In this study, four thematic units are generated across the nine research participants and through their interviews: historical, cultural, social, and linguistic. The four themes were identified based on discourses and ideologies expressed by the nine participants were on their Facebook accounts.

In section 4.2, I describe the sampling procedures I used for the online ethnographic observations. Then, I give a brief description of the demographics and background of the nine participants who I followed through Facebook. In section 4.3, I describe the semi-structured interview procedures. In addition to Facebook and interview data, I also conducted an online survey to generate current Tunisians' attitudes towards *Tamazight*. In section 4.4, I briefly describe the procedures and motivation for this survey. I move on the ethical considerations in section 4.5. I conclude with a summary of the chapter and key issues.

4.2 Sampling and participants

4.2.1 Sampling

To collect a representative list of Facebook sites designed by Tunisian Imazighen, I made connections with potential subjects by “friending,” (sending friendship requests and being added as a friend), following links, and gaining access to profiles; the profile connected me to additional participants indirectly through Facebook’s “people you may know” function which lists individuals who are already connected with several of a user’s friends. Initially, I identified 32 Facebook pages related to Tunisians who identify themselves as Amazigh. These sites were narrowed down later to include only pages created by individuals and not groups. During the elimination process, several criteria were considered. Firstly, pages were used if the information in their “about” section shows that the person is from Tunisia. Massive interactions and Facebook communications occur daily between Imazighen people from different regions in North Africa. Therefore, it was necessary to verify the nationalities of the participants since this study is strictly limited to Tunisian Imazighen.

Secondly, the selection was based on the extent to which the uploaded postings are related to *Tamazight* language and culture. This was decided by looking at what the postings were about. Thirdly, only participants who have anonymous profiles were chosen. To protect the privacy of the participants I undertook a few steps. First, I deleted and encoded all identifying information immediately after the data was collected. I replaced profile names of each of the participant with *Tamazight* names of historical figures and kings. Other identifiers, such as the village where they come from, current city where they live, or work place have all been removed. The researcher tried to build up a dataset sufficiently anonymous for all participants.

Goffman (1959) described the anonymous offline world as space where deviance from established social norms will be punished or ridiculed and where the mask people wear in everyday life becomes their real or known identities. In a fully anonymous online environment, however, the masks that people wear get thrown away and their true-selves come out of hiding along with other suppressed identities (Zhao 2008). The anonymous online world emerges as a third type for environment where people may tend to express what has been called the “hoped-for possible selves” (Yurchisin, 2005). In other words, it is an environment where people tend to show images of the self that are currently not known to others (Markus and Nurius, 1986). This was a basic motivation behind selecting anonymous Amazigh profiles particularly that the focus of this study will be on discussing the erasure and counteracting erasure of Amazigh language and identity.

Additionally, pages created by the same person were also eliminated and so were the ones which were not updated regularly or were deactivated during the first two months of systematic observation (cf. Androutsopoulos, 2008). As a result, the number of the sites was narrowed down to fifteen. “Friending” these pages was simultaneously highly informative and entertaining. Nevertheless, it was also very overwhelming to follow them assiduously, given how active they are on a daily basis. Therefore, it was necessary to go through a third stage of narrowing down the number of the profiles. Since it would not help generate good amount of data if the Facebook profiles were not known to most members of the community, popularity were also considered as parameters for selection. The number of friends, likes, comments along with regular activities and the themes of the postings were used to estimate the popularity of the individuals analyzed in this study. Nine pages were left as a result of these stages of elimination. Table 4.1 below sums up the data selection stages.

Coding	Data selection	Bases of selection
Profile information	Who is the admin of the profile?	Examine whether it is individual or group page; Examine country of origin; Do not include village or work place names.
Anonymity	What's the name of the profile page	Examine if the admin uses a proper name and whether it is fake or real; Give pass to pseudo-names if they are followed by a real name.
Popularity	Is the profile known	Examine if there are at least 200 friends; if the postings can reach up to 50 likes and if they often trigger long threads.
Frequency of activities	Is the page owner active on a regular a basis?	Examine whether the administrator is active, occasionally active, rarely active, or deactivated his page; estimate the number of postings per day, every two to three days, and per week.
Themes discussed	What's the purpose of the Facebook page?	Dismiss pages that are devoted to promoting a business, religion, or sports; examine if the page raises Amazigh issues on regular basis.

Table 4.1: Overview of the first five steps of data selection

Of the nine profile owners, two were female and seven were male. Their ages ranged between 33 and 57 years. As noted above, although they used their real names on their pages, for ethical purposes of this research, their names were substituted with names of Imazighen historical figures, such as Massinissa (king), Juba (king), Aksil (war leader), etc. I chose not to reveal real names in this study despite the agreement of all the participants to take part in this research to protect them from any possible politically motivated targeting. Below, I outline their demographics and background information. Table 2 below sums up the demographic information of the participants along with chart summary of my data corpus in number; that includes the number of snapshots, images or videos collected from their pages.

4.2.2 Participants

Aksil is a fifty-seven-year-old born and raised in Tunisia. He is originally from the city of *Gafsa*, originally called *Capsa* which lends its name to the Mesolithic *Capsian Culture* (10.000 to 6000 BC), the origin of the proto-Amazigh tribes (Wikipedia 2018). He is a public-school teacher and he speaks Arabic and some French. When he visited Morocco in the 80's, he learned *Tashelhyt*. Upon his return to Tunisia after the 2011 revolution he founded the *Tunisian Association of Tamazight Culture* with other Amazigh members. He is a quite popular figure among the Amazigh communities. He was invited by several TV channels to debate the Amazigh element of Tunisian identity. *Aksil* is a very active member of the Amazigh community in Tunisia. It is hard not to find a picture of him in all the cultural and political events that has been organized by Tunisian Imazighen since the revolution. In 2014, he was among the few pioneers to march to the parliament in objection of the ongoing marginalization of the Amazigh rights in the constitution. He visits, posts or comment on Facebook almost on daily basis. The first time I sent him a Facebook message to introduce myself was in 2012. When I explained to him the purpose of my study in 2015, he did not hesitate to participate both on Facebook and an interview.

Juba is fifty-three years old from one of the *Tamazight* villages in the governorate of Gabes. He has a university degree and works in a finance company. Although he is not a native speaker of *Tamazight*, he is a very well-known activist in the community. He has been a member of several associations, but never in a leadership position. He was among the pioneers to lead the wake-up movement of the Amazigh community in Tunisia. Like *Aksil*, he has been invited several times by media channels to speak about Amazigh identity, culture, and events. He doesn't adhere to the community members who want to politicize *Tamazight* issue in Tunisia.

Rather, his major focus is rather on acknowledging the Amazigh element in the Tunisian identity by the people of Tunisia first. He is a very active *Facebooker*. His postings range between two to three times a day. I was introduced to Juba through Aksil in 2012 at first. He has become a major connection between me and many other Amazigh activists, not only from Tunisia, but also from Algeria and Morocco since then. Juba has played major role in connecting me to most of the participants in this study as well.

Yughurtha is forty-six years old from a *Tamazight* village in the governorate of *Tatouine*. He lives in the capital, Tunis, where he runs his own business with most of his family members. He visits *Douiret* occasionally. He is the holder of a university degree in Business and Management. He speaks three languages natively: *Tamazight*, Arabic, and French. Yughurtha is a well-educated person and probably the most knowledgeable of the history, culture and even of linguistic properties of *Tamazight* language compared with the rest of the participants. He does not consider himself an activist and he refrains from participating in any cultural or associative work. I was introduced to Yughurtha by Juba on Facebook. He was very active on the site until mid-2017, however, I haven't seen him posting anything for about one year. Attempts to reach him again were also in vain even though we used to chat quite often about *Tamazight*. He helped me tremendously with data for my qualitative research papers. He also agreed on using his Facebook postings for my dissertation and I had an interesting interview with him.

Massinissa is also fifty-three years old from a *Tamazight* village in Gabes. Like Yughurtha, he also lives in the capital of Tunis with his family where he also works as self-employed. He is also a near-native speaker of *Tamazight* besides Arabic and French. I describe Massinissa and Yughurtha as native speakers of French because they lived in France most of their childhood and returned to Tunisia when they were in their forties. Massinissa likes poetry

and literature. He even writes poetry in Tunisian *Tamazight* and organizes poetry readings events and is an active member in few cultural associations as well as on Facebook. He visits his profile regularly and he is often interested in posting *Tamazight* proverbs. I was introduced to Massinissa of Facebook through Juba in 2014. Since then we chatted on the phone and Skype couple of times. He was very collaborative when I explained my research to him and he continue to be so to date.

Firmus was fifty-six years old at the time of the interview. He is originally from a *Tamazight* village in Tatouine Governorate. He lives in the capital of Tunis with his family like Yughurtha and Massinissa. He is also well-educated and speaks Arabic and French fluently. He also lived most of his life in France before he went back to Tunisia where he started his own business and founded a *Tamazight* Association prior to the 2011-revolution. His association does not exist anymore, but he continues his activism on Facebook. Firmus does not seem to speak *Tamazight* very well though he claims he does. Most of his interactions and interviews including the ones he sometimes does on Amazigh TV channels are always in French. I assume he uses French for the Amazigh TV hosts who tend to be more francophone than Arabophone, especially if they are Kabyle speakers from Algeria. He is a strong adherent for the idea of revitalizing *Tamazight* culture and identity without politicizing it, which has caused an ideological split in the Amazigh community into two camps. One is supporting the cultural revival while the second advocates for politicizing the cause. I was introduced to Firmus through Juba and Yughurtha on Facebook in 2015 when I was about to start the online ethnographic observations. On Facebook, Firmus is sometimes very active to an extent that he would publish up to five or six postings per day. Other times he would fully disappear for a long period. When I spoke to him about my

research he showed a lot of support and did not hesitate to allow me to use his Facebook material and to sit for an interview.

Gildo is the youngest participant I followed on Facebook. He is thirty-four years old from a *Tamazight* village in the governorate of Gabes. However, he is the most important one for all the research work I have done about Tunisian *Tamazight*. Gildo did not finish high school. He works for a small carpentry shop in the city of Gabes, but he visits his home village very often. In addition to Arabic, Gildo speaks *Tamazight* natively. He cannot visit his Facebook profile very often for two main reasons. First, he doesn't have a computer. Second, he doesn't always have access to the internet when he uses his phone. However, he has been posting quite extensively about *Tamazight* language and identity. I was first introduced to him by Juba, but he is known by most of the other participants. This is not because he is an activist but rather because he is considered an "authentic" native speaker of the language. I was referred to Gildo by almost every Amazigh I contacted whenever I was looking for linguistic information. Gildo speaks only Arabic in addition to his mother tongue *Tamazight*. He is also the only participant who can write in *Tifinagh* (*Tamazight* alphabetic system). He was a main informant for two of my pilot studies and he accepted to continue participate in my dissertation research.

Takfirinas is a forty-nine-year-old from the governorate of Gafsa. He is married with two children who are trying hard to learn *Tamazight* based on their father's wish. He is a holder of a high school degree. He works in an electricity company. He speaks only Arabic and he is in the process of learning *Tamazight*. He likes to be called an activist and he established a new *Tamazight* association in 2017. Nevertheless, its activities did not last for a long time. He visits his Facebook profile daily and he posts extensively about *Tamazight* issues. I was also

introduced to him through Yuba. He agreed to participate in my research since I contacted him on the first time.

Dyhia is a woman in her fifties who is originally from a *Tamazight* village in Gabes. She lives with her family in Tunis where she works in a governmental institution. She is fluent in Arabic and French, but doesn't speak *Tamazight*. She became engaged in the *Tamazight* cause in 2013 as a member in several associations and organizer of cultural events, workshops, and conferences pertinent to Tunisian *Tamazight* revitalization project at the local and international level. She likes to travel and to take pictures. She has become very active on Facebook during the last three years. I found out about her by myself. When I contacted her via the Facebook message tool she was so excited that academic work is taking place about the language and identity of her ancestors. She is also very happy to be a participant in this research study. Dyhia is a friend of Yuba only on Facebook even though they are from the same village.

Teziri is a thirty-seven-year-old originally from a *Tamazight* village in the governorate of Tatouine, but lives in Tunis where she works in a governmental institution. She has a university degree in Sociology. She doesn't speak *Tamazight* but her parents do. She also speaks Arabic and understands French. She is an active member in an Amazigh association and she travels a lot around the country to attend cultural events and activities. She advocates for politicizing Tunisian *Tamazight*. She visits her Facebook profile regularly, but posts every two to three days once or twice. I knew about Teziri through couple of Amazigh people who did not seem to agree with her political approach. I contacted her by myself through a Facebook message. She was very collaborative and agreed to have me use her Facebook publications and to sit for an interview.

The nine participants in this research are seen as representative of a larger community that share common goals and intercommunication mechanisms; and reports its activities, work, activism, views, and approaches discursively. Dayter (2016) calls this a “discourse community”. The importance of this community in the lives of my participants can be illustrated through their Facebook intensive connections. Using Dayter’s model of Twitter subjects’ connections, Figure 4.1 illustrates mutual Facebook connections among the participants in this study. Solid lines indicate that the participants follow each while dotted lines show that the participants do not communicate, and yet they at least know of each other as members of the Amazigh community.

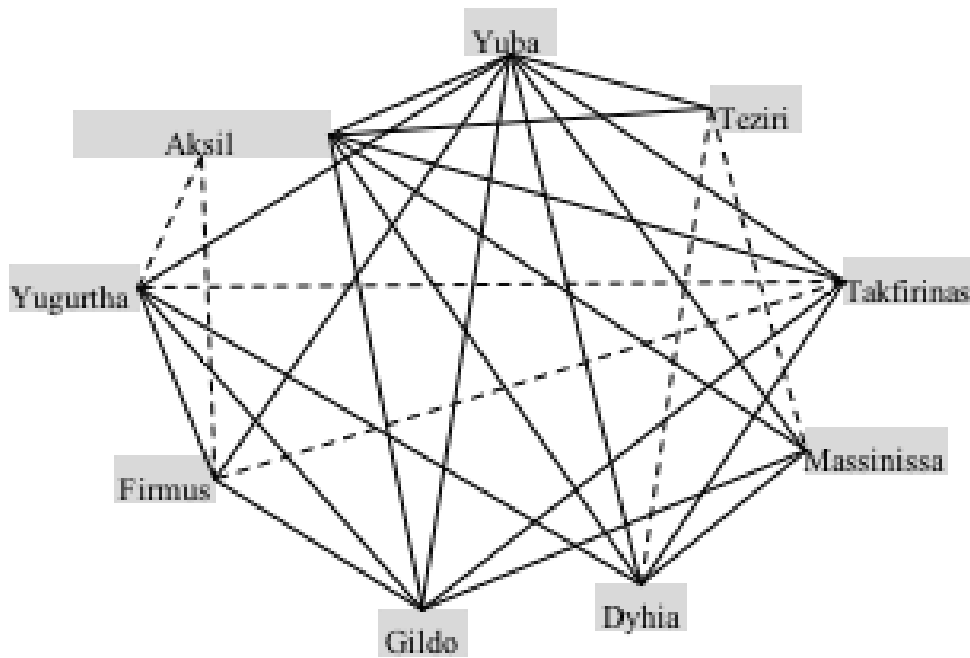


Figure 4.1: Participants connections of Facebook

4.2.3 Data

I met the participants at different points. Though I followed each of them since I was introduced starting in 2012, I did not begin my ethnographic observations until February 2016. My observations lasted for two years, ending in January 2018. My Facebook data includes short textual status postings, long textual status postings, images, that comprised participants’ personal

photos or images taken elsewhere from the internet, their comments, thread comments on their wall, and videos. The data also comprised of interview excerpts. This will be better described in a following section below. Table 4.2 gives a summary of the data corpus in number. As shown in the table, there are differences in the amount of data collected from each of the participants. This is contingent on the fact that they are not similarly active on Facebook. Moreover, they show various preferences in terms of their Facebook practices. For example, Teziri seldom makes comments on others' status. She marks her presence by rather posting on her timeline than on others. Aksil, however, is seen frequently seen making comments on other members of the Amazigh community including the participants in this study. Besides the data shown in Table 4.2, I took copious notes through this online ethnographic journey with Tunisian Imazighen's Facebook profiles and during our personal interactions. They are not shown in the Table, but I will include them in the analysis in Chapters 5 and 6.

Profile name	Gender	Age	Friends	Small texts	Long texts	Images	videos	Threads	Comments
Dyhia	F	51	3.937	63	8	23	2	31	2
Takfirinas	M	49	3.313	27	7	17	1	19	9
Teziri	F	33	2.345	13	3	22	3	13	0
Aksil	M	57	833	73	0	24	2	23	13
Juba	M	53	513	110	14	20	3	31	23
Gildo	M	34	422	33	1	25	2	22	15
Yugurtha	M	46	365	27	34	23	7	33	2
Firmus	M	56	350	17	10	9	4	11	31
Massinissa	M	54	318	110	4	19	0	21	0
Total				473	81	182	24	204	95

Table 4.2: Demographic Summary of the nine Facebook profiles

The data was collected using the snipping tool, a screenshot utility in Windows Vista that can take screenshots of an open window and store them as image files (Wikipedia). The

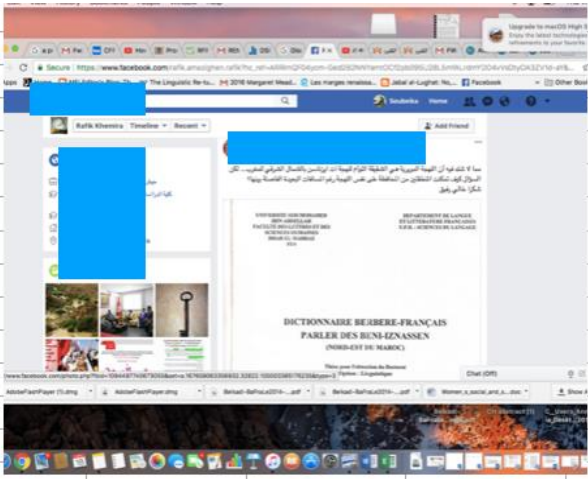
screenshots involve textual wall posts, visual wall posts, and textual and visual wall posts. Semiotics is the study of how signs operate in society or “the study of the social production of meaning” generated from sign systems (O’Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, Montgomery and Fiske, 1994, p. 281). Applying semiotics, a critical instrument for decoding meanings behind signs, images and symbols can help reveal ideological foundations. This methodology can be particularly useful for the data analysis in this study Tunisian Imazighen linguistic and cultural identity erasure and reversal erasure. Prior to data processing and analysis, it was important to think about how to categorize the data. Creating coding categories in content analysis research methodology is an important first step.

Content analysis of this data not only provides an overall view of the nature, composition and extent of Facebook use by Tunisian Imazighen, but also offers some understanding of identity representation of Tunisian Imazighen identity. This first stage was an essential step for providing a sample frame from which groups were selected for qualitative content analysis for the second stage. In the second stage, content analysis of messages and discussions of selected Facebook pages was conducted. Message components here refer to uploaded postings on Facebook walls, including textual messages, images, videos, and audio. Data from this stage provided deep insights into how the linguistic and cultural identity erasure is being interpreted and communicated online. As previously mentioned, this research adopted a screen-based online ethnography proposed by Androutsopoulos (2008) where there is no interaction between the researcher and the participants during the observation and data collection stage. Avoiding involvement with participants was purposefully designed so that participants’ behavior is “not affected by the data collection procedure” (Collis & Hussey, 2009; Janetzko, 2008).

These online observations, do not target individual people, but the content of the communication already existing online. This method can work in concert with content analysis approach in which researchers are enabled in “finding research materials where they naturally occurred, retrieving routinely accumulated record, and capturing human behavior through passive observation” (Corti & Fielding, 2016). Facebook sites provide a ready source of rich content available for the research and do not necessarily need the researcher’s participation. Collecting naturally occurring user-generated data on the Internet as texts for content analysis is similar to the way in which newspaper letters were used in previous communication research (Hine, 2000).

Following a thematic approach proved to be very useful for dealing with a verity of data, such Facebook, Twitter, Interviews, notes, etc. and theorizing across number of cases (Georgalou 2017). It was quite challenging and time consuming looking for categories and patterns to systemize the data. At first, I identified specific themes, such as identity purification, identity indigenization, otherness of non-Amazigh, and language iconization. Classifying data under these codes was a challenging task because posts sometimes overlap. I thought it would be better if I come up with broader themes. I went back and forth between profiles several times, revisited older posts, and compared the profiles to each to other. In doing so, several themes emerged in the process. Some of my participants’ profiles were more specific in focus than other, which eventually provided a few hints on how to categorize the data thematically. For instance, Yughurtha would post more often about history than any other theme. The threads on his wall, however, can deviate to several other themes. Similarly, Massinissa was more focused on posting *Tamazight* proverbs and idioms. Subsequently, I developed a coding system based on these themes, narrowing them down to four categories of themes: historical, cultural, social, and

linguistic. Identifying the themes helped to rearrange the data more systematically. Each entry which took the form of an image was assigned an ID that contains the following features: the name of the author, theme category, image type whether small text, long text, image...etc. and a number. Each image entry is saved in a separate file with its translation if required. Examples 1 and 2 are annotation examples for two entries from Yuba and Firmus.

	
<p>Translation</p>	<p><i>Yuba_Linguistics_st13</i></p> <p>There is no doubt that the Douiret Dialect is twin to the Ait Ayzinasen dialect in the north east of Morocco. The question, however, is how could these two regions preserve the same dialect despite the long distance between them?</p>

Example 1: Yuba_Linguistic_st_image9

	
<p>Traslation</p>	<p><i>Firmus_linguistic_st2</i></p> <p>Tunisians do not know that they are speaking Tamazight</p>

Example 2: Firmus_Linguistic_st2

Most of these texts were written in Tunisian Arabic or standard Arabic. A good number of these texts were posted in *Tamazight* using the Latin characters and even in *Tifinagh*. In my translations, I tried to be faithful to the cultural meanings of the data while aiming to have the target-text trigger the same impact as the original texts might have had on the readers (Georgalou 2017). I paraphrased some of the texts because they were too long or were meant to provide further explanation or contextual information on a preceding entry.

4.3 Interviews

Drawing on the user-based dimension of discourse-centered online ethnography as outlined by Androutsopoulos (2008), semi-structured interviews were also conducted. In addition to the nine main participants, I also conducted interviews with other Tunisian Amazigh people who were willing to express their views on the status of *Tamazight* in Tunisia. The purpose of conducting these interviews was to generate more data that validates what is found in the Facebook postings and to provide a more comprehensive description of how the processes of erasure and “counter-erasure” have been practiced in the context of Tunisian *Tamazight* as a mechanism of identity reconstruction. Indeed, I was inspired to conduct more interviews once I heard some of my participants’ narratives, experiences, ideologies, beliefs, and attitudes following the 2011 Revolution which they felt gave them a voice and the chance to reconstruct an entire linguistic and cultural identity.

All the interviews were conducted in Tunisian Arabic in summer of 2016 and of 2017. As previously mentioned, nine of the participants in these interviews are owners of Facebook profiles used in this study while the other participants were contacted through Facebook-people-you-may-know option, personal connections and “friend of-a-friend technique” (Milroy and Gordon 2003). Asking the Facebook informants to answer questions about some of their

Facebook postings (notes, comments, or photos) engaged them more deeply with the research question at hand. At the time of the interview, some of the participants were living in Tunis where they work or live while others were in different cities in south Tunisia such as *Gafsa* and *Tozeur*. Many of the interviewees know each other personally as they all share the common interest of preserving *Tamazight* culture and language or by being active in various *Tamazight* associations. Most of the interviews were conducted via Skype calls to the personal phones of the participants. The reason why it was not Skype-to-Skype is because most of the interviewees did not have a Skype account. Some of the participants talked to me from an open-air location such as farms or streets which produced some background noise in the recording. However, this was not important since the focus of gathering this data was to analyze attitudes and experiences of Tunisian Amazigh people, and not to gather speech data for phonological analysis. Other participants were interrupted during the interview by members of their families or friends who wanted to talk to them.

Despite all these difficulties, I managed to collect a sample of 23 participants that I could categorize based on age group, education and level of proficiency in speaking *Tamazight*. While the first two demographic categories were collected directly from the participants, the third information was more impressionistic. Most of the participants identified themselves as native or near native speakers of *Tamazight* as an assertive mechanism of ethnic and cultural identity and strategy of identity authentication (Chapter 6). It was hard to run a *Tamazight* proficiency test due to lack of materials for such language proficiency tests, so I based my estimation on observations of their Facebook interactions and discussions combined with the recommendation of Gildo, judged to be the most authentic speaker by almost all of the participants. I categorized my subjects' language proficiency levels as shown in Table 4.3 below.

Participants	Age	Gender	Education	<i>Tamazight</i> proficiency
Facebook participants				
Gildo	34	M	high school	native speaker
Yugurtha	46	M	university	near native
Aksil	57	M	university	near native (<i>Tashelhyt</i>)
Juba	53	M	university	relatively intermediate
Massinissa	54	M	university	relatively intermediate
Firmus	56	M	university	low-intermediate
Teziri	37	F	university	low-intermediate
Takfirinas	49	M	university	non-speaker
Dyhia	51	F	university	non-speaker
Other interviewees				
Yanu (slah)	45	M	high school	native speaker
Baragsen (Ta)	30	M	high school	native speaker
Kacci	63	M	elementary	native speaker
Sabtoun	30	M	high school	native speaker
Marin	35	M	university	near native
Azim	68	M	elementary	near native
Badees	43	M	university	intermediate
Afan	58	M	university	relatively intermediate
Sifaw	25	M	university	non-speaker
Sileen	25	F	university	non-speaker
Idr	31	M	high school	non-speaker
Maghou	47	M	university	non-speaker
Ziri	52	F	university	non-speaker
Illi	48	F	university	non-speaker
Lunja	24	F	university	non-speaker
Tadla	35	F	university	non-speaker

Table 4.3: Demography of the interview participants

Table 4.3 shows that there are five levels of *Tamazight* language proficiency: native speaker, near native speakers, intermediate, relatively intermediate, low intermediate, and non-speaker. The first category refers to those who learned and used *Tamazight* since they were born.

The second category refers to those who have some level of understanding or speaking while the third one refers to those who do not speak *Tamazight* but identify themselves Amazigh ethnically. Figure 4.2 depicts an interaction between age, education and level of language proficiency.

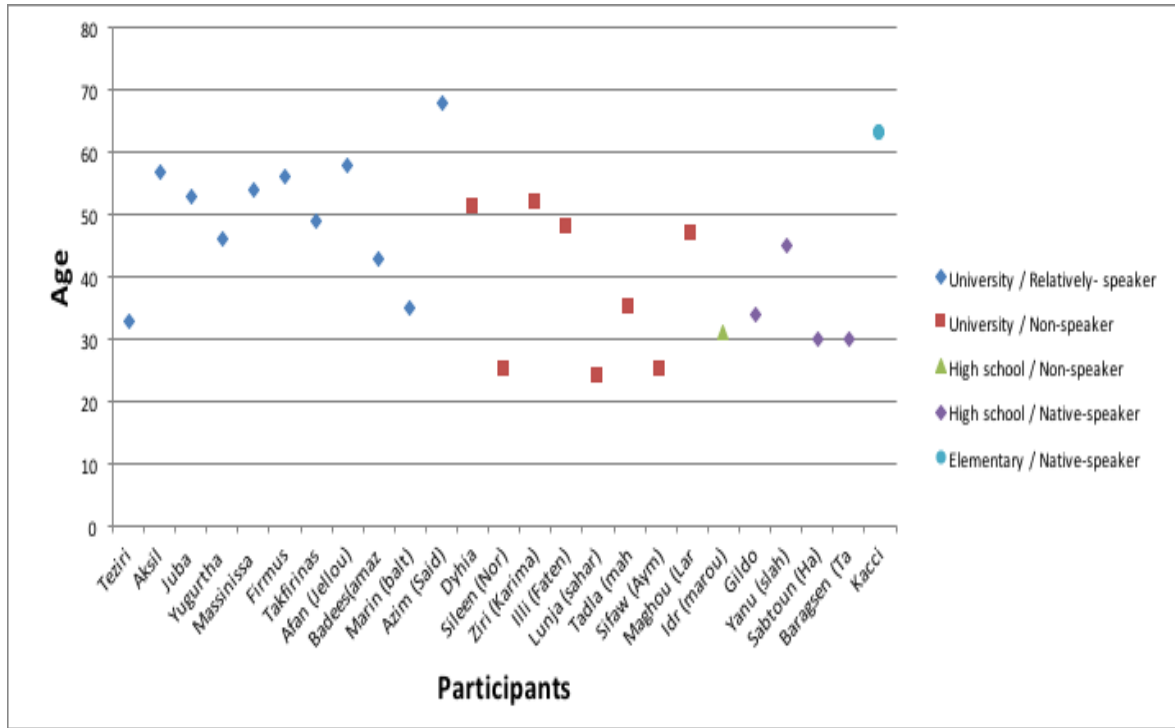


Figure 4.2: Effects of age and education on Tunisian *Tamazight*

Although I did not conduct a regression analysis, the data shows that *Tamazight* proficiency is higher among less educated and older speakers. *Tamazight* proficiency lowers remarkably with adults in the age range between thirty and fifty. These results reveal that there is an age factor for the decline of *Tamazight*. This is evidently related to the fact that most Imazighen who were born in the 1960's and after had to witness intensive Arabization wave that the first president of the country, Habib Bourguiba imposed under the pressure of a pan-Arab ideology and nationalism. The graph shows that education is a main factor. The more education,

the less likely a person is to speak the language. This is predictable since at schools and universities only Tunisian dialect or Arabic are spoken and allowed. When people drop out of school at an early age, chances for them to migrate to the city are reduced which seems to lead to maintenance of their *Tamazight*.

Although a list of questions was designed for the interviews (see Appendix 1), it was hard to stick to the order of the questions and not engage in more unstructured-like interviews or informal conversational interviews. Patton (2002) described unstructured interviews as a natural extension of participant observation, because they so often occur as part of ongoing participant observation fieldwork. He argued that they rely entirely on the spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of an interaction. This definition aligns with Labov's (1966, 1972) suggestion on the best means to enrich natural data is by giving the floor to the interviewees and allowing them to dictate the flow of the conversation. In this study, semi-structured interviews turned out to be important for the participants to feel comfortable talking to researcher and not to sound as if they were under investigation. The researcher would often allow the discussions to diverge from the main interview guide particularly for the three main reasons below: First the researcher did not meet them in person. Most the information about the researcher was delivered to the subjects through her public Facebook page and friends who played the intermediaries.

Second, it was important to make the interview more conversational to reduce formality and distance in attempt to build better rapport with the participants. Had the interview been more structured, it could have caused some discomfort for some participants who might not like to communicate with people who live in the West. Third, the study is tackling a quite sensitive topic and there might have been fear that the topic of *Tamazight* revitalization in Tunisia could engender multiple accusations of "sedition and separatism" (Tilmatine, 2015).

While the length of the interviews varied from one participant to another, they all ranged between 40 to 60 minutes. Questions were centered around the general thematic goal of this study which is to analyze the processes of erasure that Tunisian *Tamazight* language have been undergoing. Most of the interviews were conducted in Tunisian dialect (*Ettounsi*). The interview data were digitally recorded and transcribed.

4.4 Questionnaire

One additional form of data consisted of an online survey questionnaire was distributed through Facebook private message medium to Tunisians who were selected based on their willingness and their availability. The questionnaire was administered in Arabic, then translated in English. The questionnaire contained 20 questions. The biographical section included questions about age, highest educational diploma obtained, gender, place of residence, village of birth if Amazigh, and languages they speak. Questions on language proficiency and language use were designed in a multiple-choice format. Participants were asked to respond to questions about language proficiency, fluency, and domains of use, for instance: “in which language do you interact mostly at home?” The responses included *Tamazight* only, *Tamazight* and Tunisian and Tunisian *Darija*⁷ only. To assess attitudes towards Tunisian *Tamazight* in various contexts, participants were asked to respond to six statements using a five-point Likert scale on which options ranged from agree, strongly agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree; examples include questions such as “Tunisian *Tamazight* should be constitutionalized” and “Tunisian *Tamazight* should be revitalized”. The survey was administered to assess Tunisians’ awareness of the Amazigh element in their identity post-revolution Tunisia. It is important to evaluate how much Tunisians know and what variables have made some people more aware of the Tunisian

⁷ According to Maghrebi Arabic Wikipedia *Darija*, *Derija* or *Delja* (Arabic: الدارجة) means "everyday/colloquial language"; it is also rendered as *ed-dārija*, *derija* or *darja*. It refers to any of the varieties of colloquial Maghrebi Arabic.

Tamazight identity than others. Another motivation was to assess subjects' acceptability of the idea that Tunisian identity has an Amazigh dimension. In other words, the survey serves to provide a comprehensive pool of information to identify the causes and outcomes of Amazigh cultural and linguistic erasure. Results of the survey will be analyzed in Chapter 5.

4.5 Analysis

The study adopts a discourse analytical and semiotic approach to explore ways Tunisian Amazigh language and identity erasure and counter erasure are discursively reproduced on Facebook. Contrary to the traditional understanding of ideologies as an instrument of hegemony and domination that systems of dissent and resistance do not own, new approaches define ideologies as shared representations of social groups expressed and generally reproduced in the social practices of their members, and more particularly acquired, confirmed, changed and perpetuated through discourse (Van Dijk 2013). Based on this approach, not only ideologies of dominations are defined as ideologies-erasure in this study-, but any system of ideas, beliefs, and representations produced to struggle against ideologies of domination- counteracting erasure in this study-is no less of an ideology too. To uncover these ideologies a combination of micro and macro-analytical approaches will be adopted. Hence, a diverse list of linguistic features will be considered for analysis, including choices of topics, language, scripts, presuppositions, metaphors, sarcasm, attitudinal vocabulary, intertextuality and multimodality.

4.6 Ethical concerns

When I first contacted my research participants about this study, there was no concern among any of them regarding how I would manage the anonymity of their data. The nine Facebook participants wished to be acknowledged by their actual names as authors of their contributions (Markham et al 2012). Despite their wishes, it was still important for me to protect

their anonymity for the following reasons. First, being a Tunisian Amazigh activist is still a vulnerable status. And even though its members are not anticipating nor fearing risks, it was still necessary to minimize the potential of future “harm,” particularly so Arabo-Islamic ideologies are more powerful than any time before within the rise of political Islam in a post-revolution transitional Tunisia. Therefore, a consent form on which participants were assured that their data will remain anonymous and will be used strictly for this Ph.D. dissertation was sent to them to sign. The consent form also gave them the right to withdraw from the research at any time they found themselves uncomfortable during the interview or with having their Facebook postings used in the research. As noted above, throughout the data, I have substituted the actual names of the profiles with random Amazigh names of historical figures or just proper names. I consulted my participants with the names I picked for them. At least four of my participants preferred to be called “Aksil” which is the most famous and heroic historical figure for all Imazighen. I decided to attribute the name to the participant who had no preference regarding his pseudonym. On the screenshots, I blurred the images depicting faces and any place showing personal information. I have also refrained from making reference to the original village (‘bled’) of each participant. The *bled* is a highly salient and socially meaningful fact that anyone can use to easily identify Tunisian Imazighen.

In return for the extraordinary collaboration and help of my participants, I promised to mention their actual names in the acknowledgement section of the dissertation. The only ethical concern I encountered was with handling third-party data. This refers to users whose comments show only on thread discussions on the profiles of the main participants. It was not easy to get in touch of those people via phone or Skype, especially that I live in the USA when I was engaged in the online ethnography. The only way I could reach them to ask for their permission was

through Facebook feature, reply to a comment. I also asked my participants to inform their friends about my research. They reassured me they would do that when they could. They also assured that as long as their postings are public they have no restrictions on using the materials published on their walls including their friends' comments.

Even if taking these ethical issues into considerations seem sufficient for protecting the participants from any potential harm, unpredicted accidents can always happen. As pointed out by Røynealand (2018) following Bolander and Locher (2014: 17), distinction between what is private and public in CMC/social media is becoming increasingly blurred. Therefore, it should be taken with a grain of salt. Data found in the digital space may be sometimes of private nature even if it is posted publicly. This is because the notions of "private" and "public" may differ culturally. Ess (2002) suggests a computer ethics model that is shaped by partial public praxis rather than an absolute public. The model considers resources of diverse ethical and cultural traditions to bear on contemporary CMC issues (p. 12). Drawing on these insights of the ethics research, I should note that I was forced to be quite selective during my data collection period. Although several wall posts fit into the type of data I was looking for, I had to avoid selecting them for they contained offensive language or ideas that could have had political repercussions for the participants even though they were posted publicly. Following Røynealand (2018, p. 151), it was important to consider our conceptualization of private and public as well as to whom the media user is directing post or comment.

In sum, the data for my dissertation is pulled from extensive observations of daily activities on Facebook. Through the nine profiles I chose to follow, I explored numerous posts on various themes and approaches with regard to *Tamazight* revitalization and Amazigh identity formation in Tunisia.

Chapter Five

A RISING AWARENESS OF TUNSIAN *TAMAZIGHT*: AN OUTCOME OF FACEBOOK DISPLAY OF A TUNISIAN *AMAZIGHEITY*



The biggest lie that has ever been believed by people in history is: North African inhabitants are Arabs

5.1 Introduction

In the changed political and social landscape in post-revolution Tunisia, Amazigh identity accompanied by a tendency to revitalize the critically endangered *Tamazight* language have become among the most critical topics centering the public discourse. In the first section of this chapter, I will examine the effects of the resurgence of this new discourse on the general public in Tunisia through the analysis of the online survey results that was distributed on Facebook and via the friend-of-a-friend method in 2016. Participants in this survey had to be Tunisians but not necessarily Imazighen. This step is important to assess the degree to which Tunisians in general are aware of the *Tamazight* language and identity as part of their social, cultural, and linguistic identity. It is also a gateway into investigating whether Tunisians are aware of the erasure ideologies of *Tamazight* and to what extent they embrace them. To this end, the survey is one of

the ways to analyze Tunisians attitudes towards *Tamazight* to gain some insights into its current status and its future revival prospects.

Tunisian Imazighen's intensive Facebook activities, interactions and narratives play a crucial role in the awakening and dissemination of an Amazigh discourse, engaged principally in disclosing and countering the essentialist and exclusionary language ideologies that pushed *Tamazight* to a status of endangerment. Tunisian Imazighen seem to be engaged simultaneously in constructing and reproducing these same ideologies vis-à-vis Arabic through a complex and rigorous Facebook identity work. Examples of language ideologies predominantly discussed, contested, and reversed in the Tunisian Amazigh Facebook discourse include the notion of erasure.

According to Gal and Irvine's model (1995, p. 974), erasure is a powerful ideological process in which certain phenomena such as linguistic structures, cultural products, social groups, sociolinguistics varieties, etc. are rendered invisible. Accordingly, the complexity of sociolinguistic reality, such as multilingualism, ethnic diversity, and the existence of language minorities get effaced or obscured for being inconsistent with the prevailing ideologies. Erasure often interrelates with iconization and fractal recursivity, the two other semiotic processes of Gal's and Irvine's model (1995, p. 974). As a brief reminder of how these two processes are achieved, iconization, on the one hand, describes how linguistic phenomena are portrayed as if they flowed 'naturally' from a social group's biological or cultural essence. This is realized through 'the attribution of cause and immediate necessity to a connection [. . .] that may be only historical, contingent, or conventional' (Irvine and Gal 2000, p. 37). Fractal recursivity, on the other hand, captures the fact that 'the dichotomy constructed on linguistic grounds through iconization is simultaneously noticeable on different coexisting and interrelated semiotic tiers—

gender, ethnicity, race, social class, morality, and aesthetics' (Milani 2010, p. 120-121). In this way, fractal recursivity entails a chain of binary entwined oppositions, such as American versus immigrant, mainstream versus regional dialect, or as this study will show, between Amazigh writers of *Tifinagh* versus Amazigh non-writers of *Tifinagh* (Milani 2010).

Drawing on insights provided by Gal's and Irvine's model (1995, 2000), the second section of this chapter examines how the ideological semiotic processes are discussed and reproduced in Tunisian Amazigh Facebook profiles. The analysis will only focus on the structural organization of the profiles with some analysis of the content of the posts. In other words, section two will only discuss how Tunisian Imazighen use the affordances of Facebook's standard features to create an impression management of a living Tunisian Amazigh identity to counter the Arabo-Islamic ideologies which pronounced it already 'extinct'. I propose through the analysis that Imazighen's performance of their Facebook identity is implemented through the deployment of an amalgamation of linguistic and semiotic materials (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996, Blommaert & Rampton 2011), presented discursively in various processes of which *entextualization* stands as the most crucial one. Tunisian *Tamazight* language and identity performance is also sustained through a dialectic between the explicit or overt metalinguistic statements and the implicit or pragmatic ones that require interpretation of linguistic cues to infer the internalized ideological perspectives of its speakers or users (Tsitsipis 2003).

5.2 Section One: Survey Analysis

5.2.1 Socio-Demographic Profile of the Survey Respondents

An analysis of the socio-demographic profile of the survey participants provides a window into the attitudes displayed by Tunisians towards *Tamazight* under the dominant and imaginary homogenizing identity constructed by the national-state and the Arabo-Islamic

ideology. The total sample of responses collected in this study is 194. The majority of the respondents in the study were between the ages of 18 and 60. The highest number of responses were elicited by participants whose age is between 18 and 38. Results show that 42.4% are participants whose age is in that range, which is expected since most of the internet users in Tunisia are described as “teenagers” (Cherif et al. 2017). As for gender, results show that 52.1 % were males while 47.9% females. A breakdown of the demographic profile of the participants shows that the majority were from Tunis (32%), the capital of Tunisia, followed by Sfax (18%), the largest state in the south, then the state of Gabes in Southeastern Tunisia (12%). Additionally, only people from 12 states out of 24 participated. In terms of education, 84% of the respondents have some university education, a demographic which generally has greater awareness of *Tamazight* than other groups.

5.2.2 Linguistics Profile of the Survey Respondents

To gather an overview on the linguistic profile of the respondents, the researcher designed three questions in the survey. The first one was on the languages that the participants speak. The list from which they had to choose comprised *Darija* or *Ettounsi*⁸, which refers to the colloquial form of the language used in everyday speech in Tunisia, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), French, English, Italian, German, Spanish, Turkish, and *Tamazight*. Results show that 92.6% speak *Ettounsi*. This is supposed to be the mother tongue of the Tunisians who are born and raised in Tunisia. In this the survey the researcher targeted strictly this category of Tunisians, and yet a small percentage of 7.8% claim they don't speak it. As for Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) which serves the function of being the official language, the language of administration,

⁸ Ettounsi is the other name of Tunisian Arabic. The dissertation will only use this label hereafter for the following reasons. It is more captive of the multiple linguistic layers forming the vernacular language spoken by Tunisians; it is considered a language in its own right and not mere dialect of Arabic based on emerging linguistics studies on Arabic and Arabic dialectology (Salameh 2011); and It is the name employed by *Darija Association* in Tunisia to label the standardized form of Ettounsi.

and the language of education in the country, of the respondents in the sample, 62.8% claimed to be MSA speakers. The percentage of respondents who reported competence in foreign languages, especially French and English, surpasses MSA. Figure 5.1 shows that French is spoken by 91.5% of the participants followed by English with 76.6%.

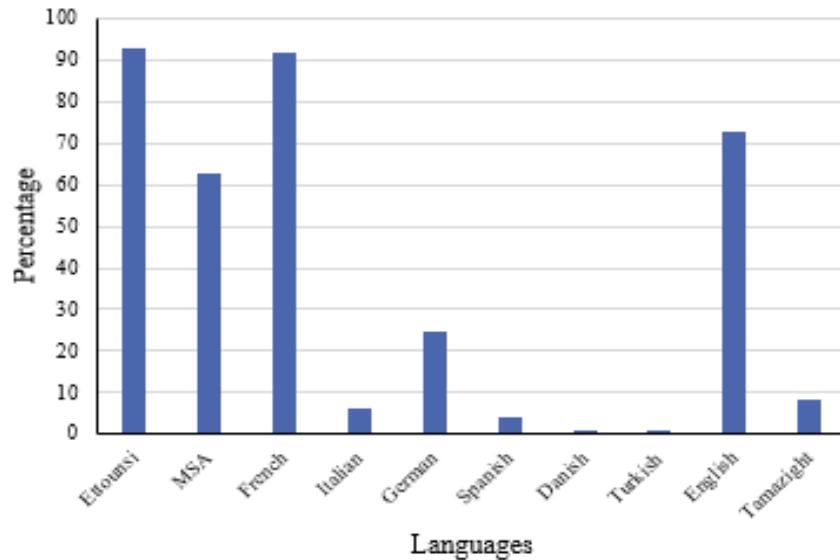


Figure 5.1: Languages Spoken by the Survey Respondents

The decline of MSA supremacy in favor of French and English can be interpreted in many ways (Khalef 2018, Salameh 2011, Sarkis 2010). First, there is growing attitude among the youth that French and English are more prestigious, functional, and more likely to guarantee jobs. Second, with the proliferation of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) in the lives of most Tunisians, Arabic-language content has failed to keep pace with demand when content in English and French has been more accessible. This is applicable to most of the Arabic-speaking countries. A study conducted by Northwestern University in Qatar in 2016 found that "despite a rapid increase in the number of Arabic-speaking Internet users, Arabic content remains one of the most under-represented languages online in terms of its share of the world's websites"

(Khalaf, 2018). A third and perhaps the most important factor for the decline of MSA is attributed to increasingly negative perceptions linked to Islamism (Khalaf 2018, Said 2012, Sarkis 2010). Salem Labyath, a member of the Democratic Party in the Tunisian parliament warned against the dissemination of “an inferior complex among the elites and middle class towards Arabic in Tunisia” (cf. The Arabic News, February 9, 2018). He demanded that a law be enacted to mandate the use of Arabic in federal, local, and private workplaces. This includes Arabizing all textbooks at elementary and high schools, all mass media products, all research patents, advertisements, business signs, administrative paperwork, and even social media communication. He went on to insist on imposing legal penalties on those who violate this law (The Arabic News, February 9, 2018).

Continuous reduction of MSA domains of use to political and religious contexts, which are often associated with oppressive and conservative ideologies has augmented the mounting aversion towards this language. The decline in the ability to speak MSA might be also related to the widespread reaction against a sign of an enforced “pan-Arabist” identity. This interpretation could find support in the fact that Arabic colloquial vernaculars, not only *Ettounsi*, represent the preferred medium of communication in social media as a sign of local identities triumphing over enforced “pan” identities (Abouzahr 2018). In a study by Abandah et al. (2015) on Arabic language status in the Jordanian networking and mobile phone communications, some of the findings show that Facebook has significant percentages of messages in Arabizi (Romanized Arabic) and colloquial Arabic at 8.2% and 67.7% respectively. The same study shows that Twitter has a significant use of Arabizi and colloquial Arabic at 7.9% and 50.1% respectively (p. 455). In another study by Chelghoum (2015) on the role of Social Network Sites (SNS) on threatening MSA and strengthening colloquial Arabic, findings were consistent with

the previous one. MSA is found to be seldom used in Facebook chat (9%) whereas dialectal Arabic and other foreign languages are the most used language at 49% and 60% (specifically English) respectively (p. 41). The study concludes that Arabic dialects dominate mostly online Facebook chat among Arabic users.

It is also important to note that answers to the next two questions on *Tamazight* speaking and writing proficiency were provided by just 89 respondents. The remaining 105 skipped these two questions rendering the results problematic at best. This is attributed to the fact that the survey was not only targeting participants who speak and write *Tamazight*, but Tunisians in general. Based on the subset of respondents who answered these questions (N=89), details on self-reported *Tamazight* proficiency reveal that the vast majority rate themselves as having no competence at all (83%).

Ability in writing in *Tifinagh* also seems limited to just 2.3% of the participants. Those who participated in these two questions without necessarily speaking *Tamazight*, still represent the overwhelming majority of 83%. It is important to notice, however, that low skills in writing *Tifinagh* do not reflect anything about the literacy rate of these speakers given that Arabic and Latin scripts can be used to write *Tamazight* too (Chapter 6).

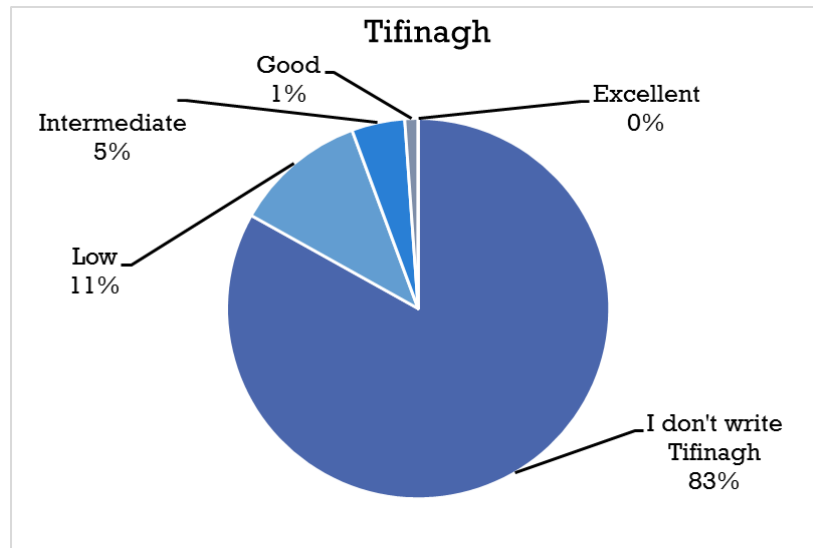


Figure 5.2: *Tifinagh* writing skills (N=89)

Most of the *Tamazight*-speaking participants in this survey originate from *Douiret* (20%), *Matmata* (20%), and *Tamazret* (26%) which conforms with the sociolinguistic literature claiming that these areas are the main sites to find native *Tamazight* speakers (Gabsi 2009, Bahri 2015). However, it is important to remember that most of the respondents took the survey while residing in one of the three big states/cities of the country. Also mentioned in Chapter 2, this was that one of the causes for the shift away from *Tamazight* is the rural to urban migration of its speakers.

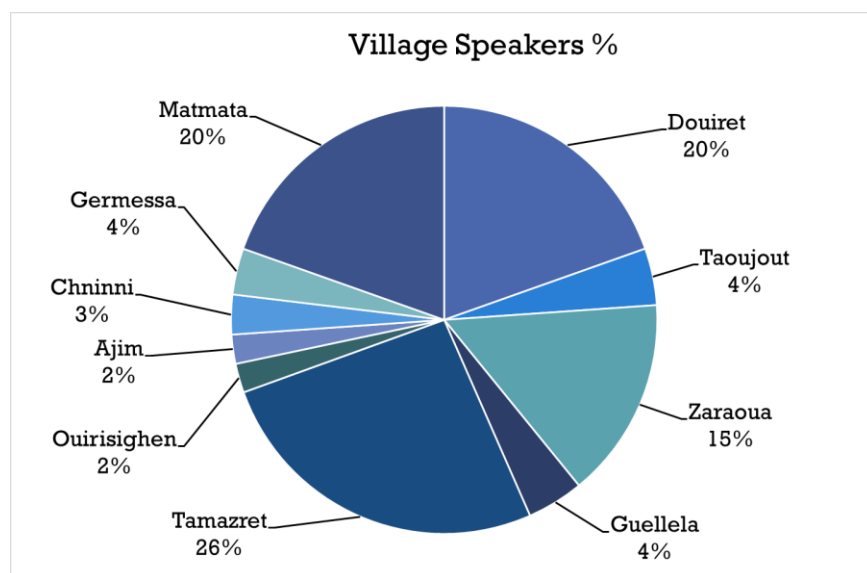


Figure 5.3: Village Origins of Self-Reported *Tamazight* Speakers (N=89)

Accordingly, it is not unexpected to find that *Tamazight* speaking abilities are low within this group. Lack of familial settings and a local speech community where individuals can engage in *Tamazight* use in the cities or states where they migrated to, have contributed to its shift.

Coulmas (2005) emphasizes that:

Among the factors determining language shift and maintenance two have attracted special attention: (1) the micro-social arena of the family as the agent of spontaneous intergeneration language transmission; and (2) the macro-social arena of group settlement in a 'territory'. The absolute demographic strength of a group means little if its members are widely dispersed, providing few social settings for using its language outside the family. And if a language ceases to be transmitted domestically the bedrock of its continuing tradition is undermined (pp. 161-162).

When asked about the language they use at home and with their family members, over 35 % of the respondents reported they use *Ettounsi*. A mere 1% reported they exclusively use of *Tamazight*. The rest of the respondents, however, reported some form of bilingual behavior ranging from the predominate use of *Tamazight* (14%) to the predominant use of *Ettounsi* (29%). The remaining (21%) of the respondents reported equal use of both languages (see figure 21).

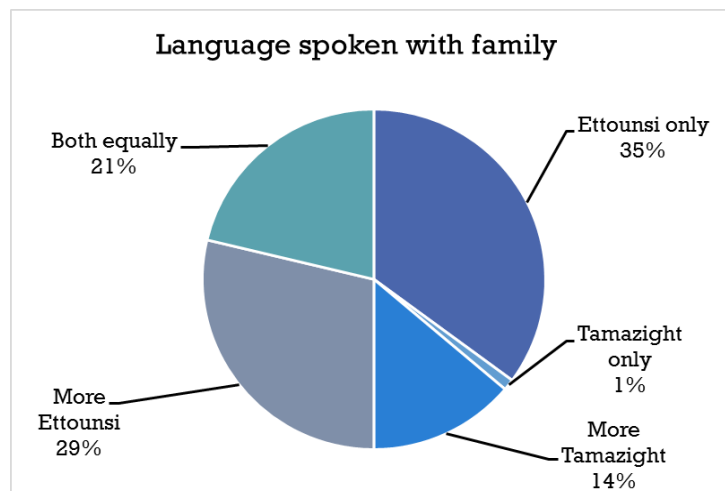


Figure 5.4: Language spoken at Home and with Family Members (N=89)

The results show a very low percentage of those who use *Tamazight* exclusively, which is not surprising. It was hard to anticipate finding Tunisian Imazighen who strictly speak *Tamazight* at home and with their family members. A situation where *Tamazight* and *Ettounsi* are used alternatively would be more expected. The remaining results could be plausible since *Tamazight* continues to have the lowest numbers in usage even among a sample of respondents who identified themselves in previous questions as *Tamazight* speakers. The low numbers associated with *Tamazight* use and number of speakers reflect to some extent the findings of previous sociolinguistic research in which *Tamazight* speakers were reported to make up no more than 1% of the Tunisian population with no monolingual speakers remaining or speakers under twelve-years old (Gabsi 2009, Hamza 2007).

At this point, the linguistic profile of the survey participants show that Tunisian *Tamazight* qualifies for what UNESCO's Language Vitality and Endangerment framework refers to as "a definitely endangered" status (Sallabank 2010) even though it surfaced as a surviving spoken language in the responses of some of the participants. In addition to the low skills in speaking and writing *Tamazight* reported in this survey, the results clearly indicate weak intergenerational transmission of the language as it is reported to be very limited in use between family members and by children.

Despite the discouraging numbers depicted through the linguistic profiles in this survey, the resurgence of an Amazigh discourse on social media since the 2011 Revolution points to increasingly positive attitudes towards *Tamazight* even among the majority community of Tunisians who not speak it. Attitudes are key as to whether languages are maintained or abandoned. They are also changeable over time and depending on the aspect of the language ideology awareness that influence them. Kroskrity (2002) states that some language ideologies

can be on a more deliberate or conscious level of cultural awareness (discursive consciousness), while others are unexpressed or part of the practical or structural knowledge (practical consciousness). He suggests that the more aware group members are of ideologies, the more these can be challenged and contested (Kroskrity 2002). Therefore, the remainder of this section will focus on describing the types of attitudes expressed by the survey respondents towards *Tamazight* and the way they view its importance in relation to Tunisian identity.

5.2.3. Tunisians' attitudes towards Tunisian *Tamazight*

The strength of support for a variety of subjective statements about *Tamazight* amongst respondents was measured on a five-point Likert scale from strong agreement with the statement to strong disagreement. Response categories included 'strongly agree' or 'agree to an extent,' 'neutral,' 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree to an extent as well as the categories of 'I don't care' or 'I don't know'. The strength of support for the statement '*Tamazight* is a part of Tunisian heritage' was unanticipated. Overall, 53% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement with a further 28% who agreed to an extent (just over 80% in total), while 13% were neutral, only small numbers of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (7%).

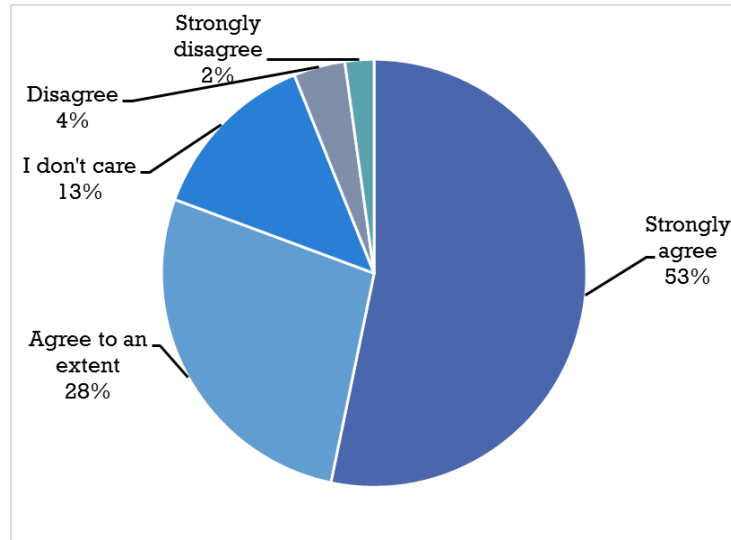


Figure 5.5: Responses to ‘*Tamazight* is a part of Tunisian heritage’ (N=194)

A more revealing interpretation of the attitudes was gained from responses to more specific attitudinal items and questions. In the survey, participants were given five more statements and questions designed to measure attitudes towards a range of domains in which *Tamazight* language might be used. These attitudinal items measured the respondents’ views about the revitalization of *Tamazight*, its teaching at school, its suitability for the modern world, its relation to Arabic, and its future constitutionalisation. Another group of attitudinal items was used to measure the degree to which *Tamazight* was valued as a symbol of group or ethnic identity and further statements were included to measure perceptions of *Tamazight* language based on its internal and structural properties.

Figures 5.6 and 5.7 show responses to statement 2 in the survey ‘The death of Tunisian *Tamazight* is unimportant’ and to statement 3 ‘*Tamazight* language revitalization is a waste of time’.

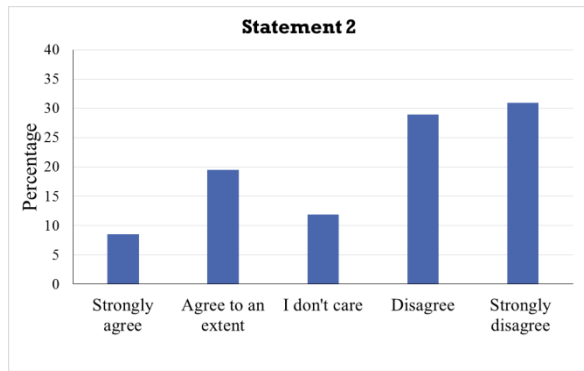


Figure 5.6: The death of Tunisian *Tamazight* is unimportant (N=194)

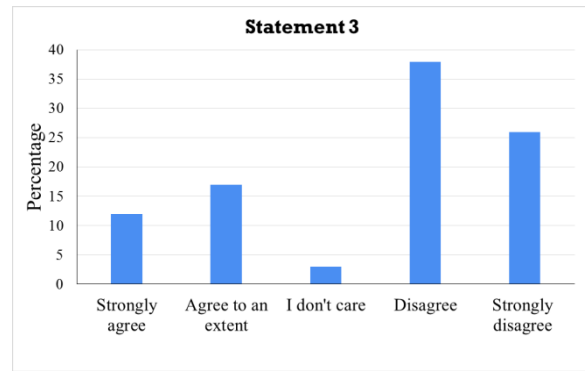


Figure 5.7: *Tamazight* language revitalization is a waste of time (N=194)

Respondents were found to attach higher values to ‘disagree’ whether strongly or to an extent regarding both statements. A total of 88 respondents (45%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with Statement 2 and a total of 116 respondents (60%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with Statement 3. Those who agreed that *Tamazight* death or revitalization are unimportant represented less than 20%. Neutral answers represented less than 10%. However, there was a gap of about 5% between the reaction to second and third statements on the neutrality and limited disagreement. Respondents seemed to prefer sharing their opinions about revitalizing *Tamazight* than remaining neutral. These results show that the overwhelming majority of the respondents are concerned about *Tamazight* disappearing and feel that revitalizing the language is important.

On the socio-economic role of *Tamazight* in the modern world, attitudes were divided almost equally between those who agreed and those who did not. Figure 7.8 gives more details on how respondents reacted to ‘*Tamazight* is useless in modern Tunisia’.

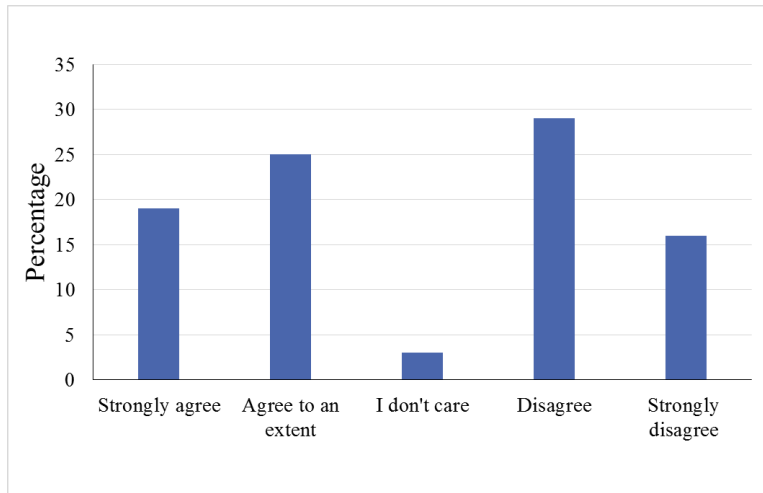


Figure 5.8: *Tamazight* is useless in modern Tunisia (N=194)

Statements calling for a governmental support for *Tamazight* also received the high positive responses as shown in Figure 5.9 and 5.10. These statements are ‘*Tamazight* should be taught at school’ and ‘*Tamazight* should be constitutionalized’. 53% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that *Tamazight* should be taught in school and 60% that the language should be recognized in the constitution.

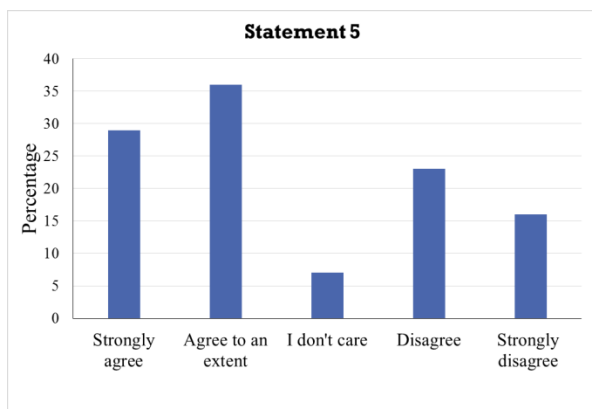


Figure 5.9: *Tamazight* should be taught at school (N=194)

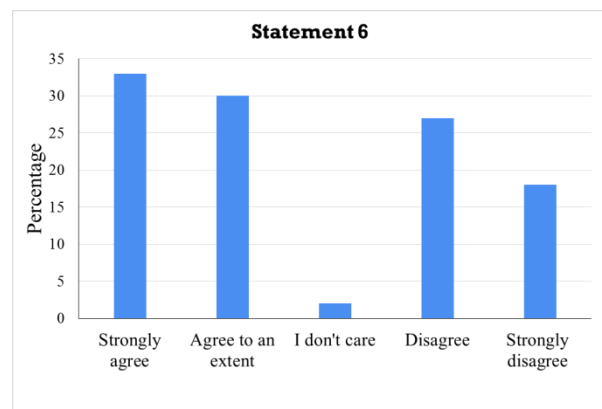


Figure 5.10: *Tamazight* should be constitutionalized (N=194)

Analysis of the attitudinal statements shows that there are general tendencies towards embracing Tunisian *Tamazight*, and responses generally indicated that they favor the increase of Tunisian

Tamazight presence in the linguistic and cultural scene in the country. High support of *Tamazight* language was accompanied by a robust awareness of ‘*Tamazight*’ historical, cultural, and linguistic influences on Tunisian identity. This was reflected through questions on respondents’ perceptions of *Tamazight* linguistic and cultural characteristics. The question asks if Tunisian *Tamazight* is a dialect of Arabic or a different language. The answers choices also included the option “I don’t know”. Over 51% disagreed that *Tamazight* is a dialect of Arabic which challenges the pan-Arabist ideology (discussed in Chapter 2). Quite a high percentage of the respondents (more than 38%) were not sure whether *Tamazight* is a dialect of Arabic or not. Nonetheless, only a small percentage strongly agreed that it is a dialect of Arabic (2%) whereas 9% agreed to some degree.

Most respondents disagreed with the statements ‘*Tamazight* is an ugly language’ or ‘*Tamazight* is a poor language’. A large percentage of the respondents (almost 50% for each statement) do not harbor prejudiced assumptions about *Tamazight* even though the percentage of those who claimed they do not know the language was quite high (over 33% for each statement). Those who had strong negative perceptions of the language continued to represent very tiny minorities (2% or less). An examination of responses to questions used to assess the degree of awareness and knowledge of *Tamazight* linguistic, cultural, and linguistic aspects in the third section of the survey confirmed the generally positive tendencies and attitudes among the respondents.

5.2.4 A growing awareness of *Tamazight* influence in Tunisian identity

Despite the lower participation rate in this section (N=96), probably due to the open-ended type of questions, responses demonstrated an increase in awareness of the *Tamazight* influences on *Ettounsi*. Example 3 shows few examples of lexical terms in *Ettounsi* that respondents knew they

were originally from *Tamazight*. Each line a separate response. Translation is line by line in the right.

Chlaghem, fartatou, fakroun, louza, bouzoggar	1.moustache, butterfly, turtle, sister-in-law, pimples disease
FAKROUNE	2. Turtle
Echel7a	3. Shelha [referring to another common,yet derogatory name of Tamazight in Tunisia]
Fakroun, memi, naw, kachabia, barnous,	4. Turtle, baby, foggy, qashabia [a long cloak with a hood], burnous [a long cloak of coarse woollen fabric with a hood]
krouma , 3ankouch , 3allouch ...	5. neck, neck, sheep
Barcha	6. a lot
Ba3li, Babbouch, Mkharag, Bakkouch, Kanoun, Ikbi, Hares, Ik'heb, Mislen ect...	7. dry, shell, [pastry], dumb, clay small heater, [unclear], [unclear], backbone
Ghonjeya	8. spoon
3allouch couscous tunes	9.sheep, Tunisian couscous

Example 3: “Do you know of any *Tamazight* word in Tunisian dialect?” (N=52)

A total of 52 respondents provided an answer to this open-ended question which is a promising number. One of the interviewees in this study clearly expressed this idea which will be discussed further in Chapter 6 of this study:

Excerpt 1: Takfirinas, interview, April 2, 2016

“...the Tunisian dialect uses many Berber words. Many Tunisians do not even know that the words they use are Berber. It is only taught within families that still speak the language today. The priority now is to teach the language and the culture” (Takfirinas, interview, April 2, 2016).

Most of the examples given above refer to body parts vocabulary, domestic animals and insects, traditional outfits, and food. This is consistent with previous research (Sayahi 2014 and Bahri, to appear) finding *Tamazight* substratum in the spoken variety in Tunisia (hereafter *Ettounsi*) is mostly limited to semantic fields of farming, agriculture, animals, insects, and body language. The data, however, show terms that are attributed to *Tamazight* etymology when they

are essentially *Arabic*. The term “*barsha*” ‘a lot’ is a significant marker of Tunisian identity and probably the most salient lexical term in *Ettounsi*. Interestingly, Tunisians often attribute it to unknown origins or to *Tamazight* but rarely to *Arabic*. Throughout the responses to his questions, several non-*Tamazight* terms were assigned a *Tamazight* etymology. This can be interpreted in two ways. First, it reveals how little Tunisians know about *Tamazight* language, which is conceivable, given that the majority used to think that the language is extinct. A different interpretation presumes that most of the respondents think that any word that doesn’t not sound Arabic or French must be *Tamazight*. This obviously erases several other linguistic layers in the make-up of *Ettounsi* language as Turkish, Spanish, or French with some phonological changes. This behavior is often observed among Imazighen, in specific, through Facebook or other media outlets. In an article entitled “hundreds of Berber words in Tunisian Darija” published by a *Tamazight* activist, Hajer Berbana, on *Essbah Newspaper* on April 7, 2014. She included a long list of words that she attributed etymologically to *Tamazight*. Although Hajer’s work continue to contribute tremendously to raising awareness of the *Tamazight* element in *Ettounsi*, some of the terms she cited and that many Tunisian Imazighen shared on their Facebook do not necessarily have *Tamazight* origins.

Responses shown in Example 4 include respondents’ examples of Tunisian cultural customs that are originally *Tamazight*. A total of 44 responses to this question was impressive given that every Tunisian cultural custom, ritual, and behavior was thought to be originally Arabic by most Tunisians. This idea was expressed further through Facebook data that will be analyzed in section 2 of this Chapter and Chapter six as well.

food
Couscous
many ..
Ommek tangou ou tasil n anzar
Les formes de henné et leurs significations
Les plats traditionnels
L'ouverture de l'an avec un plat de mloukhia et y fermer avec un plat de couscous
Ettesfih
Jhaz
Les rites de l'ayyacha
Laasida
Louziaa
Lmoussem
Tlehlih (au sud tunisien)
Tapisser à l'aube au bord de la mer pour inviter les âmes protectrices
Tkerkib
Les rites du mariage
malya, qashabya, barnous, kabbous, kharbqa jeu, qas3a 3irs,
Architecture: clothers: music: astronomv

Example 4: Do you know of any Tunisian cultural customs that are originally *Tamazight*?
(N= 44)

Figure 5.11 shows an example of a thread from Dyhia’s page in which the commentators sarcastically discuss the attribution of the label “Arabic” to several cultural practices even when these practices occur in Amazigh places, regions, or cities. Dyhia blames the media for feeding the Arabization ideology which erases all Amazigh cultural influence.

Dahia
Aksil , Syfax, Dihya,
Hannibal, Kahina, Massinissa...
Axel . Masensen. Yoghurta. Jura 1.juba 2.
Dihia b. Matih b. Tifan
Dihia b. Matih b.Tifan
تكفاريناس كين هينان مخلد بن كيداد صاحب الحمير يوسف بن تاشفين عبد المؤمن بن علي الكومي

Example 5: Name examples of Amazigh historical figures? (N= 44)

Even if these names were familiar to a few, they would usually be mistaken for being Phoenicians rather than Imazighen. This was confirmed in the interview with Yughurtha:

Excerpt 2: Yughurtha, Interview, March 11, 2016

“For most Tunisians, everything came from the East. There was no civilization before the coming of *Elissar*⁹. And you know what, they even take pride in what this woman did even though she was a mythical character. The story of establishing Carthage was all based on a myth. Real people, such as Aksil¹⁰ and Yugurtha¹¹ do not matter for them; they are not even known simply because they were Imazighen. [Sarcastically] After all why would Tunisians be interested to know about people whose leader could easily be deceived by Elissa bull’s skin trick (referring to the legend of establishing Carthage¹²)...This is all to index that Imazighen are stupid people” (Yughurtha,

⁹ Elissar, Elissa or Dido (Elishat, in Phoenician) was a princess of Tyre. According to ancient Greek and Roman legends, she is the founder and first queen of Carthage.

¹⁰ Kusaila (Amazigh:, Aksil or Aksel, Latin: Caecilius, Arabic: Kusaila[1]) was a 7th-century Amazigh Christian king of the kingdom of Altava and leader of the Awraba tribe of the Imazighen and possibly Christian King of the Sanhadja confederation. He is known for organizing an effective Amazigh military resistance against the Muslim invasion of the Maghreb in the 680s. His name means "leopard" in the Amazigh language. Kusaila died in the year 690 AD fighting Muslim invaders (Wikipedia 2018)

¹¹ Yugurta or Yugurten (c. 160 – 104 BC) was a king of Numidia, born in Cirta (modern-day Constantine). He is mostly known for the Jugurthine War (112–106 BC) against Rome (Wikipedia 2018).

¹² The legend says that Dido (aka Elissa, from Elisha, or Alashiya, her Phoenician name) was a legendary Queen of Tyre City in Phoenicia and daughter of the Tyrian king Mutto. Dido's brother, Pygmalion, killed Dido's wealthy husband Sychaeus. Dido, knowing how dangerous Tyre was with her brother still alive, took her husband's treasure, fled, and wound up in Carthage, in what is now modern Tunisia. Dido bartered with the locals [referring to the Amazigh people], offering a substantial amount of wealth in exchange for what she could contain within the skin of a bull. When they agreed to what seemed an exchange greatly to their advantage, Dido showed how clever she really was. She cut the hide into strips and laid it out in a semi-circle around a strategically placed hill with the sea forming the other side. Dido then ruled Carthage as queen (by Mark Cartwright published on 29 June 2016 on Ancient History Encyclopedia)

Interview, March 11, 2016)

This preliminary analysis of the survey data demonstrates highly positive attitudes among a considerable number of the respondents. This is further illustrated through the answers to the last open-ended question in the survey in which respondents were given space to justify their choices and explain why or why not *Tamazight* is important in the context of Tunisia in Examples 6-10. Answers were given in different scripts and languages, but those written in Arabic or French are translated. Overall findings from the comments show that the majority of the respondents have positive attitudes and strong identification with the *Tamazight* historical, cultural, and ethnic component of the make-up of their identity. They more often associate *Tamazight* to notions of belonging, Indigeneity, and pride. Interestingly, some self-identified Arabs also show support for *Tamazight* as a vital element of a pluralistic Tunisian identity. Little, however, if anything is stated explicitly about the linguistic aspect of it. Respondents do elaborate on the importance of documenting or teaching *Tamazight*, but did not express unequivocal interests to learn the language. While absence of similar comments may trigger concerns about intentions of confining *Tamazight* to symbolic and indexical, and folkloric functions, it is still too early to jump to that judgment.

Example 6: “*Tamazight* civilization is a very ancient civilization in North African”

الحضارة الأمازيغية هي حضارة ضاربة القدم في شمال افريقية و في تونس مما يجعل لغتها لغة ضاربة القدم و يجعلها تحمل دورا في كل تطور و في بناء هوية الفرد و ثقافته.

الأمازيغية التونسية مسكنة فالفرنسيون أثناء الإستعمار حاولوا طمس كل شئ غير فرنسي و أروبي أما فترة الإستقلال و الدولة الحديثة كل فكرة مغايرة لفكرة الدولة أو لفكر الحاكم الدكتاتور هو خطر و وجب القاء عليه لهذا الأمازيغية التونسية كانت مهددة و الآن بعد الثورة و الفوز بمكسب حرية التعبير عدنا للبروز في الساحة صحيح أن حجمنا لا يزال ضئيل لكنه أفضل مما كنا عليه فالآن يمكن أن تلاحظ النوادي المهمة بالثقافة الأمازيغية.

الأمازيغية كحضارة مثلها مثل الحضارة العربية و أظن أن كل حضارة لها مميزتها في لغتها و ثقافتها مما يجعل اللغة الأمازيغية و العربية يختلفان في اللغة و الحضارة.

لن نستطيع التطور في تونس مادامنا نعاني من أزمات هوية الكثير من الشباب يقول أنه عربي أصيل و هة لقبه مصمودي نسبة لقبيلة مصمودة و نفس المثال يطرح مع الصنهاجي (نسبة لقبيلة صنهاجة) إلخ ذلك و جب جعل الأمازيغية مدرسته لضمان حق الأمازيغ التونسيين و حتى احترامنا للتاريخ و حضارة مرت على بلادنا تونس.

Translation

Tamazight civilization is a very ancient civilization in North African and Tunisia, which implies that its language is ancient too and it plays a crucial role in the making of people's identity and culture. Tunisian *Tamazight* history is miserable. In the course of the French colonization, French invaders tried to erase everything that is not French or European. Then, there was the independence period during which the modern state-nation banned any idea that would oppose the ideas of nationalism or the ruling dictator. Therefore, Tunisian *Tamazight* was under threat. As for now, after the revolution and all the gains of free speech, we reappeared in the arena. It is true that we are still a minority, but the situation is better than before. Now, we can find new clubs interested in *Tamazight* culture. *Tamazight* is a civilization as many others. I believe that each civilization has its distinct language and culture, which means that *Tamazight* and Arabic have different languages and civilizations. It will never be possible for us to make progress in Tunisia as long as we have an identity crisis. So many teens identify themselves as purely Arab when their last names is, [for instance], *Masmoudi* in affiliation to the Amazigh tribe of *Masmouda* or *Sanhaji* in affiliation to the Amazigh tribe of *Sanhaja*. Therefore, it is important to constitutionalize *Tamazight* to protect Tunisian Imazighen's rights, or at least as tribute to a historical civilization that existed in Tunisia.

Example 7: “As an Arab, I'd say it is a crime to efface Amazigh identity”

Pour ne pas oublier qui nous sommes , Parce que ce qui unit l'individu à sa patrie c'est l'antagonisme et ce qui nous distingue du reste des peuples du monde, c'est notre culture et notre histoire et, sur cette base, nous construisons une société avancée vers l'histoire de les anciens même marx a parlé de l'importance de l'histoire et de la langue des peuples autochtones (Les gens ne peuvent pas construire une patrie avancée sans revenir à son histoire)

En tant qu'arabes, malgré nos différences totales avec les colonies arabes, c'est un crime contre notre histoire et notre identité en plus la fausse identité arabe a nos créé des problèmes diplomatiques avec le reste du monde, comme Israël par exemple , tout d'abord nous sommes par nature un peuple ouvert à toutes les civilisations et nous nous efforçons de créer la paix dans le monde, en particulier avec les peuples autochtones.

Translation

So that we don't forget who we are. Because what unites individuals to their homelands is love and what distinguishes us of the rest of the people in the world is our culture and history. Accordingly, we construct a progressive society that can go forward with its history. Even Marx spoke about the importance of history and the autochthones. People cannot found advanced nations without going back to history. As an Arab, despite our differences with other Arabic nations, it would be a crime against history and identity [to efface the Amazigh element]. Moreover, the false Arabic identity that the entire society is ascribed has even created diplomatic problems for us with the rest of the world, such as with Israel. First, we are 'by nature' people [referring to Tunisian in general] who are open to dialogue with all civilizations and we [Tunisian Arabs] want to make peace in the world, particularly with the autochthones/the indigenous people.

Example 8: “*Tamazight* is the people’s culture”

الأمازيغية هي مكون من مكونات الهوية الوطنية التونسية ، وهي ثقافة شعب غنية بالموروث المادي و اللامادي لابد من إحيائها و دسترتها للتطعيم و إثراء التنوع الثقافي و اللغوي بالبلاد التونسية

اللغة الأمازيغية هي اللغة الأصلية لسكان شمال أفريقيا و من واجبنا ان نحافظ على هويتنا

Translation

Tamazight is a key component of the Tunisian identity. It is the people’s culture. It is rich in material and immaterial cultural heritage. It must be revived and constitutionalized in order to enrich the cultural and linguistic diversity in Tunisia.

Example 9: “It is our right to recognize us as a majority” (submitted in English)

historically and culturally Tunisia is an amazigh country which belongs to tamazgha (north africa) so it's important to be proud of our true identity and our natal culture and also our rich history. amazigh nation are from the more older nations in the world so our language, traditional clothes and habits must be present and understood as an heritage and patrimony . it's our right to live our true culture and to recognize us as a majority . we must stop this lie

Example 10: “Facts is that we are surrounded by *Tamazight* echoes” (submitted in English)

Tunisian Tamazight was, and still a important part of the North African history, culture and identity. Most of the Tunisians are still living an identity crisis because they grew up without knowing their roots. And the history they learnt in schools, in cofees and from mouth to ear, dosen't make any sense. Fact is that we're surrounded by the Tamazight echos, but most people dont have the means understand it, cause their thoughts are clouded by lies and myths that they take too seriously, and also because they are raised to fear Truth. And there are forces that they want to keep it that way, because if they become selfaware, they would start really living in Africa not in Saudi Arabia, and that dosen't appeal for Saudie's Minions, because the make alot of money out of these lies, by numbing people with fear from religion. So it's really important for people to know the truth, and make peace with it, so they can build for the future.

Akal, afgan, awal, The earth, Human beings, the language, that's what tamazight identity stands upon.and the lack of any of these 3 components means limitations in embracing fully this millenial identity.

5.2.5. Section one conclusive remarks

Although no comparative surveys were carried out before the revolution, the little research available on Tunisian *Tamazight* (Gabsi 2009, Hamza 2007) combined with the

interviews and Facebook data that will be used in this study, both show that attitudes were very much negative prior to 2011 including among speakers of the language. ‘Why are you researching our language? It is even ugly’ commented one of Gabsi’s research informants (2007). The shift in attitudes towards Tunisian *Tamazight* has been achieved largely due to the post-revolution leadership of various activists, individuals and associations, and to the growth of various cultural activities. However, the surge of Amazigh Facebook discourse, focused most of the time on constructing and reproducing language ideologies that both challenge and counteract erasure could arguably be viewed as the most effective mechanism in raising Tunisians’ awareness of the *Tamazight* element in their identity. Facebook discourse reflects a strong desire among Imazighen to maintain and revitalize *Tamazight*. Drawing on the framework of Irvine and Gal’s (2000) three semiotic processes, iconization, fractal recursivity and erasure, along with *tactics of intersubjectivity* model proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), the second section of this Chapter and Chapter 6 will be devoted to examining how these processes are challenged and reproduced to construct and re-construct Tunisian *Tamazight* language and identity.

5.3 Section Two: Facebook platform for indigenous identity display

The focus of this second section will be mainly on discussing Facebook indigenization as a discursive practice. According to Agha (2007), meaning is not communicated through spoken and written language only, but also through metapragmatic activities in which communicative signs are used to typify other perceivable signs (p. 16). This implies that metapragmatic practices are semiotic and linguistic acts illustrating the attributes of the language, its users, and activities accomplished through its use (Staeher 2015, p. 93). Such acts can be explicit and implicit depending on the context of use. The Chapter argues that Facebook indigenization and/or

*Amazighicizing*¹³ in this study and the performance of these meanings are achieved in many cases through *entextualization*, mobilized very often in the processes of *de-contextualization* and *re-contextualization*. Drawing on the work of many anthropologists such as Bauman & Briggs (1996), Silverstein & Urban (1996), and Blommaert (2005), Reyes & Wortham define *entextualization* as a discourse practice where signs accompanying a given speech event become stable, have established a context, and pre-supposedly trigger some kind of social action. Reyes and Wortham (2015) cite the example of the signs that accompany the term ‘dude’ studied by Kiesling (2004) such as those of ‘relaxed, carefree, and confident young male’ (p. 5). Leppänen et al. (2013) describe *entextualization* as a discourse practice that allows the re-use and recycling of language and textual materials of a given context as resources in meaning making. *Entextualization* highlights two processes: *de-contextualization*, by taking discourse material out of its context, and *re-contextualization* by taking discourse material out of its context- and a re-contextualizing it by integrating and modifying this material so that it fits in new context (Leppänen et al. 2013, Georgalou, 2017). Amazigh users of Facebook employ a range of contextualization cues and semiotic resources to highlight their indigeneity, and many of these resources are iconic by nature; that is, they are semiotic resources which iconically mime or reproduce speech (Staehr 2015).

5.3.1 Amazighicizing Facebook profiles

Following the Facebook pages of Tunisian Imazighen from 2016-2018, I quickly gathered the impression that the users are fixated at overly ‘*amazighicizing*’ their pages to be identified as Imazighen. To accomplish this goal effectively, they engage themselves in an exaggerated yet crucial task of performativity as indigenous Imazighen of Tunisia. They deploy

¹³ To render something or someone Amazigh

different modalities through the mediation of various semiotic resources along with re-contextualization of different social, cultural, and linguistic practices (van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999). A point of departure in this study focuses specifically on the semiotic combinations and organization of the profile pages, background, and personal pictures and what semiotic resources are deployed to project the work of self-indigenization. The figures below are examples of background and personal profile pictures from the Facebook pages of Firmus, Dihya, Aksil, Gildo, Yughurtha, and Massinissa.



Figure 5.12: Firmus_Linguistic_image 5
Firmus' profile background picture

In Firmus' profile picture (Figure 30), the Tunisian flag takes the shape of the *Tifinagh* grapheme Yaz ⵝ, usually pronounced as /z/. This letter originally presents the sign found in the middle of the Amazigh flag to symbolize human yearning for freedom, with his arms wide open and lifted skyward. Here, Firmus engages in an *entextualization* activity while adopting a *decontextualization* process. He uses a linguistic sign that indexes *Tamazight* identity and relocates it in a way that is now representing Tunisian identity as a whole. By relocating the Yaz sign from an Amazigh discourse to a Tunisian one, Firmus has allowed himself to change the initial meaning of Yaz and create a new one. In doing so, such an iconic detail gains significance not only from the place where it figures most, the Amazigh flag, but from its indexical and

discursive relationship to the Tunisian national flag. By re-contextualizing the semiotic meaning embedded in Yaz, Firmus has used three discursive processes: substitution, legitimation, and simplification (van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999). The original symbolic meanings of Yaz are now substituted, reformulated and re-narrated to fit into the discursive intention of Firmus, and that is to assert that all Tunisia is Amazigh. In doing so, Firmus gave himself “personal authority” (van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999) to take over the symbolic interpretations of the *Tifinagh* character and present them in a new way that simultaneously renders it a symbol of the entire nation. By limiting Tunisian identity to its Amazigh aspect through this multimodal reframing, in line with the indigenization objectives of Firmus, several other aspects and voices are subdued or silenced, such of those Tunisians who have Arab and Turkish or French ancestors. Linell (1998) argues that through the selection and re-embedding practices of re-contextualization... [communicators] have many opportunities to select, endorse, and/or re-perspectivize suitable parts and aspects, edit these parts in new ways and combinations, subdue or silence voices that have been heard earlier, or could have been heard at various stages.

The multi-modal discursive practices of Firmus found on his Facebook background profile are commonly noticeable among many other participants in this study. Dihya’s background profile shows the Amazigh flag superimposed on the map of Tunisia bordered by statues and busts depicting Amazigh historical figures, two old women imagined to be *Tamazight* for their tattoos, and the name of Tunisia in *Tamazight* -Tines-, written in Latin and *Tifinagh* orthography. Dihya not only claims her Tunisian Amazigh identity through her background profile, but also in her cover photo as seen of the left side of Figure 5.13 where the Amazigh flag covers the entire map.



Figure 5.13: Dihya_cultural_image16
Dihya’s background and personal profile pictures

In designing her background and personal profile picture Dihya performs the labor of indigenization that can also be understood within the rubric of re-contextualization. Dihya understands Tunisian identity as entirely Amazigh. In making this meaning, she takes up a multi-semiotic combination (Georgalou 2017) that encompasses both the verbal and the visual to edit and reframe Tunisian identity while enhancing its Amazigh component to the exclusion of other components. Dihya’s multilingual writing skills (Arabic, *Tifinagh*, and Latin scripts) and layering of images of Amazigh historical figures, the Amazigh flag, and signs in one multi-semiotically complex product constitute an essentialist perspective which views history, language, and ancestry as sufficient to attribute one unified indigenous identity. For Dihya the use of the *Tamazight* word for Tunisia “Tines” [tines] instead of “Tunis” [tunis] as it is pronounced in Arabic or *Ettounsi* indicates Tunisia’s connection to its Amazigh roots.

Dihya underscores the value of this word being etymologically derived from *Tamazight*¹⁴. She even uses this word as a name of her Facebook profiles. “*Tines*” has become a performative

¹⁴ While there is an agreement on the proto-Semitic origin of the word ‘Tunis’, The etymology of the word “Tunis” remains a controversy between many theories. Some work relates it to ‘Thanet’ which is the name of an isle in the easternmost of Kent. According to Green (2015), The usual explanation of this name is that it derives from one of two well-known Celtic roots, either *tan-, ‘fire’, or *tann-, ‘oak’, so that it would mean ‘fire island, place of fire’. However, the proposed etymology of a Celtic root seems to have many linguistic issues. As an alternative proposal,

term in the sense that it is not a mere name of a profile derived from *Tamazight*, but also a term that aims to bring a change in the Tunisians' perceptions of Amazigh heritage when they learn that the name of their country is originally Amazigh. “*Tines*” -in Dihya's profile- functions as an index of Amazigh linguistic and cultural heritage and a discourse that is designed to awaken Tunisians' awareness of their indigenous roots. As such, Dihya's personal indigenous linguistic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) are fundamental to the process of her self-identity construction as Amazigh and to the authentication process of her proclaimed identity. On the other hand, it functions as a way of celebrating *Tamazight* language and culture, and as means to experience the world.

The making of the indigenous meanings through the choice of the *Tamazight* variant “*Tines*” and celebration of this linguistic form is further elaborated in a meta-commentary by Aksil during my interview with him. As shown in the excerpt below, he explicitly entextualizes this understanding of the term “*Tines*” by relocating it in his discourse as a tool of sensing the real world around, raising awareness about the indigeneity of Tunisia and recovering Amazigh identity.

Theo Vennemann (2006) argues at length that an acceptable and plausible root for the original British form of the name Thanet—**Tanitā*, **Tanetā* or **Tanetos/īs* actually available in the Punic language via a name *Y TNT*, meaning the 'Isle (of) Tanit', the chief goddess of the great, ancient Phoenician mercantile power of Carthage. Based on Wikipedia (2018), Tanit was adopted by Amazigh people who also called it Tannou or Tangou. In modern-day Ettounsi, Tangou becomes part of a custom called *Ommek tannou* or *Omek Tangou* ('Mother Tannou' or 'Mother Tangou') to bring rain in years of drought. In many *Tamazight* varieties spoken in Libya, *Tines* or *Tinest* is the word for 'key'. This detail might provide additional support for Chapter 2 statement that Tunisian *Tamazight*, especially the one spoken in Zrawa village is closer to *Nafusa Mountain* in Libya from the varieties spoken in Morocco or elsewhere.

Excerpt 3: Aksil interview, June 6, 2016

تناس في الأمازيغية تعني المفتاح. تعرفش علاش تونس هي تناس في الأمازيغية
على خاطر كتشوف الخريطة تلقى تونس هي أول نقطة في الخريطة
إلي نحلوا بيها باقي خريطة إفريقيا كلها. شفت كفاش ؟

Tines in *Tamazight* means key. Do you know why Tunis is derived from the *Tamazight* Tines? It is because when you look at the map, you will notice that Tunisia is the first point to spot on the map. It sorts of opens the African map... (laughter in excitement) did you see that?! (Aksil interview, June 6, 2016).

In his statement, Aksil perceives a “natural “relationship between the shape of the Tunisian map- which resembles a key- and the etymology of the term ‘*tunis*’, which is *tines* in *Tamazight* ‘key’. His goal is to highlight an imaginary ‘unique’ property of *Tamazight* language. This is not an uncommon practice among the participants in this study. *Tamazight* is even imagined to be the ‘substratum’ of all natural languages. The post below from Gildo’s wall illustrates this idea.

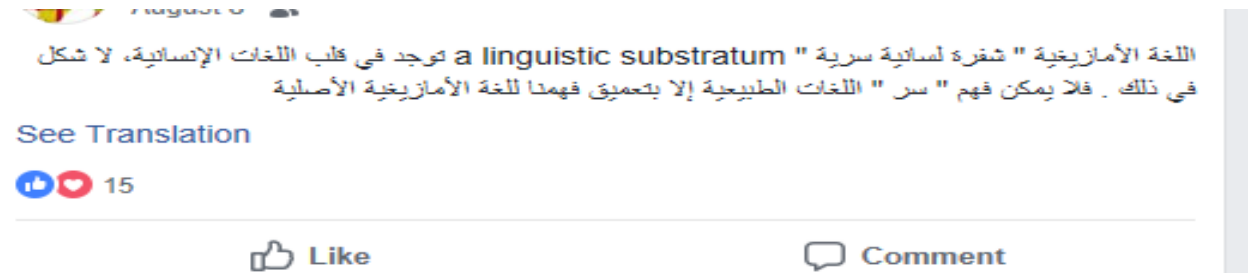


Figure 5.14: Gildo_Linguistic_sm21
Tamazight is a language substratum of all the natural languages

Tamazight language is a secret linguistic code called a Linguistic substratum that exists at the center of human languages. There is no doubt about that. In fact, it is impossible to comprehend the secret of the natural languages without a deep understanding of the proto-*Tamazight* system.

Gildo’s statement makes a good example of a language myths approach defined as ‘attitudes and beliefs...about the language of the community as well as other languages and language in general,’ even if they can correspond to objective reality or are true (Harris 1981,

Ferguson 1968). *Tamazight* linguistic myth of being the substratum of all languages is clearly established in face of the linguistic myths of “the superiority of Arabic” which is a well-known language attitude among Arabs. Ferguson (1968: 375) discusses three areas of language superiority which frame Arabic language attitudes: the aesthetic (Arabs’ belief that their poetry is the most beautiful), the linguistic (Arabs’ belief that their language has the vastest vocabulary), and the religious (Arabs’ belief that by being the language of Quran, there must be something unique about Arabic) (cf. Eisele 2003). Being familiar with all these types of attitudes towards Arabic, Gildo’s statement seems to be offered as a ‘counter-myth’. It could simply be viewed as a strategy to debunk Arabic superiority myth by establishing the mythical narrative of *Tamazight* being the foundation and/or the base of the world languages.



Figure 5.15: Aksil_Linguistic_image 5
Aksil’s Facebook background and personal profile pictures

Like Dihya, Aksil’s profile page is multi-semiotic complex display combining visual and linguistic signs to foreground, enhance, and affirm his indigenous Amazigh roots. His background picture features the Amazigh flag and his proper name written in both Latin and *Tifinagh* characters (Only the *Tifinagh* writing is kept visible in Figure 5.15 above). His profile picture depicts a more complex type of performativity. It includes his personal picture holding

the Amazigh flag, the *Tifinagh Yaz* character in red, the three stripes of the Amazigh flag, blue-green-yellow, and a sentence in *Tamazight* Roman script, '*Tamazight tella, tella*' meaning 'live long *Tamazight*'. Each of these modes is selected to carry specific information about Axil's identity. In other words, he is making knowledge about himself and he is making knowledge for others. Using *Tifinagh* tells us he knows that *Tamazight* has a writing system and that he can use it. The full *Tamazight* phrase suggests that he can also speak the language.

The repeated use of the three colors as a frame of his personal background picture, and in the flag he is holding, tells us that he knows the symbolism embedded in these colors and that he exclusively identifies himself with it. Looking at these modes as one *ensemble* (Kress 2011), at least two meanings are conveyed. First, these modes are viewed equally in their capacity to shape the meaning of Indigeneity (Kress 2011). Second, Aksil doesn't only proclaim himself an indigenous Amazigh, but also owns the linguistic and cultural capital to verify that. Aksil uses the linguistic and cultural capital as a means of distinction that helps enhance and foreground his *Amazigheity*. In his deliberately crafted indigenous and Amazigh profile, Aksil's repertoire of identity (Kroskrity 1999) excludes any link that does not assert a unified, pure, unadulterated Amazigh identity. Aksil's "*doing*" (DeFina 2014) of an essentialized Amazigh identity is not limited to his background and cover pictures, but extends to the self-information section that Facebook affords to present one's identity categories such as work place, school, place of residence, marital status...etc. (see Figure 5.16).



Figure 5.16: Axil_cultrual_st2
Axil's Facebook Intro

In this section, Aksil describes himself as an employee at a job or a company called 'Imazighen'. Like Firmus, he is involved in an *entextualization* activity, relocating the name of an ethnicity, mainly the plural form of it, to become a name of a job or place where he works. This might be interpreted in association to being a full time activist working for the indigenous rights of Imazighen. Similar practice is also illustrated in the introductory section of Yughurtha in Figure 5.17. To present his work identity, he describes himself as 'lieutenant colonel in the army of Massinissa'¹⁵.

¹⁵ The first king of Numida – an ancient Amazigh kingdom that existed from the 3rd to the 1st centuries BC

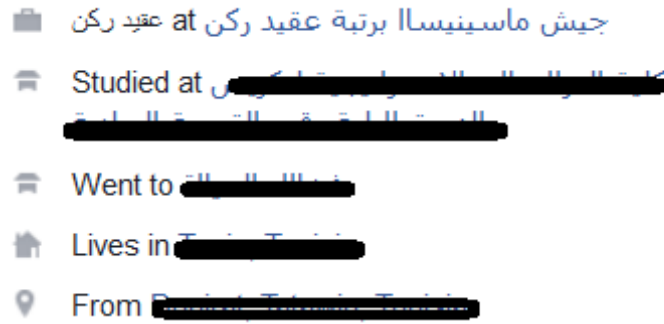


Figure 5.17: Yughurtha_historical_st3
Yughurtha's Facebook Intro

Yughurtha decontextualizes a lexical term used to describe army titles at the present and places it into an ancient Amazigh history context to characterize his work identity. This example shows how present day occupations are entextualized in the past to not only perform a community membership, but also to indigenize them by highlighting the very distant past they belong to. Through the process of *entextualization*, Yughurtha actively engages in the social management of decontextualizing and recontextualizing linguistic and discursive elements (Bauman & Briggs, 1990, p. 74). He also takes control over the use of linguistic resources and their intended meanings and ideologies (Bauman & Briggs, 1990, p.76). Yughurtha likes to focus his Facebook postings on history. In other words, he always tends to create associations between himself and /or Amazigh people and the past. By linking Amazigh identity to an ancient past, he puts forward the idea that Amazigh culture is primordial and thus has a greater claim to the land and to self-rule than other groups that came later such as the Arabs. This is an example of what Bucholtz and Hall (2005) call legitimation, the process through which the historical material imposes or affirms Amazigh identity. This can also be seen through the semiotic elements of his Facebook background picture (Figure 5.18).

The picture is an old photograph featuring a group of Amazigh men fighting cold weather while crossing desert mountains with heavily laden donkeys. The picture reflects what it seems to be a forced migration or displacement.



Figure 5.18: Yughurtha_historical_image 6
Yughurtha’s Facebook background picture

This discursive choice could be interpreted in two ways: first, it could be a challenge to the absence of Imazighen in history books and historical discourse (see Chapter 2). Second, by engaging in historicizing activities, Yughurtha is establishing assertions to authenticity and power (more discussion on this discursive practice through historical materials will follow in Chapter 6). Jenkins (2002) states that in discourse management, the past can be reshaped, discovered, rediscovered, remembered, forgotten and invented by virtue of temporal framing processes. To further accentuate his Amazigh identity, Yughurtha also uses *Tifinagh* to write his name, which is also the name of his page. The use of *Tifinagh* is part of a discursive pattern of Facebook micro-level activities that accounts for how almost all the participants in this study use this linguistic resource semiotically to index Indigeneity and authenticity. Another script that indexes *Tamazight* is found on Tunisian Imazighen Facebook pages is Roman. This can be seen clearly on Gildo’s background profile picture, another example of multi-semiotic product

consisting of *Tamazight* spelling of his name in Latin script, his name spelled in French (blurred for ethical reasons), and a contemporary photograph of the Amazigh village of Zrawa. His cover photo features him holding the Amazigh flag with a landscape of the same village. When I talked to Gildo during his interview in 2016, he claimed that he knows how to write *Tamazight* in *Tifinagh* very well. His claim was supported by almost all the interviewees in this study. They all referred me to him when I asked about who would know *Tifinagh* best among Tunisian Amazigh community. Gildo does not include *Tifinagh* on his Facebook profile page. Further data from his page where he writes in *Tifinagh* will be analyzed in Chapter 6. At this level of analysis, however, Gildo distinguishes himself from the rest of the participants by using Latin script rather than Arabic. Through this linguistic and semiotic resource, he characterizes himself as an original Amazigh. He presents himself not only as a fluent speaker of *Tamazight*, but also as someone who has mastered its pronunciation and sound system, using a Latin phonetic orthography to write it.



Figure 5.19: Gildo_cultural_image4
Gildo's Facebook profile pictures

Although the linguistic/semiotic cues that Gildo deploys could have been sufficient as performative tools of his *Amazigheity* and Indigeneity, uploading profile pictures with landscapes

in the background has specific resonance in terms of identity claims. They serve as a performative exercise of identity and belonging. Following Scollon and Scollon (2003), Georgalou (2017) suggests that our bodies give and give off their meanings because of where they are and what they do in place. In the same line of reasoning, Jaworski and Thurlow (2009a) argue that this type of photographic posing constitutes a kind of placement action which indicates and locates the self. In picturing, himself in the village of Zrawa one of the most conservative villages in terms of *Tamazight* language and culture, Gildo constructs himself not only as an Amazigh, but perhaps the most indigenous as anyone could be.

5.3.2 The letter *Yaz* : an iconic function in *Tamazight* language and identity

The creation and reconstruction of an Amazigh identity on Facebook is not just a matter of “being” but it is an ongoing “doing” (DeFina 2011) that requires cultural capital, very often the linguistic capital as well, and access to constitutive discursive elements of *Amazigheity*. Building on this argument, Hall (2000) views identity as a process (identification) rather than as an attribute or a series of attributes, and that focusing on the process allows for a consideration of the concrete ways in which people will assume identities, attribute to each other membership in various categories or resist such attributions. In other words, they point to ‘constructing identities’ as a kind of ongoing social and ‘discursive work’ (Zimmerman and Wieder, 1970). Therefore, in addition to background profiles, cover photos, or introduction sections, Tunisian Imazighen’s multimodal and discursive identity work continues persistently through the rest of Facebook’s affordances. For example, on the left side of the timeline profile layout, performances of *Amazigheity* continue through the display of a network with friends who also identify as Amazigh and the uploading of visual and textual postings with statements about

Amazigh matters. Figure 5.20 and 5.21 below are examples from Yuba's and Teziri's Facebook timeline profiles.

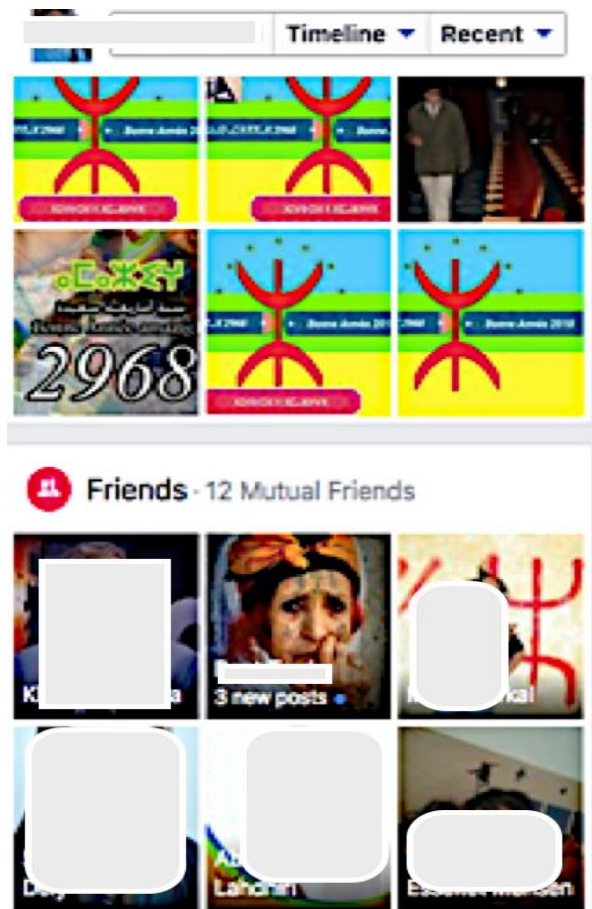


Figure 5.20: Yuba_Linguistic_image 7
Yuba's left-side timeline profile

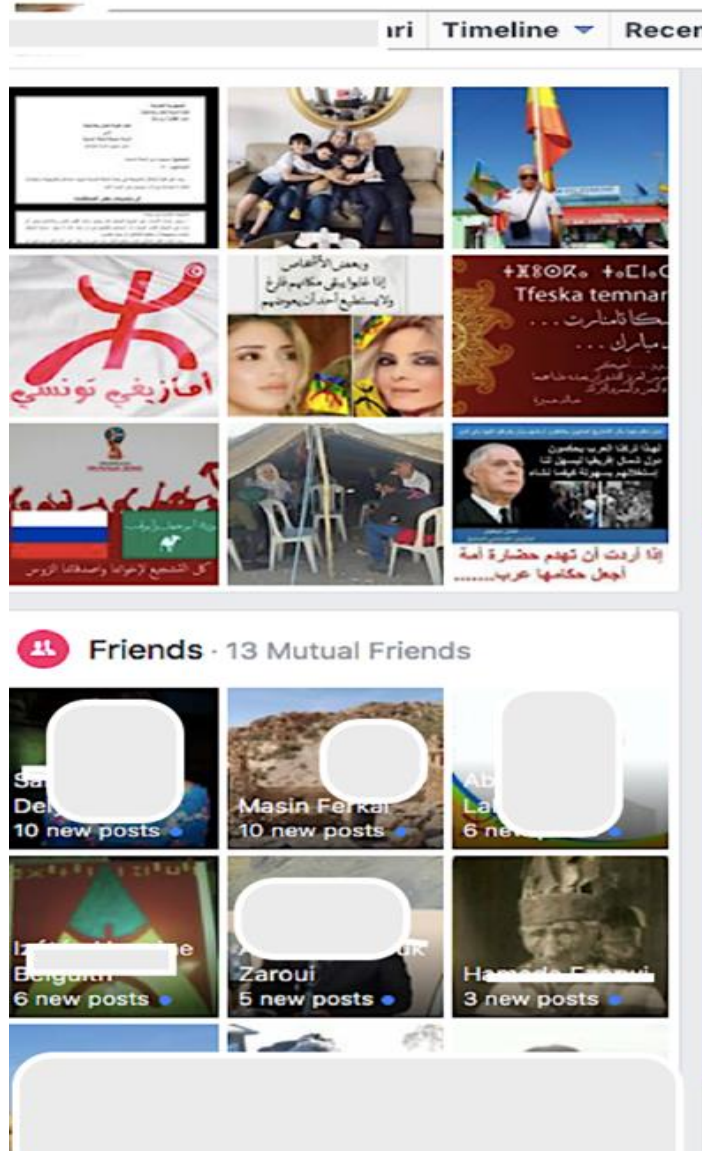


Figure 5.21: Teziri_Cultural_image8
Teziri’s left-side timeline profile

Teziri’s and Yuba’s profiles show numerous postings featuring the *Tifinagh* character *Yaz* or *Z*. Figure 5.20 and 5.21 show that *Yaz* functions as a signified semiotic device of the Amazigh identity through women’s tattoos, wall paintings, emblems, and logos. Several discursive values and meanings associated with being Amazigh are invested in this linguistic phenomenon, which over time, was believed to be an icon of nobility and freedom. As scholars such as Agha (2007, 2011) has argued “specific products may be as instrumental in articulating identity positions as

the linguistic components with which they co-occur”. Besides, and as discussed earlier, the *Tifinagh* character for *Yaz* is also interpreted as an embodiment of a man with open legs and arms symbolizing freedom and dignity or nobility. This speaks to “the role of the body in discursive construction of identity” discussed by Zimman and Hall (2009: p. 22). Hence, the linguistic feature *Yaz* is one of the components of a larger embodied semiotic system of identity negotiation in that it is combined with other material products. Eckert (2005, p. 24) calls this practice *bricolage*. With *bricolage* individuals can combine semiotic variables in unique configurations associated with various persona types (Davis 2013: 106). Drawing on the same research of Davis (2013) following Silverstein (2005), a major element of emblematic identity displays is in the wearing, holding, using, and showing a given identity quality.

It is important to realize that the key identity-relevant attributes of such cultural texts are not necessarily anything like represented “content” as such, but rather all the verbal and nonverbal signs that, displayed by and around the self, in effect wrap social personae, social spaces, moments in social-organizational time, even institutional forms, with “in-group” (versus “out-group,” of course) status. Such occasions of display are performative; in and by wearing, singing, saying, eating such-and-such, an identifying quality of person, place, event, etc. comes into being—here and now—in a framework of categorization that is now made relevant to whatever is going on or can go on. (Silverstein, 2003, p. 538)

This becomes clearer in Massinissa’s thread metalinguistic comments in Figure 5.22 below:



Figure 5.22: Massinissa_Linguistics_thread19
Massinissa's comment on Yaz letter

Commenter 1: Does it mean that Z is used excessively in *Tamazight*? May I seize this opportunity to ask you about the meaning of the word Yedder as well?

Massinissa: Good morning (in *Tamazight*), good morning (in Arabic), thank you for your interest. This shows well your strong attachment to your Tunisian *Tamazight* identity. The letter Z or YAZ in *Tamazight* is the core of the language because it represents the identity. It is the embodiment of a free man.

In this thread, Massinissa first posts a list of 15 *Tamazight* words containing the letter Z written in Roman script. To make emphasis on the importance of the *Yaz* grapheme, he employs typographical devices such as capitalization. Such a typography is used to express Massinissa's desire to call attention to or enregister this letter as iconic of the language. Capitalization in this context functions as Massinissa's voice-over, expressing his affective and emotional stance

towards the iconic function of *Yaz* in *Tamazight* language. This is better illustrated in the translation of the comments thread in Figure 5.22.

In his reply, Massinissa clearly articulates how *Yaz* has become mobilized as an icon that embodies the essence of Imazighen's free and noble character. Massinissa's linguistic and metalinguistic comment align with Irvine and Gal's (2000) model of the notions of *iconization* referring to 'linguistic phenomena, that are portrayed as if they flowed 'naturally' from a social group's biological or cultural essence. This is realized through 'the attribution of cause and immediate necessity to a connection [. . .] that may be only historical, contingent, or conventional' (Irvine and Gal 2000: 37). Through iconization, not only are different individuals *essentialized* as a more or less homogenous social group on the basis of allegedly shared linguistic features, but an apparently 'natural' opposition is also created between that social group and other groups that are not perceived to give evidence of the same (linguistic) characteristics (Milani 2016).

In this respect, Tunisian Imazighen's approach to their language and identity seem to be very close to the language ideological approach which argues that beliefs and assumptions about language are related to how the speakers perceive themselves. This belief system manifests itself through the discourses that create indexical links between: (1) perceived or presumed features, genres, styles or varieties of language and (2) broader images of their purported speakers in terms of nationality, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, aesthetics, morality and so forth (Woolard 1998). More analysis of Tunisian Imazighen's ideological work while bearing in mind the semiotic processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure as mechanisms and discursive strategies to reconstruct their language and identity will follow in Chapter 6.

5.3.3. Amazigh ethnic identity and Tunisian nationhood: Herderian relation

As Tamazight language becomes increasingly indexical, a Herderian ideology gets reinforced to a point where the language becomes the essence of Imazighen's national (or ethnic) identity. In this way, the best and highest use of Tamazight in the expression of an authentic national culture lies in recuperating the language as the only language indexing Tunisian ethnic and national identity while denying "the legitimacy of multiple voices and multiples languages in public discourse" (Bauman and Briggs, 2003, p.194). In figure 5.23, Aksil and one of his page followers assert sharply that Tunisian nationality is strongly dependent on its Amazigh ethnic identity. Aksil opts for a multimodal approach through which he orchestrates two modes of meaning: the visual and the textual. By placing his comment in a central position between Tunisian flag on top, a symbol of nationhood, and the Amazigh flag in the bottom, a symbol of ethnic belonging and primordiality, he engages himself in a process of naturalization of the link between his ethnic identity and national identity. Disagreement with such an ethnic conception and understanding of *La patrie* (Calhoun 1993) is deemed by both, Aksil and his follower, as treason of Tunisia and betrayal of the Amazigh ancestors. A true Tunisian is someone who dissociates himself from any foreign heritage, particularly the Arab one.



Figure 5.23: Aksil_cultural_comment3
 Aksil’s assertion of natural link between Amazigh Ethnicity and nationhood

Commenter: Tunisia is ethnically, territorially, and linguistically Amazigh

Aksil: I [generic form of the first personal pronoun] am Tunisian North African by homeland, Amazigh by identity and belonging, also geographically, historically, and culturally. He who says I am Arab by identity and belonging is unpatriotic first and a traitor of our ancestors second.

Commenter: True

Emphasis on the ethnic rather than the political criteria in the construction of the Tunisian nationhood is clearly articulated in figure 5.24. Takfirinas interprets ethnicity and nationalism as synonyms. This becomes clear when he calls Tunisia an *Amazigh nation*. In displaying Amazigh flag all over the Tunisian map, he seeks to show that Tunisia is essentially Amazigh not Arab, and is indigenously made rather than based on political criteria (Calhoun 1993:16).



Figure 5.24: Takfirinas_Ethnicity_st13
Tunisia is an Amazigh nation

Tunisia is a civic nation. It is also an Amazigh nation that belongs to North Africa. It is not Arab.

Since language plays a key role in ethnic (or “naturalizing”) versions of nationalism (Anderson 1991:196), and since *Tamazight* language is believed to be the mother tongue of all the members of the Tunisian nation and that is at least through the baby talk register (see Yuba’s post in figure 5.25 below), Takfirinas seems to take it for granted that the true existence of a Tunisian nation is prior to and separate from any particular set of political arrangements.

اليوم العالمي للغة الام .. اخص التونسية
ونبدو لحكاية اي تونسي وهو يبني "رضيع" نكلموه "بشيشي" اللحم "وحم" كول" ونني "nenni" ارقد" و
نانا "جدة" و... "اكثرية يعرفو مصدرها الكلمات والبعض يجهلها انها الامازيغية لصغار يعني من
الصغرة تونسي يتكلم الامازيغية ثم تبدا مرحلة التغريب والتعريب والتهجين "مناهج التعليم والاعلام
والخطاب السياسي و.."
مع ان الداخلة التونسية تضم عدد الالفاظ الامازيغية او تكب الحما .. وان التونسية بحما هذا هكذا

Figure 5.25: Yuba_Linguistics_st83
Tunisian baby-talk is Tamazight

The International Day of Mother Language...I am addressing Tunisians specifically. To start the story, we all know that if we want to talk to a Tunisian infant we go “*sheshi*” ‘sit’; “*ham*” ‘meat’; “*nenni*” ‘sleep’; “*nana*” ‘grandmother’. While many know the origin of these terms, others ignore that they belong to the *Tamazight* baby talk register. This implies that Tunisians speak *Tamazight* since childhood before Arabization, alienation, and domestication stages take place.

While Yuba oversimplifies the notion of mother tongue to an extent speaking a register of language-baby-talk in this case- would be enough to consider that language a mother tongue, Takfirinas asserts in Figure 5.26 that the entire lexicon of *Ettounsi* is highly influenced by *Tamazight*. Being the most shared language-*Ettounsi*-provides an ample evidence to argue for the existence of a natural link between *Amazigheity* as an ethnicity and Tunisian nationhood. According to Calhoun (1993), the language of nationalism is often the second language that unites the different peoples of a nation; or the elite language, shared among aristocrats and/or a bourgeois; or the language of a colonial power (p.17), Tunisian Imazighen; however, seem to view Arabic, the language of nationalism in Tunisia differently. For them, it is rather an invented or imagined tool of creating Tunisian nation-state. A true test of nationhood, however, requires that someone understands it as deeply rooted in *Amazigheity*.

أنت لا تعرف أنك تتحدث بلهجة أغلب مفرداتها الأمازيغية ، لكن ستكتشف أنك تتحدث بلهجة لا يفهمها العرب .
أنت لا تعرف أن نسبة العرق الفرنسي في تونس (05 %) أكثر من نسبة العرق العربي (04 %) ، لكن ستكتشف أن نسبة الأصول الأمازيغية (88 %) .
أنت لا تعرف أنك أمازيغي قح ، لكن ستكتشف أن عربيتك كذبة .
" تاكفيريناس "



Figure 5.26: Takfirinas_Linguistics_st14
Tamazight language is a test of nationhood

You don't know that you are speaking dialect which most of its lexicon is *Tamazight*. But you will discover that you are speaking a dialect that is unintelligible for Arabs.

You don't know that the percentage of the French ethnicity in Tunisia is 5%; it is even higher than the Arab one, which is 4%. But you will discover that the percentage of the Amazigh ethnicity is 88%.

You don't know that that you are purely Amazigh. But you will discover that your Arabhood is a lie.

The primordial relationship between “being Tunisian” and “being Amazigh” as shown in Aksil’s, Takfirinas’, and Yuba’s understanding of nationhood and ethnicity is clearly motivated by an ideology that seeks to represent Tunisian *Amazigh* as an intact and continuous identity. Understanding Tunisian nationhood as a continuity of the past, the historical, and the traditional offers an account of *Amazigh* as a living, uniform and homogenous identity. This aligns with Smith’s (1989) argument that “In order to survive *ethnie* must take on some of the attributes of nationhood, and adopt a civic model” (p.157).

This assumption in which a non-Amazigh is not a Tunisian and does not belong to Tunisia is further complicated by several other problematic linguistic assumptions: if you don’t identify as Amazigh, then you are ‘Arabized’ or a ‘/mustaʔrab/ Amazigh’ (to be discussed further in Chapter 6). The term /mustaʔrab/ is often used in derogatory contexts to refer to Tunisians who do not identify themselves as Imazighen due to lack of awareness or denial. They are perceived as inauthentic Tunisians even though they were born and raised in Tunisia. To illustrate, figure 5.27 shows a conversation between Takfirinas and his commenters in which he calls those who identify themselves Arabs based on their religious or linguistic criteria /mustaʔrabeen/. The use of this term unfolds at least two negative interpretations. First, it erases the existence of other ethnicities, particularly the Arabs, in an indirect assertion that Tunisia is essentially and homogeneously Amazigh only. Second, the term has a derogatory meaning, referring to those who dissociate themselves from the Amazigh identity to associate themselves to Arabic “imagined” or “fake” one. Thus, the usage of this label constitutes an instance of dissociative practice with an Amazigh identity practices. Dissociating oneself from Amazigh identity when being Tunisian is inexcusable for the Amazigh people. Accordingly, the differences between the terms *Arab* and *mustaʔrab* becomes part of a reflection of broader

macro-discourse on national identity. Tunisian Imazighen consider Tunisia, as previously discussed, an essential Amazigh nation, and they reinforce this understanding using various semiotic and discursive displays on the Facebook platform.

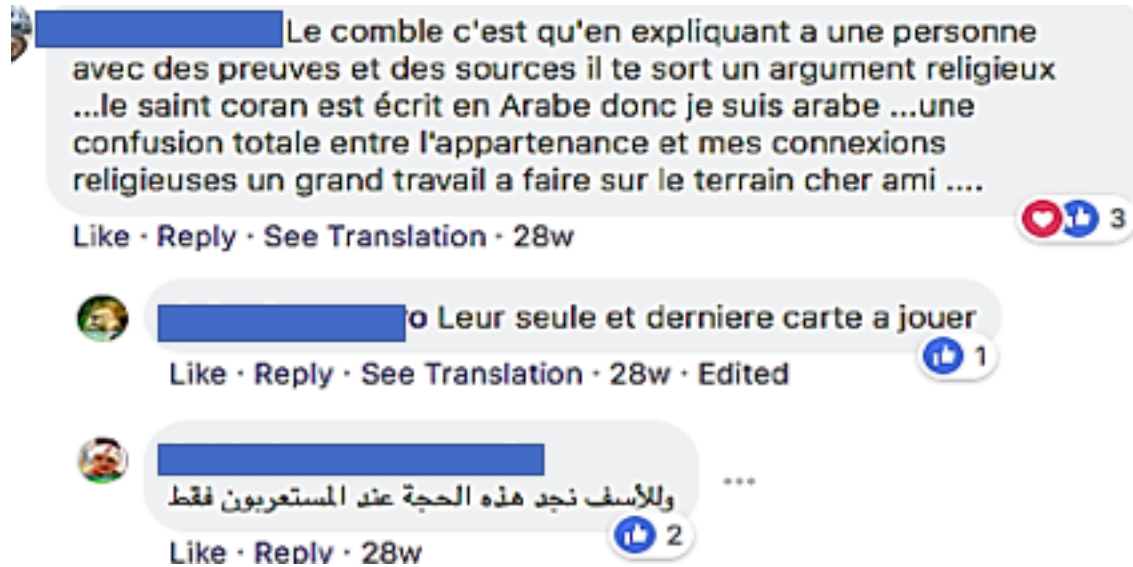


Figure 5.27: Takfirinas_Linguistics_thread56
They are *mustaʔrabeen* not Arabs

Commenter 1: the problem is that when we provide well referenced and proven explanations to someone, they use the religious argument. They would claim that the holy Quran is written in Arabic so they are Arabs. There a whole confusion between [ethnic] belonging and religious affiliations. There is still a lot of work to be done in the field my friend.

Commenter 2: That's [the religious affiliation] their last cart to play.

Takfirinas: Unfortunately, we find this kind of argument only made by the *mustaʔrabeen* [the Arabized].

These examples illustrate how Tunisian Imazighen on Facebook persistently reproduce an essentialist 'ethno-nationalistic' ideology based on the assumption that language, ethnicity and nationality have a fixed one-to-one correspondence, which will extend in later analysis to establish a mother-tongue ideology by arguing that speaking *Ettounsi* - perceived by most

Tunisian Imazighen to be a language that overlaps with *Tamazight* to a great degree - indexes Amazigh identity (Phyak 2015). Hence, ‘speaking *Ettounsi*’ corresponds to ‘being Amazigh’. These assumptions are instrumental in iconizing the ethnicity and *Ettounsi* as the natural outcome of being Amazigh. In such a discourse, it is easy to see how other ethnicities and languages that have contributed to *Ettounsi* are erased. A detailed examination of these discursive reproduction and reconfiguration of what constitutes a *Tamazight* language and identity will follow in the next chapter.

5.3.4. Section two conclusive remarks

In this chapter, I approached Facebook as key tool for enabling a positive attitudinal change towards Tunisian Tamazight language and identity which could play an important role in reversing language shift. Comparing the findings of the online survey with previous work (Gabsi 2011) suggests that there seems to be greater awareness and acceptability of Tamazight as a principle constituent of the Tunisian identity than there was prior to the revolution. The shift of attitudes could ease the task of revitalizing the language and achieving more social and institutional recognition of Tamazight. I claim that this shift of attitudes has been achieved largely due to the efforts of several Tunisian Imazighen through their intensive Facebook activities since the 2011 revolution. For many Amazigh Facebook users, this site has become a key-self representational tool to combat the hegemonic assumption that Imazighen no longer exist, to communicate their presence and assert their identities. In doing so, they simultaneously adopt a counter-erasure ideology where semiotic processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure are enacted discursively.

In the second section of this chapter, I discussed how Amazigh engage in intensive discursive practices of identity construction and reconstruction starting from the standard

features of their Facebook profiles, such as the background profile pictures, cover photos, the page name and the left menu where friends are listed, networking, and other demographic information are situated. The focus was on performativity of Indigeneity and Amzigheity in which processes of *entextualization* (de-contextualization and re-contextualization) play a key role. Considering that the semiotic setting of these Facebook features is essentially multimodal, the analysis looked at both linguistic, metalinguistic, and other semiotic means by drawing on Tunisian Amazigh activists' reinterpretations of features, texts and discourses which originate from different contexts. The section revealed how the semiotic resources are essential for the performativity and meaning-making of Amazigheity and Indigeneity. It also demonstrated how building connectedness and associations or boundaries and inequalities are enacted through the multimodal products displayed through Facebook profile page features.

More specifically, Facebook users at this point of the study are able to characterize themselves as Imazighen showing what connects them to this identity (authentication) and what verifies the claimed connection (legitimation). They claim an Amazigh 'identity' via performative usage of particular linguistic and visual resources, histories and ideologies. At the same time, Tunisian Imazighen subscribe to the ideological construction of 'identity uniformity and homogeneity' in many occasions throughout the analysis. By invoking a fixed and essentialist (Herderian) relationship between Amazigh ethnicity, Tamazight, and Tunisian nationality, they are not only constructing ideological boundaries around Tunisian Amazigh identity, but also excluding, distancing, or even silencing other identities that also fit within those boundaries. In either erasing ways, entextualization through de-contextualization and re-contextualization processes of particular linguistic signs are shown to be helpful discursive tools for the participants.

Following the original argument by Bauman and Briggs (1990, p. 76), Tunisian Amazigh Facebook users present themselves as active agents for whom *entextualization* is an ‘act of control’ through which they can claim a degree of social power. This power manifests in various ways: in their access to the activity of *entextualization*, in the legitimacy of their claims to reinterpret the texts, in their ability to perform the interpretation, and in the differential values attached to various types of texts.

In addition to meaning-making of Amazigheity and Indigeneity through the discourse practices of decontextualizing and recontextualizing Amazigh linguistic and cultural materials, it was demonstrated that there are tendencies to ascribe everyone in the entire country of Tunisia the Amazigh identity. It is in this respect that Irvine and Gal’s (2000) notions of iconization and erasure offer us useful conceptual tools with which we can tease out the ideological underpinnings of this connection. They are building an argument that rests on a complex set of assumptions, of which the most central is that ‘being Tunisian’ essentially means ‘being Amazigh’.

Chapter Six

MULTI-LINGUALISM AND SCRIPT CHOICES



Like · Reply · See Translation · 1d

Tamazight first [‘Arabic’ is the crossed-out term]

6.1 Introduction

Language revitalization projects put much of their emphasis on creating resources to teach endangered languages with the hope of increasing the number of speakers. While these endeavors are vitally important to bring an endangered language back to life, they remain insufficient. Kroskrity (2000) argues that contesting language ideologies and practices that force language shift are equally important as focusing on increasing the number of its proficient speakers. This perspective is gaining more ground with the increasing rise and use of technology and social media among endangered language speakers and indigenous communities. Recent studies of indigenous languages on Facebook have shown that this virtual platform has turned into a battleground where several language norms and language ideologies are put forth and contested (Carlson 2013, Lafkioui 2013, Phyak 2015, Prett 2017). These studies unite around glorifying Facebook’s contribution to cultural, ethnic, and linguistic plurality. Nonetheless, Facebook’s diversity and hybridization cannot obscure a salient re-emergence of contrary tendencies “stressing uniformity, stability, and homogeneity” (Blommaert 2009, Phyak 20015).

These norms and ideologies are traditionally reinforced by the nation-state. Moreover, individuals who have some historical, cultural, or ethnic claim to an endangered language or have the ability to speak it are also reproducing the same nationalist norms and ideologies in their Facebook discourse. This relates to the current view of identity as a dynamic construct that incorporates notions of performativity, positioning, discourse, and negotiation (Norton, 2000).

According to Block (2007), identities can be thought of as “socially constructed, self-conscious, ongoing narratives that individuals perform, interpret, and project (p. 27).” He goes on to write that “identities are about negotiating new subject positions at the crossroads of the past, present and future” (p. 27). This concept of identity as fluid and constructed is basically what triggers research on the online writing practices of multilinguals (e.g. Androutsopoulos, 2013; Chen, 2013; DePew & Miller-Cochran, 2010; Saxena, 2011; Sharma, 2012; You, 2011). According to Schreiber (2015), digital literacy practices involving high levels of code-mixing, invented spellings and transliterations and other forms of linguistic creativity, express new, often hybrid identities. Online spaces, such as Facebook, provide space for the interactants to appropriate or reimagine codes of a given language that best expresses their identity formation and alignment.

Tunisian Amazigh on Facebook represents an example of a digital arena where language ideologies are contested and reproduced in a discourse that simultaneously deconstructs and constructs ideologies of homogeneity, hierarchies, and uniformity. Language choice on Facebook, shows that Tunisian *Tamazight* is also constrained by nascent ideological tendencies and intentions that limit individuals from using all of the multilingual resources (*Tamazight*, *Ettounsi*, MSA, and French) at their disposal (cf. Blommaert 2009; Varis and Wang 2011). By focusing on the context of an Amazigh indigenous identity that attempts to redefine the

traditional meaning of “indigeneity”, a point discussed briefly in the previous chapter, along with the sociopolitical changes that aided the resurgence of Amazigh identity in public discourse, this chapter will continue to examine the Facebook discursive practices that Tunisian Imazighen deploy as they are shaping and reshaping their *Amazigheity*. More attention will be paid to how they negotiate questions, such as: Who counts as Amazigh? How membership in Amazigh group identity is constructed and reconstructed? How a re-emerging Amazigh identity is used to redefine Tunisian identity? What counts as *Tamazight* language? What counts as *Ettounsi* language? How do multilingualism and multi-orthography express the diverse aspects of Amazigh ideological identity? And how do they position their *Amazigheity* in relation to other identities they encounter in the context of Tunisia?

To this end, the present chapter examines the language and semiotic processes that Tunisian Amazigh participants use on Facebook. The chapter begins by addressing the question of erasure that Tunisian Imazighen have been subject to. I am particularly interested in examining how the participants represent themselves as subjects of erasure and how they respond to the institutional and social agencies that reinforced it. I will also show how they articulate and argue their reappearance vis-à-vis a public discourse that problematizes their nascent visibility and claims of authenticity.

In the second part of the chapter, I analyze how Tunisian Imazighen establish and index their Tunisian *Amazigheity* as they are drawing from existing and pre-existing semiotic and linguistic resources. In doing so, Tunisian Imazighen are no more *subject to* but *subject of* the discourse (Davis 2013). This implies that they are in control of relocating reframing, appropriating and reconfiguring the semiotic recourses and linguistic forms available for them to reconstruct a Tunisian Amazigh identity while, simultaneously reproducing language ideologies

through processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure. Recall that iconization involves “linguistic features that index social groups or activities appear to be iconic representations of them, as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group’s inherent nature or essence” (Irvine and Gal 2000, 37). Fractal recursivity refers to the tendency of ideological features that differentiate among social groups or establish social hierarchies to be deployed at multiple levels or scales. Thus, the same features that distinguish between one group and another can also be used to discriminate within groups and subgroups recursively (Leeman 2014). Finally, erasure is the process whereby information that is inconsistent with an ideological representation is rendered invisible or explained away (Irvine and Gall 2000, p. 38).

Multimodality (the mix of text and other semiotic signs (e.g. emoticons, pictures, videos, etc.), *entextualization* (based on identification and analysis of the paths through which textual material has traveled to be appropriated and reused as source of meaning making (Bauman and Briggs 1990: 73)), and intertextuality (as an act that consists of using language and linguistic forms that belong to a network of texts (discourse, images, etc.), past and future, in order to communicate meaning by complex relationships to those texts (West 2015) are crucial parts of the construction of identity on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook. Following Bolander & Locher, (2010), Facebook users represent themselves implicitly and explicitly by selecting images and text for their homepages and by sharing links to articles, images, and videos on other sites. While doing so, they rhetorically engage in re-contextualizing others’ words and ideas into a more personal frame, as users. Drawing on Bolander’s and Locher’s work in addition to that of Briggs and Bauman (1992), and Silverstein and Urban (1996), this chapter finds multimodality, *entextualization*, and intertextuality relevant to the analysis of how linguistic and semiotic forms

become discursively and meaningfully deployed for Tunisian Amazigh identity construction in Facebook.

Regarding identity alignment, Bucholtz and Hall (2007) argue that identity is a social category that needs to be understood as an interactional achievement during which speakers of a certain language differentiate themselves from and equate themselves with social groups or identities. This is accomplished through what they call *interpersonal tactics* of identity. For Bucholtz and Hall (2007), practices and processes of differentiation and alignment can be accomplished through three pairs of identity relations: *resemblances and distinctions*, *authentication and denaturalization*, and *authorization and illegitimation*. This perspective is relevant to the analysis of the context of Tunisian Imazighen as being in the process of identifying who they are by defining and redefining their association or dissociation with other identities. The contradiction that each of these pairs holds is essential to understand how ideological processes such iconization and erasure are negotiated and executed during the creation of Tunisian Amazigh linguistic and ethnic identity traits and boundaries (Kroskrity 2014). On Facebook, it is the semiotic constructions and processes of indexing or eluding differentiation or alignment which seem most fruitful for investigation.

6.2. Section one: Tamazight language and identity erasure

In response to the language shift that Tunisian *Tamazight* has experienced, Amazigh community members have devoted a huge part of their Facebook discourse to increasing linguistic awareness of the language ideologies that pushed their language and identity to a status of endangerment. In this section, I argue that Imazighen's awareness of the language ideologies that suppressed their language and identity has a prominent impact on the efforts to reverse language shift. Following Kroskrity (1998, 2000), speakers' awareness of language ideologies

can be deliberate, taking place at the level of discursive practices (“discursive consciousness”), or unexpressed, making part of the structural or practical knowledge (“practical consciousness”). In this section, I will consider the metadiscursive and metalinguistic reflections of Tunisian Imazighen on the Arabization ideology that alienates and erases their language and identity as a form of practical consciousness.

6.2.1. Exposing Tamazight erasure discursively

The first meta-comment on erasure in this study comes from Takfirinas, a forty-nine-year-old Amazigh activist who started learning *Tamazight* after the 2010-2011 Revolution. In Figure 6.1, Takfirinas announces that he will be collaborating with another Amazigh woman in producing a Facebook series under the title “*disclosing history, civilization, and ethnicity deceivers*”. In the announcement, he only includes an excerpt from “*Identity in Tunisia in the New Era*”, a book by *Jalloul Jribi* published in 1992. The writer in this excerpt takes a strong homogenizing ideological Herderian stance, depicting Tunisia and the Maghreb as essentially Arabic, linguistically, ethnically, and historically.

سلسلة بعنوان : فتح مزوري التاريخ و الحضارة و الأساب
سنة 1992 صدر كتاب بعنوان : (الهوية في تونس العهد الجديد)
للأستاذ جلول الجريبي " مدير المعهد الأعلى لأصول الدين و عضو المجلس الإسلامي الأعلى بتونس " في
عهد بن علي، أكتضب لكم منه ما يلي :

قد مثلت بلدان المغرب العربي و لا تزال وحدة طينية متماسكة و رقعة جغرافية متشابهة الخصائص و
المناخ و وحدة تاريخية في بناء الحضارات و مقاومة الأعداء و وحدة ثقافية متجانسة في بناء الفكر و تأسيس
المنهج، فهذه البلدان متصلة ببعضها، تقع في جزء واحد و في قارة واحدة، و سكانها ينتمون الى جنس واحد
هو الجنس العربي، و يتبنون دين واحد هو الدين الاسلامي و يتكلمون لغة واحدة هي اللغة العربية... فلا
عرو اذا قلنا انه لا يوجد شعب يمثل هذه العوامل للوحدة مجتمعة مما يمكن هذا الجاح للامة العربية من
مصارعة المحتلين و الوقوف في وجوه المميزين الذين تكلموا على ارضه....

- يا سيّد جلول ، كيفاش يكون مغرب عربي و أصول شعبه أمازيغ؟
- يا سيّد جلول كيفاش يمثلوا وحدة طينية متماسكة و أنهم و أمثالكم من أكد رسم الحدود و إنفصال هذه الدول
و الشعوب؟
- يا سيّد جلول عن أي حضارات تتحدّث و قد ربطت تاريخ هذا المغرب الكبير " أكثر من 40 ألف سنة قبل
الميلاد " بتاريخ العرب الذي ولد منذ بضع سنوات " 1500 سنة "؟
- يا سيّد جلول كيفاش يكون جنسنا عربي ، و دمانا و ثقافتنا ، عاداتنا و تقاليدنا ، مأكلاتنا و ملابسنا ، نحن و
العرب مختلفين و لا يوجد بينهم وجه شبه؟
- يا سيّد جلول ، عن أيّ نجاح للامة العربية تتحدّث و هي عاركة للكنكوش في الخرا؟
- يا سيّد جلول ، ربّي يهديك

Figure 6.1: Takfirinas_Linguistic_It3
Takfirinas sarcastic response to a pan-Arabist approach

Takfirinas and [name of the other person] **** present to you:
A series for disclosing the falsifiers of history, civilization and ethnicity
A book entitled “Identity in the Era of Tunisia” was published in 1992 by Professor Jalloul Jribi, the director of the High Institute of Religion and a Member of the High Islamic Council of Tunisia during the former president era. Hereby is an excerpt:
“Countries in the Arab Maghreb have always had one natural unity and a geographical territory that shares similar characteristics and climate. Also, they have been historically united in founding a civilization and facing the enemies; and culturally similar in building thoughts and approaches. In fact, these countries are related to each other. They belong to one region of the same continent. Their inhabitants belong to one ethnicity, and that is the Arabic ethnicity. They believe in one religion, and that is Islam; and they speak one language, and that is Arabic. Thus, it would be safe to argue that there are no other people who own all these aspects of unity combined. [This is] the reason why the Arabic community has been successful in defeating the invaders and confronting change-makers over the time.”

- Mr. Jelloul, how come you speak about an Arabic Maghreb when its roots are Amazigh?!
- Mr. Jelloul, why is it that they [Magreb countries] represent a connected and natural unity when you [in reference to pan-Arabist] are the ones who insisted on drawing boundaries to divide the nations and the people?!

- Mr. Jelloul, what civilizations are you talking about when you limited the “Grand Maghreb” history of forty thousand years BCE to the Arabs’ history of ‘SOME’ recent fifteen hundred years?!
- Mr. Jelloul, how come we are Arabs when our blood, culture, traditions, rituals, food, clothes are very different from those of the Arabs with no single similarity?
- Mr. Jelloul, what success are you talking about with regard to the Arab nation when it is **sinking in dirt all the way up to the neck** [Tunisian idiom]?
- Mr. Jelloul, **may God show you the right path** [religious idiomatic expression]

In this posting, Takfirinas creates a text in which the content is modified in way that is geared towards producing a new interpretation that fits his discursive intentions. Tannen (2013) refers to this form of communication as *metamessaging* as it doesn’t state what the writer or the speaker wants to say or do directly (Tannen 2013). While the source text might be recognized by some readers of this Facebook posting as appreciative of the Arabization ideology of North Africa, Takfirinas has decontextualized and embedded it in a new context, in which it has acquired a quite opposite interpretation from the original one. The original text is now used not to spread the Arabization ideology, but rather to condemn it. Following Leppänen (2008), it is an example of entextualization -- when the source text is integrated within the new text, changing it into a novel form. This process triggers new interpretations of the source text (cf. Reyes 2011).

The posting displays a heterogeneous mélange of semiotic features. The announcement/title that Takfirinas makes on top of this posting simulates the title of a TV, radio, or other form of media. In the same vein, he uses more than one linguistic mode to form his rhetorical questions as he mixes Modern Standard Arabic and *Ettounsi*. The question word for *How come (Kifesh/)*, for example, is repeatedly used in *Ettounsi*. The idiomatic phrase in addition to the religious one in the fifth and sixth question are also stated in *Ettounsi*. Through the manipulation of an interplay of figurative linguistic devices, such as rhetorical questions, idiomatic expressions, religious phrases, Takfirinas’s goal is frame the content of the source text

in a sarcastic way. Colston (2007) defines sarcasm as underlying negative meaning that varies in intensity, and usually achieved through devices such as hyperbole, rhetorical questions, and understatement. The opposite idea or critic is quite obvious in Takfirinas' posting as he uses sarcasm as the primary discursive and persuasive strategy to condemn and 'counter' the pseudo-homogenous Arabic identity that the author of the entextualized/source text advocates. In doing so, Takfirinas discloses how the nation state discriminates by erasing other identities in Tunisia, principally the *Tamazight* one. Sarcasm continues to be chosen as a linguistic device to disclose and counter erasure by other participants such as Dihya in Figure 6.2 and Yughurtha in Figure 6.3. Each of the posts invokes examples of misinformation about Amazigh outfits and place names as part of their erasure processes imposed on their Amazigh origin.



Figure 6.2: Dihya_Linguistic_It16
Dihya' sarcasm

Nothing has changed for long centuries. We used and we continue to ascribe our culture, civilization, and cultural properties to colonizers and invaders (Phoenician, Roman, Vandal, Arabs, Arabians [another adjective for Arabic, it is often used with a derogatory meaning], French, Ottoman...etc.)

Things are apparently genetic in us

Hereby is a paragraph from a book entitled *Ifrikya* and as we have said many times, the word *ifrikya* and African means Amazigh/Berber historically, principally the ones from Tunisia; in the aftermath, the term has encompassed all the people in the African continent

“Unfortunately, it seems Tertullien was right when he pointed out the weak collective memory of the Africans in his critique in the second century CE. He criticized them [the Africans referring specifically to the Amazigh people] for being proud of wearing the Roman Abaya while ignoring the fact that it was one of their own crafts/products. It seems the later generations had inherited a short memory from them. In fact, many of them continue to forget that current Tunisian cultural heritage, which is so diverse culturally and which is capable of interacting with and open to other cultures owes all these qualities to the indigenous people who have always been marginalized and their role in making their land’s history and who role in building its civilization has been always erased.”

Following Weingartner & Klin (2009) and Klin & Drumm (2010), Dihya sarcastically comments “*things appear to be genetic,*” introducing ambiguity into her discourse by creating possible alternative interpretations for listeners. However, depending solely on sarcasm as a linguistic device to express her intention would not have solved the ambiguity without having previous knowledge of the history of assimilation of Amazigh people. Dihya’s followers or readers of this post may not have access to the meaning embedded in the comment. Unlike a person-to-person conversation where speakers have prosodic and paralinguistic tools to add important information to help interlocutors interpret their messages in online writing, and Facebook in particular, doesn’t provide these affordances. Thus, adding a literal statement has the same effect as sarcasm. In doing so, the excerpt from the book helps to resolve the ambiguity by illustrating how the erasure of *Tamazight* language and identity occurred due to negative attitudes of its own speakers or people.

Figure 6.3 from Yughurtha's wall shows a photograph of a road sign referring to the name of a region that's called *Shatt Zenata* 'Zenata Beach'. In the photo, there are two signs indicating the road to Zenata Beach in Arabic above and French (*Plage Zenata*) below. On Yughurtha's wall, the image is preceded by a short comment by Yughurtha that says '*here are the beaches of the (Zenata) people*'. This is a very sarcastic post, however, someone who does not have enough context about it, who doesn't know Yughurtha, or does not know that Zenata refers to a name of an Amazigh tribe, may not be able to detect any sarcasm. And yet, what's more important is the work of entextualization. He appropriates and modifies visual materials (from road signs), the name of a known tribe, and a term from classical Arabic *qawm* [in the comment above the picture] 'community, people, folks' to make up a sarcastic statement ('here is the beach of the [Zenata] people').

The visual materials are of particular interest in this posting. Although the sign has a specific meaning and function - that of giving directions - it acquires a new meaning as an image in the context of Facebook by being transformed into a sarcastic statement. What Yughurtha is trying to refute indirectly is the juxtaposition of the word 'beach' with the tribe of Zenata who had no connection to modern day beach activities. The sign gives direction of a regional area that is called 'Zenata beach'. According to Yughurtha, finding signs as such indexes widespread ignorance of an important part of Amazigh tribal history, such as the fact that the famous tribe of Zenata did not have interest in sea activities. The sign might also be done deliberately as a strategy of falsifying the historical and cultural characteristics of Amazigh people. Yughurtha chose sarcasm to unveil another example of Amazigh erasure: being identified with something they are not - people who spend leisure time at the beach.

Subsequently, two of the metadiscursive comments on Yughurtha's posting in Figure 6.4 confirm that the Amazigh tribe of Zenata had no interests in sea or beach activities. Yughurtha's comment above the sign implies that either ignorance of Amazigh history and/or deliberate intentions to misrepresent and falsify the cultural, historical and linguistics properties of Amazigh identity are examples of the erasure strategy that has aimed at pushing Imazighen into a full assimilation to Arabic. Yughurtha chose sarcasm as a mode for delivering this message and disclosing the causes of erasure because following Peter (2013, p. 10), "it serves the discourse function with the best return of effort for the current context."



Figure 6.3: Yughurtha_historical_image 23
Yughurtha's sarcasm



Figure 6.4: Yughurtha_historical_thread 19
Zenata beach discussion

Comment1: Earth is no longer the same. It is replaced with a different earth...Zenata did not have any interest in the sea.

Comment 2: Most of the *Zenata*¹⁶ were nomadic Bedouins. This is not to say that there were some of them who were more stationary. They worked in desert trading. They probably crossed the sea when they spread to Andalusia. I specifically mean the *Braziles*. What is more appealing to me is the name *Zenata* as it refers us back to the *Fatimiites* who moved to Egypt and they probably took with them some of their Zenata supporters.

¹⁶ The Zenata are one of the main divisions of the medieval Berbers, along with Senhaja and Masmuda. They were traditionally nomads. The Zenata tribes entered Morocco from Tunisia in pre-Islamic times and grouped themselves with the tribes of Maghrawa, Miknasa and Banu Ifran. Some of these tribes surrendered quickly to the Muslims in the 7th century, while others, like the Jarawa under al-Kahina, put up a successful resistance for a long time. In the 8th century most of the Zenata were Kharijites and took part in the Maysara revolt against Umayyad rule. The last Kharijite rebellion was in the 10th century under Abu Yazid, and was defeated by the Fatimids. During the 10th century the Zenata were predominantly allied with the Caliphate of Cordoba, which fought for control of Morocco with the Fatimids. In the process the Zenata were pushed out of Morocco by the Sanhaja tribe, allies of the Fatimids. However, in the 13th century the Zenata regained political importance with the Abdalwadids in western Algeria and the Marinids in Morocco. Finally they held sway over Morocco under the Wattasids in the 15th century. They claimed an Arab (South Arabian) origin, for what most historians regard as political reasons, but this claim is not widely accepted. Their varieties of Tamazight languages, collectively termed Zenati, are spread over a wide area; for this reason, several languages are termed "Zenati" or in some cases are spoken by people who call themselves Zenata (based on Wikimazigh).

Another example of highlighting erasure on Facebook discourse is from Yuba's page. Figure 6.5 involves metaphor, rhetorical question, religious register and sarcasm. The post was published to comment on the political conflict between Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Yuba sarcastically implies that Amazigh activists and *Tamazight* should be held accountable for this conflict since it has always been depicted as divisive and a threat to the national unity. The post contains a mixture of figurative language to convey sarcasm vis-a-vis nation-state ideologies which view *Tamazight* as a threat to linguistic and national unity in Tunisia.

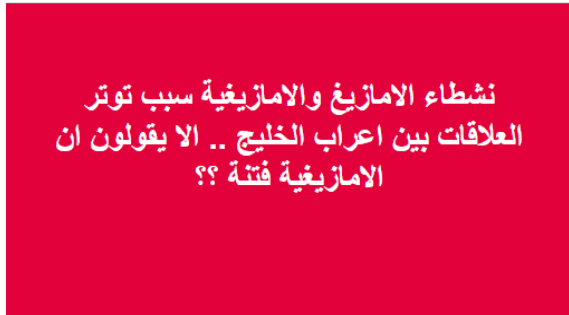


Figure 6.5: Yuba_social_st25

Yuba's sarcasm

Amazigh and Tamazight activists are the cause of the clash between the Arabs of the Gulf...didn't they say Tamazight is Fitnah [a religious concept for disorder and unrest]?"

In this post, we can see how the ideological discourse associating *Tamazight* with notions of divisiveness and dissention (Sadiqi 2017:147) is repositioned and re-used as sarcastic context on Facebook. Following Grice (1989), metaphor and sarcasm in this post impose on the reader two stages of interpretations. At first, it aids in recognizing “a categorical falsity” as metaphorical. This appears in linking *Tamazight* to *fitnah* (disorder, unrest), and secondly, by highlighting this meaning as contradictory with the one that the speaker/writer holds, namely that *Tamazight* has never been a trigger of disorder or disruptiveness in the way pan-Arabists and Arabization ideologies attempt to depict it (p. 34).

Throughout the analysis of the examples above, Tunisian Imazighen present themselves as not only aware of the erasure ideologies that have been imposed on their language and identity, but also of the discursive alienating practices that reinforce the work of erasure. This is expressed through a number of metadiscursive posts and comments, but mainly through the figurative language of sarcasm and irony. At this point, excerpts from pan-Arabist oriented books, idiomatic phrases, religious terminologies, signage, and shared political and ideological knowledge are entextualized into a collective target of sarcasm used to unveil the erasure discourse in the following sites: the ‘one language one nation ideology’, speakers’ negative attitudes towards their mother tongue (internalized hegemonic language attitudes), misrepresenting aspects of Amazigh cultural, and depiction of *Tamazight* as threat to the national unity, a cause of disorder and divisiveness, and symbol of backwardness.

6.3. Section two: Counter-erasure in counteracting erasure

A considerable part of Tunisian *Tamazight* identity construction and re-construction work on Facebook is achieved through negotiation and performance of linguistic resources through multilingualism and multiple-orthographies and scripts. Since all of these resources are characteristics of Tunisian Amazigh Facebook, the analysis will focus on language and script choice as discursive strategies for signaling alignment or dis-alignment. As such the analysis will draw on the tactics of *intersubjectivity* (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004) in which individuals do not project a single unitary identity, but express diverse aspects of their identities depending on how they position themselves in accordance with or in contrast to the available ethno and sociocultural positions. Identity in this case is not viewed as a static trait or internal state but the result of practices of locating the self and the other in various subject-hood positions (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004).

More specifically, the focus of this study is on how participants maneuver the linguistic resources available to them through Computer-Mediated Discourse (CMD), and how they benefit from the freedom of speech afforded by Facebook, and the rise of minority voices in post-revolution Tunisia. This implies that the languages they use can be sources of gaining and exercising power, and thus they are essential for the (re)construction of their identities as minoritized¹⁷ or oppressed groups and individuals (Blackledge & Pavlenko 2002; Blommaert 2010; Blommaert & al. 2003; Bourdieu 1982, 1991; Gal 1989, 2006; Heller 1995). They can also be sources of obstructing others' power, which and can lead to a repositioning of the 'dominant' speaker in the interaction context and to a reconstruction of his or her identities (Bourdieu 1991, Lafkioui 2013).

6.3.1 Counter-erasure, multilingual resources, and Tunisian Amazigh identity

Four main languages function as the main linguistic and interactive resources on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook: *Tamazight*, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), *Ettounsi*, and French. Other languages in their repertoires such as English, Spanish, and Italian are rarely used for communicative or meta-communicative comments. A great many of the interactions occur in MSA or *Ettounsi* while French is more used by some (i.e. Yughurtha and Firmus) than others. This is explained by the fact that only these two participants traveled and lived for some time in France (Chapter 3). *Tamazight* is found in all the pages in the Facebook corpus. It functions as the symbolic marker of the three main ethno group identities (Amazigh, Tunisian, and North

¹⁷ Tunisian Imazighen resist narratives that describe them as a minority. They often resort to the cultural properties and genetic studies to present themselves as majority. A genetic study published by Hajjej et al. (2015), for instance, showed that Tunisians are related to present-day North Africans, Amazigh people and to Iberians, but not to Eastern Arabs (Palestinians, Jordanians and Lebanese). This suggests that the genetic contribution of Arab invasion of 7th-11th century A.D. had little impact of the North African gene pool. Tunisian Imazighen take these findings for granted to argue against minoritizing narratives. Despite the lack of a strong linguistic argument that Tamazight is endangered, Tunisian Imazighen sometimes use the fact that Ettounsi is influenced by its Tamazight substratum, as evidence for their linguistic majority as well. Upcoming analysis in this chapter will demonstrate.

African). The interactive functions and social values attributed to these linguistic resources on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook are obviously different from what is performed in the offline context where *Tamazight* would be highly unlikely due to low proficiency and domain loss. Lakfioui (2013) sums up the offline functions and evaluations of the languages mentioned as follows:

As national and local policies determine basically the sociolinguistic hierarchy of the languages used by the Imazighen in the offline context in North Africa and its diaspora, mother tongues such as *Tamazight* (e.g. as used by the Kabyle of North Algeria and the Jerbi of South Tunisia), generally with a non-official and minority status, cannot compete with the dominant languages such as Arabic (the language of the Islam and its *umma*, i.e. transnational Islamic community), French (the only official language of France) and English, which is generally seen as the most international language and which has been socially and interactively growing in importance since the electronic revolution (p. 140).

On the Facebook space of Tunisian Imazighen, however, the function of these languages is no longer the same as in the offline context. When relocated online during the entextualization processes, they may acquire new social and cultural values and be part of new processes of meaning-making. The affordances of social media for the performance of identity through entextualization is aptly described by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, p. 34) as ‘the new realities of the semiotic landscape’. By this, they point to processes of change taking place at different levels (the nation-state, technology, and economy) that not only have an impact on political and cultural boundaries, but also on semiotic boundaries (Leppänen et. al. 2013).

Tunisian *Tamazight* language for example continues to be regarded as invisible, useless, and even extinct. In most official and political discourse since the 2011 revolution, it is completely ignored and silenced. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the 2014 Constitution, for example, completely ignored the linguistic and cultural rights of the Amazigh people of Tunisia. On Facebook, however, Tunisian *Tamazight* is presented as not only a living language but also a

very instrumental and functional language. The following example from Gildo's page illustrates this by attributing new values and functions to *Tamazight*. The example is a quite lengthy post written exclusively in *Tamazight*. In a Tunisian context, it is still hard to find many people who can read and understand this text. Yet, Gildo's posting is not about the content as much as it is about changing perceptions of the language.

February 24 · 🌐

اللغة الامازيغية = tuthlayth tamazighth

tuthlayth tmazighth : tidetin d umazruy

tuthlayth tmazighth nettath d azzuZel d amuqqar seg tawja n tuthlayin tisamiyin (zigh afro tasyawith g irmawen tingliziyen elli yessentith J.Greenberg) g tuthlayin ni mazighen , tsamith , tkuchith , masar taqburth , d gat tirraw , d trabyout tachel7ith , d arra dma yatasedh fell-as wadhin , d touthlayth tmazighth d ngad anen "tazurth"dichth seg uzlmadh n tfriqth akchu yalla tura adli f afa n azur ag barray zigh yella deffres d imsbaq zigh ghir tarselt ni mazighn

Ituch timsagemt g tamnadht enes n tura s ughlif , ur messkhnan-t idgharen n imkhanen-nes al tura ,seg annawen n tuthlayin yaden imazighen selli ilan-t aTTas n tghawsiwin elli irment seg tema n iwaliwen seg tasuta n 19 i tanafuth n tmazrayen n tisakayen tig baraniyen n tuthlayth (azelmadh n wammaz zigh azelmadh n tfriqth) zigh essin n tikla s aqn n umazruy zigh tanterqulujith tmaddit tgad athaffegh tawda n imazdagh seg imkhanen khlaf , athamesbed s ifles acku aryez yella g tfriqth 1000000 di sukkanen (1980,1974 asukkas . CF.Camps)

tmazighth tatunsith ; ammex i tamnaba ,tmazighth , zigh ,tachel7it , adh nettath tuthlayth tazurth ni mazdagh imazwaren n tunes al lammi i dusin imadruyen ibiyathen (i3raben) imasmen g tasuta n 7 seg taw_thas tadhwel tuthlayth tmazighth g imihi n urahi seg tunes assa . nged anen ur tella taberberith tqel f 30 d isukkasen d ngad anen lawsa n tawalin zigh d axaz dma yetmanna . uzzern-t aTTas n i meqdach ntsartitin d tadamsant sma athjen tuthlayth .array n tizmar xef yin fi zigh ta3rabt zigh tabarbarith n tunes gharsen tagda n tuthlayth ensen natta di jen n tmukrisin i ujafi slawsa arfadh n tuthlayth d magith tmazighth yu3ar gat annen idich asiden unsif seg imazighen n tunes g tunes lanet lawsa n tizritin aqel n 1% seg imazdaqh n tunes tuthlayth tura q amihl yelzem anawi inqisen

irm ,berber , yeffegh-d sg ,barbaroi , ssemrasen-t igriken mara ad melen ira n ijen ur ittuthlayn-c tagrikant ,d irm *barbarus*,amagut n *barbari* ssemrasen-t irumanen mara ad meln yal igduden nniden ur illan-c d igriken nigh d irumanen (Ennaji,1999).s ughiluf , tasnzghurt n wassagh *berbère* itturmas abda s gar , acki (car) izdi s inumak imagaren am *amad-uz* zigh *barbar* . assaghen am ,tmazighth , d ,amazigh , dweln d igduden illin atig ugar awd ghur imsiwlen ines liyn am ijen n tmessumant mara ad anfen i inumak imagaren iqqen gher yirm *berbère* . iggut usmers n yirm ,amazigh , i usnummel n igduden izedghen tafriqth n ugafa am g *Amazigh de tunisie* . Maca , d ijen n ussmers araddad n yirm .

Amazigh d umyiwen amay . udm amaddad , g unmgal , d *imazighzn* am g * imazighen n tunes * d awd assagh *amazighe* ikka yal amadha maca assagh amaddad n tuthlayt d

En: *tmazighth* immalen nit *tuthlayt tmazighth* . Asmres nyirm *langue amazighe* yegga-t f ugama ayemmat n tuthlayt tmazighth .G Thila-a d akewat ad nessekti mas d *t* d ijen ufunim awetman g tmazught d ukus nnes g yirm *tmazight*izmer ad immass s isragen inamu-sertann ittannayn mas d amun a3rab (yudfen tunist g tsuta ag 7) d ayebbt. Qqaran as awd i tmazight tatunsith shilha zigh tashelhit , ishtn n tenda tamazight ttutlyn tugt g imazighen n umerruk . ssemrasn itunsiten irbawalen irm shluh _ shelha mara ad meln midden n idurar zigh imekrazen ur issinen tagharma wla asegni

Ssemrasen irbawalen itunsiyen awd irm *Werghamma* mara ad meln imazighen n tunist .

Irmma wah ifka-t id umusnaw u-tunist n tsuta g 14 lbn xaldun.

Like Share

8

Figure 6.6: Gildo_Linguistic_It13

Gildo's text in *Tamazight* commenting on *Tamazight* Language characteristics

Posting long texts exclusively in *Tamazight* in the Tunisian context is clearly a form of performance. Gildo is aware that only few if any of his profile visitors will be able to read and understand the long texts he posts. Thus, it is safe to argue that he uses them only as performative mechanisms to present himself as a *Tamazight* native speaker and authenticate his identity. This practice also sends the message that *Tamazight* is not dead in the context of Tunisia. It still has speakers who can speak and write it fluently and proficiently. In this discursive performance, meanings of vitality, grammatical and lexical richness, and prominence unfold, in attempt to counter the ideologies that frame *Tamazight* as a “simple”, “poor”, and “extinct” language. MSA, in contrast, is used in only on one occasion in this example, to translate the title of the text. The way *Tamazight* and MSA are used and distributed in Gildo’s text encapsulates an implicit meta-pragmatic comment on linguistic practices, making a ‘counter-hegemonic bid’ and pointing to a switch of the symbolic positions of the two languages (Tsitsipis 2003). Hence, by relocating it within a Facebook discourse, *Tamazight* is now presented as a prominent language with significant cultural value.

The content of Gildo’s post contains a descriptive analysis of some of the linguistic and grammatical properties of *Tamazight*. Gildo is not a linguist, grammarian, nor does he hold a university degree as described in Chapter 4, and yet here, he presents himself as language expert. Being able to write elaborately in *Tamazight* along with being knowledgeable of its linguistic system are part of how Gildo discursively authenticates his linguistic expertise. It is important to understand that in doing so, Gildo is performing an Amazigh identity for himself while simultaneously engaged in verifying and confirming that *Tamazight* is still alive and still has “authentic” speakers in the context of Tunisia.

The following example in Figure 6.7 from Massinissa represents a flyer announcing an event for the Amazigh New Year. The bilingual use of *Tamazight* and Arabic points to different symbolic meanings attributed to both languages. Massinissa's meta-comment – a welcoming message to the visitor of Tamazret, his home village- is delivered in *Tamazight*, then translated into Arabic. Here, *Tamazight* is given precedence over Arabic, whose role is reduced to a medium of translation. On the flyer, *Tamazight*, written in *Tifinagh*, is also given prominence by being located at top of the announcement followed by Arabic and French in lower positions within the image. *Tamazight* prominence is also featured by being located on the left-side of the flyer (*Tamazight* is read from left to right) through the name of the village of Tamazret, while Arabic is given a secondary status by being placed in to the right side. An Arabic reader may look at the right side first for information. In figure 6.7 the right margin is manipulated in a way that gives Arabic less status. The name of the village Tamezret appears under the Tunsian flag along with the Amazigh agricultural New Year. Since all these elements are located to the left, they are more likely to be captured prior to the Arabic script even for someone who reads Arabic. the use of *Tifinagh* on top of the image. The reader of this image is positioned to get attracted to the left side margin more than the right one by means of ornamental and embellished writing of *Tamazight*. The left margin positions the reader to understand not only that *Tamazight* is an “alive”, “written”, and primordial, but also a beautiful language.



Figure 6.7: Massinissa_cultural_image27
Massinissa multilingual identity performance

By displaying *Tamazight* as the source language and *Arabic* as translation medium indexical values associated with meanings of rootedness, localization, and nativeness are attributed to the former while the latter is positioned as ‘foreign’ and ‘strange’.

Another posting exemplifies the re-organization of the cultural values attributed to the multilingual resources that Tunisia Imazighen use in the posting below from Massinissa’s wall as well. The text in Figure 6.8 features a poem written exclusively in *Tamazight*. Arabic is pushed to the bottom of the poem whose sole function is as a short meta-commentary about the theme of the poem: ‘This is a poem written in my mother-tongue *Tamazight* dedicated to my mother’,

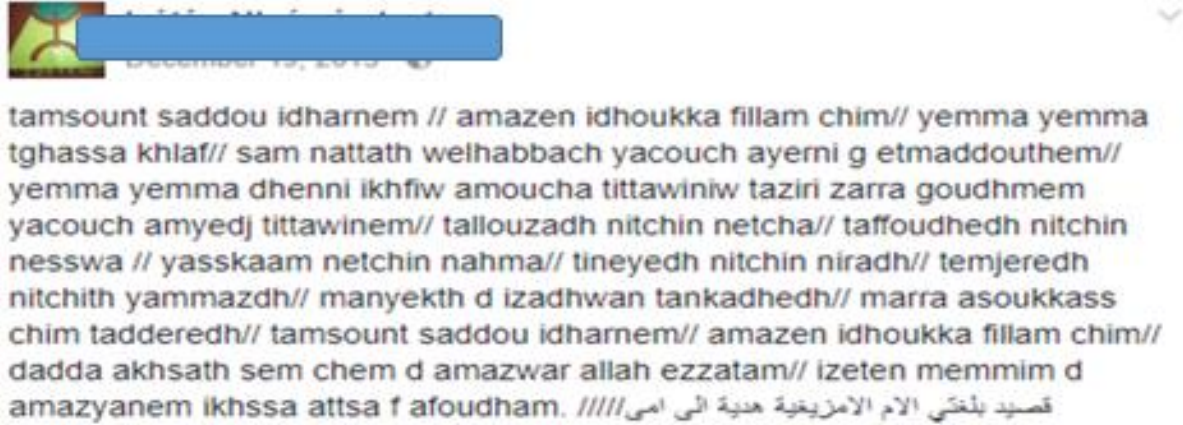


Figure 6.8: Massinissa's *Tamazight* identity performance

In relocating and reframing *Tamazight* as a written literary language from an oral interactive context to an online Facebook space, its cultural and symbolic values are reframed. Writing exclusively in *Tamazight* as in this example or in Gildo's example apparently target a *Tamazight*-speaking majority. Nevertheless, in the context of Tunisia, this type of audience is not available. Thus, we can conclude that the use of *Tamazight* is more performative and symbolic, reshaping perceptions of language vitality and expanding the domains of its use to include literary and technical genres. This display of *Tamazight* constitutes a performative act about the performers as well which follows Akya's (2014) discussion of performance as an act constructed and constituted via semiotic links and is also linked to diverse styles, personae, stances, hence identities (cf. Bucholtz 1999b, 2009; Chun 2001; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003; Fuller 2007; Kiesling 2005; Mendoza-Denton 2007; Ochs 1992, 1993). Massinissa's literary use of *Tamazight* doesn't present him as an Amazigh only, but as someone who commands the language 'authentically' being able to write complex and elaborate genres of literature using this language. Arabic functions strictly as an auxiliary language for short meta-commentaries or translations. In this context, bilingualism on Tunisian Imazighen's Facebook turns into an emblematic form of identity display of identity intertwined with ideological stances.

Tamazight designates ingroup membership (“us”) while Arabic indexes the outgroup that they differentiate themselves from (“them”). This speaks to Cutler and Røyneland (2018) observing the multilingual practices in CMC as “window into how speech styles, dialects, and languages are being reevaluated at the local and the global level, reflecting ongoing social shifts in the indexical values of these various codes (p.25).

Tamazight language is a significantly important marker of separation between Imazighen and rest of the Tunisians, especially those who identify themselves as Arabs. Even individuals who do not speak *Tamazight* - the majority- still find different linguistic tools to distinguish themselves as Imazighen and set up boundaries with other groups in Tunisia. The use of certain lexical items and meta-commentaries serve as a significant indexical function in construction of an ethnic Amazigh identity for these individuals. The *Tamazight* greeting term *azul* ‘Hello’, for example, has become very common in Tunisian Imazighen’s Facebook. Most Tunisians who identify themselves as Amazigh have abandoned the Arabic greetings, such as *essalamu aaleykum* or *asslama* for *azul* even if the rest of the content in the posting is in Arabic or *Ettounsi*. Figure 54 provides an illustration of this phenomenon. It is a statement denouncing unethical misconduct against one of the Amazigh activists during Tamazret Village Festival written by Yuba. The statement opens with a lyric from a popular Tunisian Amazigh Rap song by Marou Cezar “*Azul wa lan nazu:l*” ‘Hello, we will never cease to exist’



9 hrs · Tunis, Tunisia ·

ازول و لن نزول كان يا ما كان . والكبل بالمكيالين.
في اعقاب مهرجان ات مزرط //مزرط// لسنة 2016الذي دابت على تنظيمه جمعية احياء وحماية التراث ب
مزرط منذ 1992. عمد بعض الماجورين ودوى العاهات المزمنة في عقولهم الى شتم [Yuba]
لجنة الثقافة والتظاهرات بالجمعية لا لشيئ لانه اعتمد الامزيخية عنصر اساسي في المهرجان . هذه الشكائم
طالت عاقلتي بسبب الدنيا وينحني ب ايشع النعوت ولم يتدخل المسؤولين عن الصفحة الا عند
اشعارهم . الجواب كان مضحكا . منهم من تعلل بالسفر ومن هم من تعلل بانه في عطلة شكرا خاص
للـ [Yuba Cultural] //المشاهير//

Figure 6.9: Yuba_Cultural_st17

Azul a marker of Amazigh identity alignment

Azul, we will never cease to exist.... once upon the time...the double standards
Towards the end of Tamazret Festival in 2016, which has been organized by the Heritage
Maintenance and Revival Association since 1992, a few mercenaries and chronically-
disabled people attempted to insult [Yuba] for doing nothing other than using *Tamazight*
as an essential element in the festival. These attacks included my family by insulting my
parents and by calling me very offensive names. However, none of the admins of the
page responded to that unless they were notified to do so. The response was funny. Some
of them claimed they were traveling while others claimed they were on a holiday.
Special thanks to Mr. [person's name].

As shown in Figure 6.9 above, Massinissa incorporates only the *Tamazight* greeting in an otherwise mostly Arabic statement. Yuba, as described in Chapter 4, does not speak *Tamazight* fluently even though he is a very well-known activist in the community. On Facebook, he uses either MSA or *Ettounsi* for when he writes. What reinforces the claim that *azul* is employed as an index of identity rather than to show his *Tamazight* communicative abilities, is the use of intertextuality in Yuba's posting. The term is defined as "a socially constructed act that consists of using language and linguistic forms that belong to a network of texts (discourse, images, etc.), past and future (in the sense of anticipating audience assumptions, responses, etc.), in order to communicate meaning by complex relationships to those texts (West 2010). In making use of this intertextuality, Yuba attempts to make connection not to the rapper as much as to the

message of the lyric that contains a strong assertion of identity. This is an evidence that *azul* has become more of an identity index than a greeting term. In Figure 6.10 below, Teziri's posting includes a Happy Ramadan wish (fasting month for Muslims). Being a non-fluent speaker of *Tamazight* like Yuba, she delivers the content of her message in Arabic, but, starts her text with the *Tamazight* greeting phrase *Azul Fallewen* which is a close translation to the Arabic religious salutation *Essalamu A'aleikum*.



Figure 6.10: Teziri_cultural_st9
Azul as an Amazigh identity marker

Azul fellwen! Hello, Happy Ramadan to the Amazigh and Islamic *Umma*/community everywhere in the world.

Even though Teziri's posting is about a religious context, she still makes use of the *Tamazight* greeting phrase instead of the Arabic religious one. The use of the phrase *Azul fellwen*, however does not match *Tamazight* semantic properties. This is noticed by several

Tamazight speakers. Below is an excerpt from my interview with Yughurtha who clearly objects the use of this phrase.

Excerpt 4: Yughurtha interview, July 23, 2016

برشة أمازيغ ما يقولوش التحية بالصحيح تلقاهم يقولوك أزول فاللاون إلي هي ترجمة حرفية للسلام عليكم. في الأمازيغية ما نقولوش أزول عليكم.

So many Imazighen say *azul fellwen* in greetings, which is not right. That is the literal translation of *essalemu A'aleikum/peace be unto you*. In *Tamazight* we don't say *unto you* (Yughurtha interview, July 23, 2016).

By challenging the use of the phrase *azul fellwen* in his meta-commentary declaring his own knowledge of the ethnically marked lexical usage of *azul*, Yughurtha invokes the status of an authentic speaker who has the authority to define the boundaries of the linguistic territory of his ethnic group and those who identity with this group. This provides more evidence of how the lexical term *azul* without *fellwen* has become as an ethnic marker used to describe in-group status while setting ethnolinguistic boundaries with other ethnic groups in Tunisian society. Rejecting *fellwen* is a distancing strategy since *azul fellwen* appears to be a calque on the Arabic Muslim greeting *essalemu a'aleikum* ('peace be upon you'). *Tannemirt* ('thank you') is another example of a symbolic identity marker that makes no claims about the speaker's competence in *Tamazight*. In recent years, many Imazighen have abandoned the *Ettounsi* term *Ya'atik Essaha* or *Merci* along with the Arabic term *Shukran* in favor of *Tannemirt*, both in their written and conversational practices. Thus, by incorporating *azul* and *tannemirt* into their discourse, Tunisian Imazighen show alignment to lexical and semantic components of *Tamazight* via the use of salient and widely diffused lexical items. The use of these markers is one of the ways Tunisian Imazighen signal their ethnolinguistic distinctiveness.

Linguistic differentiation is a very crucial aspect of defining identity for Tunisian Imazighen. However, the use of *Tamazight* doesn't imply abandoning the multilingual competence of the community, particularly with regard to the use of *Ettounsi*. The extract below

shows the focal role of multilingualism and multimodality in constructing *Tamazight* identity on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook. It is a translation of Yughurtha's interview featured in a documentary entitled *Imazighen of Tunisia" The Right to Appeal*. In this documentary, both Aksil and Yughurtha made an appearance to talk about *Tamazight* and its relation to *Ettounsi*. The re-contextualization of this cultural product on Facebook is not for documentation purposes only, but also aims at meeting the linguistic and hybridized nature of Tunisian Amazigh Facebook where multilingualism is common (*Tamazight*, *Ettounsi*, MSA, and French). The multimodal insertion of this documentary video on Facebook is motivated by the intention to explain the position of *Ettounsi* in the process of Amazigh identity alignment.

Ettounsi, our Darija [colloquial], includes countless numbers of *Tamazight* words, e.g. *Kruma* [neck] comes from *Takrumt* [in *Tamazight*]. Many, many terms are originally from the *Tamazight* dictionary that entered our Tunisian Darija or other Darjas in North Africa, such as the Algerian Darija, the Moroccan Darija, and the Lybian Darija. Besides all this, the structure of sentences [syntax] in our Darijas is based on the morphological and syntactic structures of *Tamazight* language. Even negation is in reality based on a *Tamazight* rule. E.g. *Ana ma mshitch* 'I did not go' *ma mshitch* is a *Tamazight* negation because in the Modern Standard Arabic it is *lam amshi* so what's the etymological source of the suffix *tch* at the end of *ma mshitch*? More examples include *ma klitch* 'I did not eat' and *ma ritich* 'I did not see'. Where did the suffix come from? Well, it is from *Tamazight*. Also, phonetically speaking, which refers the sound system, we have so many regions in the coast that you know about, such as Mahdia [a Tunisian city] where they do not pronounce /θ/. One may wonder why? Why don't they pronounce this sound? Because, at first, in Zenata, which is a *Tamazight* dialect there is no letter *tha* /θ/. And in *Tamazight* language there is no letter *tha* /θ/, and there are few people who have a childhood speech difficulty with /θ/, /ð/ and the emphatic /ðˤ/. [tleta] instead of /θle θa/ 'three' or /idhar/ instead of /iðˤhar/ 'afternoon'. Where do all these sounds come from?! If a researcher tries to find out their origin, he will discover that they come from **TAMAZIGHT** [my emphasis; capitalized to signal Yughurtha accentuating this term during the interview], from the substrate, which means we have even preserved the structure of words in Darija, Tunisian Darija. We have preserved the sound system of *Tamazight*. *Tamazight* sounds are numerous in Darija because we have few sounds which are emphatic. I am still speaking about Darija and I mean that we have emphatic sounds in Darija. We say /barfˤa/ 'many', /fˤ/ is emphatic whereas the brothers [sarcastic use of the term *brother* to signal distance and dis-alignment] in the Gulf regions / say /barf ə/. They cannot pronounce the emphatic sound /fˤ/. Where do all these phonetic

[sounds] come from? They come from our mother tongue, the substrate language which is *Tamazight*. *malla a'azri ma'angar kabbusa w mitlakmit fi barnussa*. Now, try to find the Arabic words in this sentence which every Tunisian is able to comprehend [This sentence is from *Ettounsi*, but according to him every single word in is *Tamazight*]. So, to finish commenting on this sentence, I would say that all Tunisians speak *Tamazight*. All Tunisians are *Tamazight* speakers. There are those who master *Tamazight*, that's who we call speakers and there are those who we call non-speakers, but I would say they are speakers who do not master *Tamazight* language because in Darija they use *Tamazight* words.

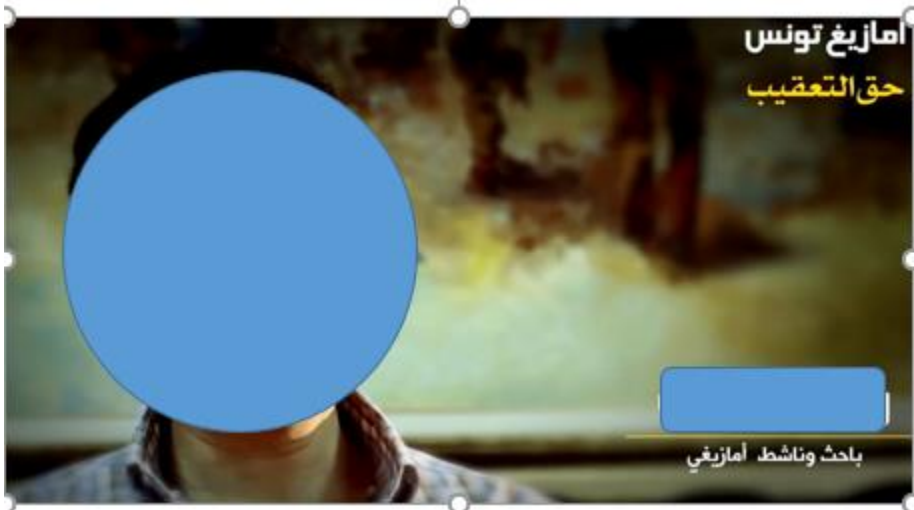


Figure 6.11: Yughurtha_linguistic-video1
Ettounsi is originally *Tamazight*

Yughurtha's commentary includes several claims about *Ettounsi* structural grammar that may not be valid. His analysis of *Ettounsi* negation, for example, is still argued by many linguists to be the outcome of Arabic rather than *Tamazight* contact (cf. Kossmann 2014). What is important here is that, from the point of view of Yughurtha, *Ettounsi* is a combination of numerous structural features originating essentially from *Tamazight* with no reference or mention of any other source. Yughurtha's comments make perfect sense in light of identity alignment, and can be interpreted in two ways: maintenance of ethnolinguistic identity for those who speak *Tamazight* and adaptation of *Ettounsi* as a substitute identity marker for those who do not speak *Tamazight*. Thus, the process of identity alignment does not necessarily require speaking a specific code; either one or the other (*Tamazight* or *Ettounsi*) is sufficient to signal *Tamazight*

identity. In such a culturally and linguistically hybrid community, the notion of mother tongue is no longer the defining factor of an Amazigh identity. *Ettounsi* may be sufficient to index Amazigh community membership. In other words, if nativeness is to be assigned, *Ettounsi* would be amply adequate. For some Tunisian Imazighen, *Ettounsi* is nothing but another form of *Tamazight* in the sense that its phonological, morphological, syntactic and even lexical systems are highly influenced by the *Tamazight* ones. The following example from Dihya demonstrates how this assumption is framed:



Figure 6.12: Dihya_Linguistic_thread 5
Dihya’s comment on *Ettounsi* being a distorted form of *Tamazight*

Of the most famous Tunisian proverbs we have: the featherless hen is drowning in dirt and screaming [ywa’awish] /jwaʕɪʃ/. What is the meaning of *iwa’awish*? Hereby the definition from the *Tamazight*-Arabic dictionary by the Algerian professor Khadija Saed:

Hen scream.....i’uish /iʕuʕɪʃ/
Whooping cough..... ta’uuasht /taʕuʕaʃt/
Whooping cold ys’uu /jəsʕuʕu/

Being continuously Arabized linguistically and culturally for numerous centuries, we have changed and distorted so many *Tamazight* words. At times we reduce a letter and other times we insert a strange letter. However, it is very important [to acknowledge] that our mother tongue is still alive.

Commenter 1: and we say in our Darija [variety] *ywa'awish/* ('he screams like a hen')

Dyhia: I believe the disease that is called *wa'awasha* in our Darija refers to the whooping cough??

In this sense, there is an ideological construction of *Ettounsi* as language highly influenced by *Tamazight* to an extent that it could be viewed as another dialect of *Tamazight*. This assumption acts as a nascent force on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook, erasing other linguistic sources of input in the make-up of *Ettounsi*. While trying to present Tunisia as a tolerant multilingual and multicultural country ('Tunisia is open to all and to everything') (Yuba interview, 2016), Tunisian Imazighen persistently reproduce an essentialist mother-tongue ideology which reproduces the belief that language and ethnicity have a one-to-one correspondence (Phyak 2014). 'My mother tongue is my identity', said Gildo in his interview. Thus, the mother tongue from this perspective could be either *Tamazight* or *Ettounsi*.

In the examples below, Tunisian Imazighen seek to redefine being Tunisian as being essentially Amazigh. This is realized through processes of intertextuality as in Figure 6.13 from Yuba's wall. To support the assumption that Tunisia is essentially *Tamazight*, Yuba relies on a quote from the first president of Tunisia, Bourguiba, during the enactment processes of the Code for Personal Status (CPS)¹⁸ in 1956. As many Imazighen, Yuba believes that feminism, women's emancipation and gender equality are more widespread and accepted among Tunisians than anywhere else in the world due to the "*Amazigh*" nature of this society as it is known for

¹⁸ It is a series of progressive Tunisian laws aiming at the institution of equality between women and men in a number of areas. It was promulgated by beylical (attributive to bey, the governor of Tunisia during the French colony. The term is originally turkish. It refers to the chief or governor of a province) of Tunisia decree on August 13, 1956 and came into effect on January 1, 1957. This Code is one of the best known deeds of Habib Bourguiba, who was Prime Minister and later President.

He gave women a unique place in Tunisian society, notably abolishing polygamy, creating a judicial procedure for divorce and requiring marriage to be performed only in the event of the mutual consent of both parties.

being matriarchal and pro-gender equality. This is stated in *Writing, the story of alphabets and scripts* by Georges (1992) when describing the matriarchal nature of the *Tuareg Amazigh* society. “It is highly unusual in the history of writing in that it is confined to women. *Tuareg* society is in fact matriarchal, and there, as elsewhere, literacy represents power.”

In Yuba’s interpretation, Bourguiba took advantage of this nature to be able to pass the Code of Personal Status (CPS).

سنة 82 .. الهند سنة 94 .. روسيا الاتحادية الرازيل .. جنوب افريقيا .. والمغرب .. اذا الهوية هي حجر الاساس للبناء ومثلا بورقيبة لتمرير قوانين "مجلة الاحوال الشخصية" و لبناء الوطن قال "هويتنا تونسية بربرية" وبذكاء خلق ارضية لدى التونسيين لتقبل حرية المرأة لانها في ثقافتهم و غرس حب تونس وبنائها و .. الهوية هي الامان والنمو والاستقرار



Figure 6.13: Yuba_social_st43

Yuba’s comment on how being Amazigh is inherited nature in Tunisians

Identity is the foundation for progress. For example, when Bourguiba (first president of Tunisia) enacted the Code of Personal Status and in order to establish a nation he said, “our identity is Tunisian-Berber”. In saying so, he smartly prepared a context for Tunisians to accept the idea of women’s emancipation [he advocates for] which is already part of their culture [referring to the Amazigh culture] and to have them love Tunisia and participate in building its nation. Identity means security, progress, and stability.

By viewing the post-colonial changes of freedom and equality in Tunisia as attributes of the natural characteristics inherited essentially from their Imazighen ancestors there is process of iconization that frames *Amazigheity* as a privileged identity. During this process, there is an erasure of several other ethnic, linguistic, and historical components that have shaped the present ‘Tunisian’ identity, such as Arabic, Jewish, French, Turkish, Spanish, and Italian. *Amazigheity* is depicted as having a privileged status, and not just for Tunisians, but also all humanity. In Figure 6.14, Yuba and a commentator are explicitly articulating this hegemonic approach.



Figure 6.14: Yuba_social_comment 32
Amazigheity is an equated to humanity

Commentator: *Amazigheity* is the heritage of the humanity as a whole because it is a fundamental component of human history. It documents a very important stage of human intellectual progress. Therefore, he who alienates *Amazigheity* is in fact alienating humanity.

Yuba: indeed, this is what we should disseminate. This is the reason why I pointed out to the importance of discourse. Discourse is very important to know how to communicate with our partners and with the authorities in this country.

At this point of analysis, three major issues regarding Tunisian Amazigh identity reconstruction and re-contextualization of multilingualism arise. First, Facebook is the space where ideologies about *Tamazight* language and ethnicity are contested and constructed. Tunisian Amazigh Facebook displays a great diversity of language practices. Nevertheless, the ideological construction of these languages through processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure are discursively employed to reproduce ideologies of ethnic and linguistic hegemony. The following graphic from Takfirinas’s page demonstrates explicitly how Amazigh language discourse intends to reproduce modernist language ideology focused on hegemony and uniformity.

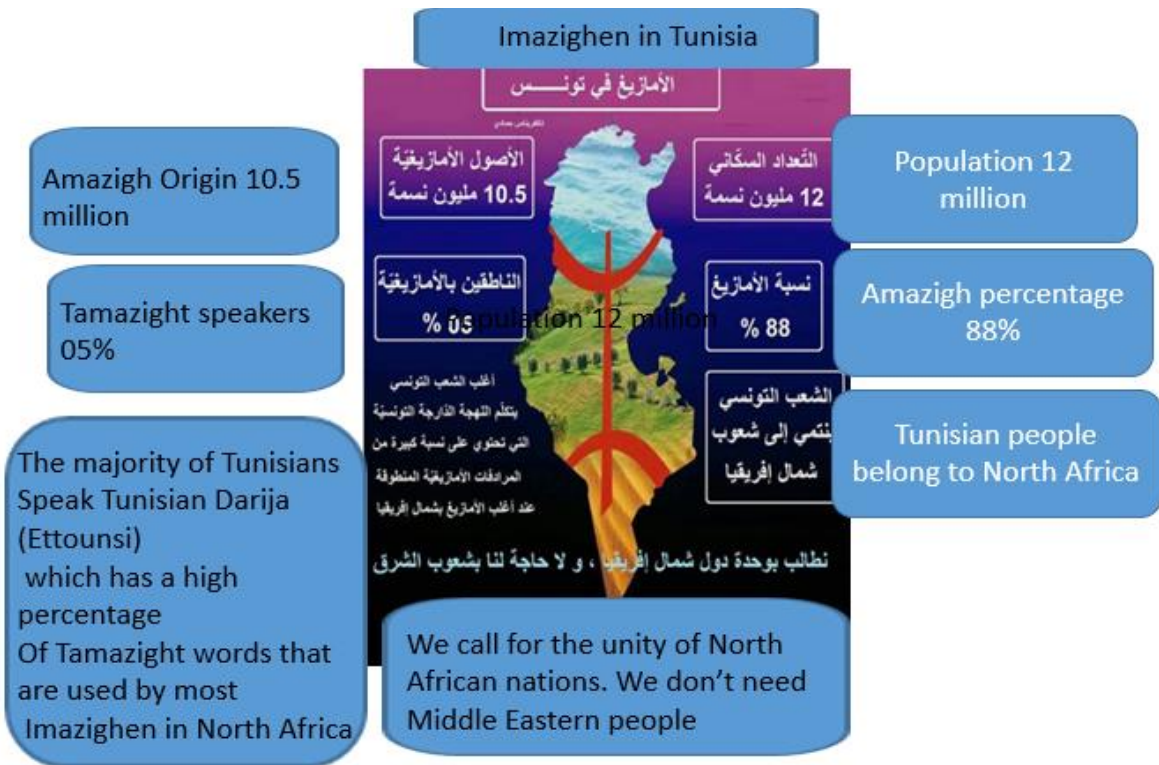


Figure 6.15: Takfirinas_Linguistic_image12
Takfirinas’s graphic of the Ethnolinguistic demographics of Tunisia

In Figure 6.15, we can see a clear process of re-contextualization in which visual materials including a map of Tunisia with an Amazigh emblem, the flag superimposed on it, around the margin, textual and statistical figures purporting to represent Tunisian ethnic and linguistic demography are presented. Figure 6.15 is an example of entextualization involving the relocation of materials (maps, symbols, statistics) from various sources and recontextualizing them as demographic facts about Tunisians. This constitutes a discourse of resistance against hegemonic Arabization while reconstructing an ideology that invokes a one-to-one relationship between language and identity. Speaking *Tamazight* is assumed to be an essential marker of Amazigh identity while speaking *Ettounsi* is constructed as another way to be Amazigh. Although MSA remains dominant on Facebook and in the corpus of data collected in this study, its value is reduced in the discourse to a mere vehicle or tool to express and convey content in or about *Tamazight*. As for French, the data in this study does not reveal much usage at all. A better and more enriching analysis of the ideological construction of French in Tunisian Amazigh Facebook will be addressed in the next section of multi-orthography and re-contextualization.

6.3.2. Section two conclusive remarks

In this sense, we see that multilingualism on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook does not care for the level of proficiency as much as language use and function. This makes it fit in the most current framework of multilingualism which includes ‘all people who function in more than one language regardless of proficiency (Cutler and Røyneland 2018:5). The way MSA, *Ettounsi*, and *Tamazight* are chosen on Facebook correlate with symbolic practices and ideological features that “may defy or reverse the very essence of fragmentation, hybridization, [and] destabilized identities” (Blommaert et al. 2009, p. 204). Tunisian Imazighen’s multilingualism provides a good example of what Cutler and Røyneland (2018) call “societal multilingualism” where not all

groups are necessarily proficient in all the linguistic repertoires available. Observations of the multilingual practices of the participants is to a large extent consistent with the language proficiency description attributed to them in Chapter 4. When they are all native-like speakers of MSA and *Ettounsi*, their proficiency in *Tamazight* remain hard to describe, except for the case of Gildo who is clearly a native speaker of the language. Similarly, their use of *Tamazight* online may not be the same as their offline use. And yet, what is possible to infer, at this point, is that multilingualism on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook is a source of identity performance and an instrument to challenge ideologies of erasure while reproducing others. Besides, Tunisian Imazighen's multilingual interactions seem to have contributed positively to an ongoing revalorization process of *Tamazight* and work towards destigmatization among Tunisians.

Despite the lack of precise evaluations of *Tamazight* proficiency levels among Tunisian Imazighen, Facebook is clearly opening up opportunities for more use and production of writing in this language which increases its visibility and legitimacy. As a conclusion to this section, multilingual practices on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook are mirrors of a micro-level language planning exercised through Imazighen's agency at the grassroots level and it is essential in a context where Arabization policies, Arab nationalists, and the *Umma* narratives attempt continuously to isolate, marginalize, and erase *Tamazight*.

6.4. Section three: counter-erasure in counteracting erasure

6.4.1. Counter-erasure, multi-orthographic resources, and Tunisian

Amazigh identity

Social networking sites such as Facebook are distinct among platforms for online writing in the ways in which they support and shape identity construction. Multimodal affordances and the use of multiple languages fundamentally characterize the act of writing online for

multilingual people (Androutsopoulos, 2013). Writing systems represent powerful symbols of the languages they encode, to the extent that, in the public mind, a language and its writing are often the same thing (Shreiber 2015). Script may even be the main or only characteristic which differentiates two ‘languages’ (Coulmas, 2003). Scripts are particularly powerful identity markers. Therefore, the Urdu script, for instance, most of the time indexes Muslim identity; the Devanagari script indexes Hindu identity. The Urdu script as seen by an angry, inflamed Hindu mob summons up talismanic images from the present and the past (Sebba 2009, p. 39).

In this sense, orthography can function to differentiate groups at different levels of social organization. Unseth (2005, p. 22) lists factors that can affect how people want to distance or identify themselves by orthography such including clan identity, ethnic identity, national identity, affiliation with membership in political movements, prestige, and religious identity, and he provides examples for all of these. Hence, the power of orthography as an index of identity should be valued just like any other linguistic variable that may signal identities and ideologies. Following Sebba (2009), iconic power is not reserved just for complete orthography. Within a single orthographic system, such as the Roman one, there exist many possibilities for iconizing particular font styles, characters, and diacritics. For example, the letter <w> signals something archaic in Swedish, confined to loanwords and surnames (which sometimes retain their old spellings, and sometimes have been modernized) (Sebba, 2009). Spitzmüller (2007 , p. 403) points out how the umlaut has been used by Heavy Metal Bands with names such as Motörhead, Mötley Crüe, ZnöWhite, Beowülf, Blöödhag, Infernä Mäjesty, Infernö to index the musical genre as well as the notion of ‘Gothic’ more generally.

Another example concerns the Haitian writing system. In this context, standardization remains contentious in the face of competing ideologies of language. In Haiti, the issue was

whether written Haitian should resemble, and thus be viewed as a variety of French, or a language distinct from French (Schieffelin & Schieffelin and Doucet 1994). Similar considerations exist in the case of writing Galician (a language spoken in Spain, which is close to Portuguese but has been in prolonged contact with Spanish) (Sebba, 2009). Although there is an official norm, there is at the moment no standardized way of writing Galician. Rather, there is a whole continuum of norms; these are not randomly distributed, but reflect an ideological stance on the part of the user, as to whether Galician is a kind of Portuguese, or a language different from Portuguese. Celso Álvarez-Cáccamo and Mário J. Herrero Valeiro (1996, pp. 148–9) describe how the tipping point between what is symbolically “Galician” (*gallego*) and what is symbolically “Portuguese” can be located in the presence of <ç>, or <ss> or even in the nasal tilde on <ã>, <õ>. All of these conventions are associated with Portuguese - not Spanish - orthography and hence become symbols of the ‘*Portugueseness*’ of Galician in contrast with other conventions (shared with Spanish) which symbolize ‘*non-Portugueseness*’ (Sebba 2009).

The main point here is that characters, scripts and diacritics could acquire iconic meanings by language users to create solidarity, groupness, and alignment or to distance and differentiate themselves from others. Orthographic and script choices can be a powerful symbol of group membership, identifying the users as belonging to or differing from other groups using the same or different scripts. Regarding *Tamazight*, the language is written using three different scripts which I describe in detail below: *Tifinagh*, Arabic, and French.

Tifinagh is a modern alphabetical derivative of the traditional script, known as Neo-*Tifinagh*, introduced in the 20th century. *Tifinagh* is believed to have descended from the ancient Libyan (libyque) or Libyco-Berber script, although its exact evolution is unclear (Chaker 1994; Durand 1994; Galand 2001). The latter writing system was widely used in antiquity by speakers

of Tamazight languages throughout Africa and on the Canary Islands. It is attested from the 5th century BCE to the 3rd century CE. The script's origin is considered by most scholars as being of local origin (Chaker, 1994, 1996) although some scholars suggest it is related to the Phoenician alphabet (Yasir 1996). In a recent paper published by Sternberg (2015), the researcher argues for a Proto-European origin of the script. According to Souag (2000), *Tifinagh* orthography became widely adopted by *Tamazight* speakers in Morocco and Algeria only in the 1960s when the *Academie Berbere* (later renamed *Agraw Imazighen*), a group of Kabyle activists in Paris put forward a proposal in 1967 taking letter forms indiscriminately from *Tifinagh* and Libyan, with vowel letters and letters for spirants added, written left to right. To date, there is no information on how many people can currently use or read this script.

Adopting *Tifinagh* as a main script for *Tamazight* is usually motivated by two reasons. First, *Tifinagh* has unique characters which would allow the revivalists to take pride in bringing back an ancient writing system. Second, Latin script is usually associated with a lack of patriotism while Arabic is associated with traditionalism (Souag 2000). In this sense, *Tifinagh* makes a better option for indexing uniqueness and authentication concurrently. This perception is very common among Moroccan, Algerian, and Libyan activists. A debate over which script to select for *Tamazight* has not been documented in the historical record in Tunisia. The remaining of this section will reveal differing opinions on which script should be chosen for *Tamazight* in Tunisia.

Arabic script for writing *Tamazight*

According to Souag (2000), *Tamazight* languages in the North began to be written again as early as 1200 years ago, when the anti-*Caliphal Ibadite* sect of Islam established a state in the central Maghreb. A plethora evidence of Amazigh literary works written in Arabic script are

traced back to 1200 and 1300 C.E. For the later medieval period, evidence of *Tamazight* writing is found almost everywhere the language was spoken. *Tamazight* religious poetry and translations as well as dictionaries written in Arabic script were attested starting as early as 1580 (Souag, 2000). Arabic continued to be used to write *Tamazight* during the colonial period in North Africa (1830-1962). It was also used for some correspondence and collections of poetry and fables used it, such as *Poésie Populaire de la Kabylie de Jurjura*; the *Ibadhis* of *Jabal Nafusa* In Libya, and or Tashelhyt writing in Morocco (*Tawalt* website). According to Souag (2000) in modern times, using Arabic script for writing *Tamazight* has fallen into near-complete disuse in Algeria - even Mzabi works use Latin - but a modernized orthography proposed by Muhammad Chafik - is still commonly used in Morocco and Libya, especially for Tashelhyt, despite competition from Neo-*Tifinagh*.

In Morocco, several books in recent decades have used Arabic script, including some fiction, a dictionary, and most notably the recent first full translation of the Quran into Berber, published 2003, a powerful influence in itself. Even in Algeria it was officially adopted for pedagogical purposes in 1996, although that project was abandoned soon after (Souag 2000). In the corpus used for this study, Arabic script is used extensively on only two Amazigh language webpages: Tariffit Project and Tawalt. This is not surprising since most North African computers tend to be equipped with French operating systems, and, while no language other than English has a significant online presence, French has far more webpages and software than Arabic (Souag 2000). Writing *Tamazight* in Arabic had facilitated for centuries the transmission and documentation of Amazigh culture. Souag (2000) calls it a “genuine vehicle” for Amazigh culture. Besides, most Imazighen master reading and writing *Tamazight* in Arabic script than the other two scripts (Latin and *Tifinagh*). Nevertheless, being associated with Arabism, Arab

nationalism, and Arabo-Islamic ideologies, negative attitudes towards the use of Arabic script appear to be increasing over time. More sociolinguistics altitudinal studies in this regard are required to verify these observations.

Latin script

The use of Latin script goes back to the French colonial period (1830-1962) when missionaries and army linguists were frustrated with having to learn the Arabic alphabet, and with the expense of printing the vowel signs necessary for pedagogical publications. Latin script was more frequently used among those who had some French education during this period. Souag (2000) argues that the increase in literacy under the French also helped the spread of Latin script. Since independence, in 1956 and particularly since the establishment of a standard transcription for Kabylie in 1970, *Latinization* has been strongly promoted by Amazigh (particularly Kabyle) intelligentsia - most of whom, having been educated in French, are more familiar with the Latin script than any other - as well as being very popular with the emigrant community in France (Souag 2000). Additionally, Latin script seems to fit very well with the specific character of the Kabyle *Berberist* movement, much of which is pro-Western to an almost *Atatürk-esque*¹⁹ extent (Souag 2000). As a result, most of the *Tamazight* published in Latin is originally Kabyle (spoken in Algeria); Tashelhyt speakers in Morocco and Nafusa speakers in Libya use Latin to a lesser extent. Publications in North Africa include several poems, short stories, dictionaries, grammars, and a few plays. Latin script is getting more institutional advocacy, such as from the *Haut Commission pour l'Amazighité*. Hence it is speculated that Latin will likely take hold irreversibly in the coming years as *Tamazight* is taught more and more in schools. *Tamazight* has been taught in Algeria since 1995 in at least 16 provinces out of 48 and

¹⁹ Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is the founder of the Turkish republic. He is known for leading a cultural revolution which reducing the power of the religious clerks, introduced the Latin script and gave women the vote. In this process, he created a very westernized Turkey based on universal Secular values and mutual respect.

at different levels and in Morocco since 2002 in at least 317 primary schools and few universities across the entire country. It also started being taught in Libya since the post 2011-Revolution with no specific numbers released yet on how many schools teach *Tamazight*. In 2004, a Latin alphabet Amazigh computer package came out. At the present, almost all Amazigh webpages use some idiosyncratic, keyboard-friendly variety of Latin transcription.

In the rest of this chapter, I will present the multi-orthographic practices of Tunisian Imazighen on Facebook, while investigating the social meaning and ideological practices engendered in each of these orthographic choices. The data in this part of the chapter will be examined based on a quantitative and qualitative approach treating each of the script choices as a linguistic variant. In doing so, I first selected 163 screenshots from the data that shows writing in *Tamazight* language. These are the only screenshots found in the data with *Tamazight* writing. Drawing on a similar work by Al-khatib (2008), I categorized the data based on a system of three functions: “greetings and thanking”; “ethnic-related content”, such as proper and toponymical names; “cultural content” that conveys connotations related to Amazigh society and culture; and “comments on general topics”. The number of occurrences of each of the scripts in the categorization functions was calculated. Applying the qualitative analysis again, I will demonstrate how the script variations are determined by Amazigh linguistic ideologies (i.e. *Tifinagh* as a semiotic marker of Indigeneity; Arabic as semiotic marker of religiosity, and Latin via its connection to French, a language that indexes modernity and power).

6.4.2. *Tamazight* multi-orthographic practices on Facebook

The analysis of the data demonstrated that more than 64% of the orthography of the posts is in Latin script. Arabic and *Tifinagh* are used much less and at almost at identical rates with

16% for the former and 12% the latter. It has also been observed that the participants tended to share postings only in Latin script more often than posts only in *Tifinagh* or Arabic.

scripts	Number of textual posting	%
Roman/Latin	105	64
Arabic	26	16
<i>Tifinagh</i>	32	20
Total	163	

Table 6.1: Distribution of *Tifinagh*, Latin, and Arabic orthography on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook (N=163 posts)

The results in Table 6.1 suggest that more participants feel comfortable writing using Latin script online. This could be justified in two ways. First, it is important to note that the term Latin²⁰ and Roman are used interchangeably in this study. Second, most Tunisians are familiar with the French alphabetic system regardless of their level of education or French competency. Thirdly, MSA and its colloquial varieties are reported being written more often in Romanized script than Arabic especially in digital spaces (Al-khatib, 2008). According to Souag (2000, 2004), the availability of *Tamazight* literature printed in Arabic script is diminishing gradually, apart from religious publications. Results in Table 6.1 agree with Souag's (2000) findings as Arabic appears the least used script in Tunisian Amazigh Facebook.

Other than Gildo, none of the participants knows how to write in *Tifinagh*. Yet, my results show that it is more dominant on Facebook than Arabic. The use of *Tifinagh* also remains higher than Arabic in data in which both scripts are used simultaneously. For example, Figure 61 from Massinissa shows *Tamazight* numbers written in both Latin and Arabic. Examples as such are calculated as one Linguistic variable versus examples in Figure 62 from Yuba's page

²⁰ Latin or Roman script refers to the same set of alphabet. Romanized script, however, refers to the use of Roman script in transliteration of Tamazight language.

showing both Latin and *Tifinagh*, which are calculated as a different variable. Note the text on top of Figure 6.16 includes instruction in Arabic language on how to read *Tamazight* numbers. Similarly, the text at the bottom of Figure 6.17 is an Arabic translation - not *Tamazight* written in Arabic script - of the phrase written in Latin and *Tifinagh* on top of the post entitled ‘learn *Tamazight*’. The text on top of Figure 6.17 includes an announcement of the start of classes for teaching *Tamazight* and *Tifinagh* in two Amazigh associations: *The Tunsian Association of Tamazight Woman* and *The Tunisian Association of Amazigh Culture*.

تعلم كيفية الحساب بالامازيغية مع طريقة النطق السليم لمخارج الحروف وهذا بالاعتماد على الحروف العربية والامازيغية اللاتينية بطريقة سهلة تسمح لك بتعلم الحساب بالامازيغية في مدة قصيرة من الزمن .
الحساب بالامازيغية من واحد الى تسعة .

الاعداد	المقابل بالامازيغي	طريقة النطق
0	Ilem	إلَمْ
1	Yiwen / Yen	يُون / يَان
2	Sin	سِين
3	Krad	كْرَاد
4	Kuz	كُوْز
5	Semmus	سَمْمُولس
6	Sdis	سَدِيش
7	Sa	سَا
8	Tam	طَام
9	Tza	طَزَا

Figure 6.16: Yuba_Linguistic_It40
Latin-Arabic double-script example

November 9, 2015

عديد الهياكل من جمعيات ووادى في تونس العاصمة اعلنت عن انطلاق حصص تدريس اللغة امازيغية
 *الجمعية التونسية للمرأة الامازيغية الطلاق الدروس 11/21 بنادي 13 اوت القصبة نهج باب بنات قرب
 الصادقية لمن يرغب في التسجيل الاتصال على الرقم 98355596
 *نادي لتعليم اللغة الامازيغية ..التيفيناغ. التابع لفضاء نجمة المدينة و ذلك بداية من يوم 22 نوفمبر 2015
 على الساعة 10 صباحا لترسيم الاتصال ب 97057422 نهى فرين/ 98478116 ادارة لفضاء نجمة المدينة
 *الجمعية التونسية لتقافة الامازيغية بمقرها الحالي بشارع إفريقيا بالمنزه الخامس (قبالة محل " سايو" و بجوار
 المتلجات الإيطالية) ابتداء من يوم السبت 2015/11/21 لمن يرغب في التسجيل الاتصال بالمسيد محمد خلف
 الله الكاتب العام للجمعية
 نتمنى للجميع حظ موفق وثابة لهذه الهياكل التي تعتمد على مواردها الخاصة وهذا يجعل اكثر فرص بتسهيل
 تلقى الدروس للموظفين والتلامذة والمطربة
 وكذلك التفكير الجدي في مناقشة وبلورة مناهج سوي تعليمية او بداعرجية للمستقبل واطلاق بعض نشاط
 الامازيغية في البحث في هذا الموضوع خدمة للامازيغية ولتونس وللجيل القادمة



Figure 6.17: Massinissa_cultrual_text_Image 11
 Latin-Tifnagh double-script double example

A close examination of the data reveals that postings with *Tamazight* written in Latin and *Tifnagh* are used more often than postings with *Tamazight* written in Latin and Arabic. More specifically, Table 6.2 aligns with the findings in Table 6.1 showing that participants prefer Latin and *Tifnagh* to Arabic. However, it is important to notice that we have a very small sample of data for this part of the analysis that may not make the findings very conclusive. More of this type is still required in order to draw meaningful conclusions.

Script	Number of postings	Percentage
Latin- <i>Tifinagh</i>	12	57% - 7.3% (of the total data)
Latin-Arabic	9	43% - 5.7 % (of the total data)
<i>Tifinagh</i> -Arabic	0	0%
Total	21	100% - 100%

Table 6.2: Double-script data: Latin-*Tifinagh* versus Latin-Arabic (N=21 posts)

Preference for the Latin/Roman script might not be exceptional. Several written languages use Romanized letters for the following reason. Individuals who introduce a new writing system for a given language are often bilingual. These script mediators or orthography mediators as called by Sebba (2009) usually adopt a writing system that is familiar to them. Subsequently, numerous languages have orthographies based on the Roman alphabet, rather fewer use the Cyrillic alphabet, and many languages use or have used versions of the Chinese writing system. Following the publication of a 'Standard Alphabet' by Karl Richard Lepsius in 1855 and the International Phonetic Alphabet in 1888, the majority of newly written languages have used an alphabetic script based on the Roman, though with adaptations (Sebba 2009). This also could be explained on the grounds that using Romanized letters for writing language is motivated by the growth of Internet and Social Networking Sites (SNS). Romanized Arabic letters, for example, were not used to write Arabic before the advent of the Internet (Al-Khatib 2008; Warschauer 2002, Silhani 2013). The origin of this phenomenon goes back to the 1990's with the introduction of technology (Warschauer 2002). Subsequently, we find that this practice is more common between teenagers rather than adults. The widespread use of this new form of written communication ('*Arabish*', '*Araby*', '*Arabizi*' etc.) is gradually diminishing the need to use Arabic script in communication although things may be changing as Arabic keyboards become more accessible.

In research conducted by Yaghan (2008), four factors are given for the spread of this orthographic practice: first teenagers found *Arabizi* a trend that facilitates group positioning among their peers. Second, several teenagers view writing in classical Arabic as not always able to express contemporary issues nor does it facilitate the use “casual” forms of language such as slang and is better confined to educational function. The third factor was efficiency since the number of characters it takes to write a message in Roman letters is much less than in Arabic script. Finally, teenagers depicted *Arabizi* as flexible form of language, orthographically unregulated and norm-free, which reduces concerns about errors. These attitudes are based on the flexible grapheme system in *Arabizi*. Letters that do not have a close phonetic approximation in the Latin script, for example, are often expressed using numerals or other characters, such as the pharyngeal fricatives /ħ/ and /ʕ/ which are transliterated using number seven 7 and three 3 respectively²¹.

While technical factors have traditionally been responsible for the prevalence of Latin or Roman script in writing Arabic, *Tamazight* might stand as a different case. The choice of orthographies has a history of raising debates in the context of Morocco and Algeria. Souag (2004) argues that the Kabyle movement in Algeria is considerably more pro-Latin. Souleimani (2013) states that *Neo-Tifinagh* was officially selected as the main code of *Tamazight* and won tremendous governmental support to be taught at schools. In each of the two countries, activists, intellectuals, ordinary speakers of the language continue to disagree on the script choices made by the authorities. Questions of identity, ideological affiliation, and linguistic differentiation are important factors behind each script choice. Close examination of the data used in this section of the chapter suggests that using *Tifinagh* to write *Tamazight* by Tunisian Imazighen is often shaped by the cultural meaning embedded in each of the shared Facebook posts. The following

²¹ There is still need for more recent work since writing practices evolve so quickly in digital communication.

analysis is based on how a language function, such as greetings, wishes, announcements ...etc. has an impact on each of the *Tamazight* code choices and how each of these choices is determined by an ideological tendency. The following discussion is based on the various functions and social meanings of each of the script choices use to write *Tamazight*.

6.4.2.1 Arabic functions: Performing religious alignment

Most of the participants in this study are found to use Arabic script to write *Tamazight* more often in religious contexts than in other forms of cultural messages. For instance, they use Arabic to exchange greetings and wishes during *Eid* (Muslim feast), *Moulid* (Muslims 'prophet's birthday), and the Muslim New Year. For illustrations of this, see Figure 6.18 and 6.19 from Massinissa's and Yughurtha's pages.



Figure 6.18: Massinissa_cultural_st53
Tamazight Happy Ramadan message written in Arabic script



Figure 6.19: Yugurtha_cultrual_thread 33
Tamazight Happy *Eid* message written in Arabic script

It is highly likely that by using Arabic script in religiously-bound contexts, Imazighen attempt to express attitudes or stances that cannot be expressed with other orthographies. We argue that the switch to Arabic script in similar contexts serves an affective function through which Imazighen are aligning themselves with the religious meaning-making that is often associated with Arabic. Religious context is probably the main context where they are found using Arabic letters to express *Tamazight* messages. A closer examination of Figure 6.18 shows that the two responses to Massinissa’s message are written in Arabic language and script. Both responses involve exchange of religious wishes as well, such as, *kol a’am w inti bi kheer* ‘Happy New (Islamic) year’ and *Ramadan Mubarak* ‘Happy Ramadan’. In Figure 6.19, commenters use Latin or Romanized script to thank Yughurtha in *Tamazight* for his wishes, but not to exchange religious wishes with him. What is notable here is that the change of the pragmatic context from *exchanging religious wishes* to *thanking* seems to affect the script

choice. This could be verified when we notice that the Arabic script appears again in the last comment in the thread since it is, also, about a religious wish for *Eid*.

Imazighen Facebook interactants often find themselves forced to engage in discussions over their religious identity in a setting where Arabic is asserted as the ‘language of God’ and superior to the indigenous *Tamazight*. It is commonly known that any cultural or linguistic activity aiming at reviving *Tamazight* language and identity or demanding political and social recognition is perceived to be inimical to the proper practice of Islam. The example below from Gildo’s wall clearly describes the ideological association between *Tamazight* and religious dissent or *kufir*:



Figure 6.20: Gildo_cultural_st_image35
Gildo’s comment on associating *Tamazight* with religious dissent

(**Arabic text above image**) The Amazigh movement is usually accused of antagonizing Islam. It is also claimed that most of the members of the movement are francophones. There are even those who would associate the movement with allegations of a conspiracy by foreign agents. These false allegations against the movement have caused many citizens to lose sympathy for the *Tamazight* movement when, in reality, it is a cultural and intellectual movement, open to all religions.

(**Text in the flyer**): Why whenever I declare that: I am not Arab [(bold writing in red is *Tifinagh*; yellow is Arabic)] you use Islam as a shield through which you would shoot your dirty arrows at us [(Imazighen)].).

Therefore, Tunisian Imazighen are often observed taking explicit stances that emphasize their religious alignment with Islam. These stances draw on and perpetuate an ideology that defines them as Muslims while simultaneously placing them in confrontation with the Arab-Islamic ideology. In this respect, the use of Arabic script in religious context is interpreted as part of a discursive alignment strategy and an example of stance-taking that DuBois (2007) describes as *inherently intersubjective*.

Du Bois argues that in enacting a stance, the speaker simultaneously creates three consequences: 1) evaluation of an object, 2) positioning of a subject (usually the self), and (3) alignment with other subjects (DuBois, 2007, p. 163). As such, DuBois states that every act of stance act is both an act of evaluation and an act of alignment. His conceptualization thus suggests that stance cannot be analyzed as a feature of a context-free grammar that is directed at the level of the sentence; rather, it must be analyzed as a highly-contextualized phenomenon that emerges in sequential interaction. In DuBois's own terms, stance must be looked at "beyond the utterance to its presupposed conditions of use" (2007, p. 146). In this framework, individuals position themselves on a scale of alignment with respect to the stance object, taking similar or different stances from others and thus producing intersubjectivity (cf. Davis 2013). The way they position themselves through the use of Arabic script speaks to DuBois's discussion of stance along with the adequation and distinction tactics of intersubjectivity in Bucholtz' and Hall's model (2005).

With the term *adequation*, Bucholtz and Hall explain that processes of identification need not be total or complete but rather "sufficiently similar" and thus, "In order for groups or

individuals to be positioned as alike, they need not—and in any case, cannot—be identical, but must merely be understood as sufficiently similar for current interactional purposes” (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 495). In the choice of Arabic script to communicate religious messages, Imazighen downplay a crucial aspect of difference with other Tunisians in order to highlight a shared religious identity. The stance becomes observable in the excerpt below from Yuba’s page. He is critical of activists who identify themselves as Imazighen, but refuse to celebrate Islamic holidays as an action of resistance against the Arab-Islamic ideology:



Figure 6.21: Yuba_cultural_It48

Yuba presents Imazighen Muslims as the majority in a process of alignment

(Arabic text above the graphic image): “Critic... with all due respect to free speech, yet, I believe that some Amazigh activists who refuse to celebrate Islamic events as part of their activism are free to do so; but could they explain why would they link *Tamazight* to their refusal? *Tamazight* is open to all religions, cultures, and civilizations. How are we going to persuade the Arabized Imazighen that *Tamazight* is their identity, civilization and culture while in acting so, you send them underlying messages that threatens their spiritual and religious beliefs? Eighty-percent of Imazighen are Muslims and most of them are conservative. In putting forth such a discourse you are paving the way for extremist ideologies to win over. This is actually what *Tamazight* native speakers are going through; they are being victims of allegations of dissent and of *takfir*.”

In this post, Yuba asserts - though with no references - that the majority of Imazighen are Muslims. This makes them “sufficiently similar” to the rest of people in Tunisia. Arabic script, regardless of its association with an ideology that aimed at erasing *Tamazight* historically, is now a crucial definer of the religious identity for Imazighen. The idea that Arabic orthography has inherited religious privileges is further illustrated in my Skype dialogue with one of the interviewees:

Excerpt 5: Sifaw, age 33, Interview from July 13, 2016

الامازيغية هي لغتي الاصلية | ولغة اجدادي اما كما تعرفي العربية اختارها ربي وكما تعرفي لحروف العربية كما نقولوا نحنا مقدسة”
 “*Tamazight* is my mother tongue and the language of my ancestors but as you know Arabic is God-chosen, endowing it — as you know— with a sacred character” (Sifaw, age 33, Interview from July 13, 2016).

The following comments on a post by Axil projects the same ideology about the sacredness of the Arabic script and its tight relation to religion.



Figure 6.22: Aksil_cultural_image_thread12
 Imazighen’s comment on the use of Arabic script

Aksil’s posting involves a flyer written in Arabic language and Arabic script. In the graphic image, phrases such “*Tamazight is my identity, my language, my freedom, my life,*” are

written in the color of the Amazigh flag (blue, green, and yellow), which is also featured in the post below. At the same time, the post includes the following statement written in white on the top-left side: “I am Amazigh. I use Arabic language to read the Quran and to pray. God said be Muslim. He did not say be Arab”. While Aksil singles out Arabic for its religious function, the two commentators who posted responses below the flyer appear to be Imazighen as well. They express the view that Arabic as having an inherited-privileged status over all forms of writing including *Tamazight*. Note that the comments written in Arabic in Figure 6.22 are rewritten in Arabic for better legibility, then translated in English as shown below:

Commenter 1:

صحيح لا فرق بين الشعوب و فرق بين الناس ولكن الله أنزل القرآن عربيا لأمر لا يعرفه إلا هو عز وجل وأنزل خاتم الأنبياء والمرسلين محمد (ص) رسولا نبيا عربيا. True, we should not discriminate between languages and people, but God revealed the Quran in Arabic for reasons that only he knows about. He also sent an Arab prophet.

Commenter 2:

يجب أن نتخلى عن سياسة الإقصاء ولماذا نقص اللغة الأمازيغية عن معيشتنا اليومي. لكن حسب تفسيري الشخصي حظيت اللغة العربية بمكانة جلييلة ورفيعة لاعتبرها لغة القرآن وهو الأمر الذي أهلها أن تزيح قوة حضور اللغة الأمازيغية في معيشتنا اليومي.

We should move away of the discriminatory policies, but in my opinion, the Arabic language has been valorized and levelled to a sacred and high position because it is the language of the Quran. That is what made it even more influential than *Tamazight* language in our daily life.

Profiting from the multimodal affordances of Facebook (colors, flyer, images, likes, comments, Aksil tries to simultaneously perform a *Tamazight* identity that is not in conflict with the Islamic one, but rather in alignment with it. In this multimodal discursive process, Aksil is trying to suppress or smooth over points of differences for the sake of creating a similarity (adequation) which will in his opinion benefit the revitalization of *Tamazight*. The use of Arabic script in religious contexts is basically motivated by the need to accentuate Imazighen’s religiosity. According to many Imazighen, it is a crucial discursive strategy to counter the

Islamic discourse wherein *Tamazight* is viewed as “both useless and secular, even profane, represent[ing] a pagan past that the Imazighen should dissociate themselves from if they are to be true Muslims” El-Masud (2014).

6.4.2.2 Tifinagh functions: Performing ethnic and cultural identity

While Arabic orthography is found to discursively act as an affective stance meant to convey meanings of similarity and association, *Tifinagh* seems to convey exactly the opposite stance. In Bucholtz’ and Hall’s words (2005), it acts as a tactic of distinction. This process, the mirror image of adequation, relies on the suppression of similarities to highlight dissimilarity (Davis 2013). In this case, writing in *Tifinagh* is argued to be motivated by an intention to create distinctiveness and ethnicization. However, before we delve in the analysis of discursive distinction processes, it is important to remind the reader that *Tifinagh* has been subject of debate with regard to the standardization of *Tamazight* orthography. Following the selection of *Tifinagh* as an official script by the Moroccan Kingdom in 2003, several controversies arose among people with different views and affiliations (Lafkioui 2002, 2008b, 2011c, 2013). Many perceive *Tifinagh*, especially in its neo-version, as artificial, folkloric, and more suitable for travel brochures and logos than daily use (Souag 2000, 2004). Being concerned that *Tamazight* elicit similar negative perceptions, several Imazighen continue to oppose this choice. Moroccan governmental and institutional support of *Tifinagh* through (IRCAM) (Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe) is interpreted by many Imazighen as a manipulative policy intended to further suppress and isolate *Tamazight*, rather than maintaining and revitalizing it. Tunisian Imazighen, however, do not seem to feel the same way. In the following examples from Aksil’s page, *Tifinagh* script is presented as the main distinguishing feature of *Tamazight*. The fact such

a script exists is sufficient to distinguish it as a vital, unified, independent, and “written” language.

الأمازيغية في دماننا والتيفيناغ حروفها. إن كنت لا تحبها فالعالم واسع. هناك أماكن لا تسمع حتى بعربيتك. إذا كانت لا تعجبكم الأمازيغية ولا تحبونها يمكنكم ببساطة الرحيل إلا بلاد العرب والعربية. تكرهون لغتها وكذلك لا بأس. من سألكم عن رأيكم في شيء لا يعنيكم من قريب أو بعيد. وكذلك ستقولون أنهم سيفرضونها عليكم في المدارس. فلا بأس أيضا فقط إغفونا من تعلم لغتكم التي اخترنا لسنوات ضوئية إلا الوراء. أحقا تريدون أن نستفتيكم في لغتنا؟ لا بأس ولكن لنستفيء في لغتكم أنحن نقلها رسمية أم لا.

Figure 6.23: Aksil_Linguistic_It19

Aksil’s comment on *Tifinagh* as a distinctive feature of *Tamazight* identity

Tamazight is my blood and *Tifinagh* is its alphabet. If you don’t like it, just leave it. The world is big. There are places in the world where you will not even be able to hear your ‘Arabic’. If *Tamazight* doesn’t please you. If you hate it you can simply leave it and go to an Arabic country where you can find Arabic. If you hate the *Tamazight* character, that is fine. You are not required to love it. All that you need to do is excuse us from learning your language (Arabic) which has pulled us millions of years back.

Tifinagh does not only mark the ethnic, cultural and linguist value of *Tamazight* but also creates distinction between those who support the use of *Tifinagh* as a basic writing system and those so-called “*Arabicized Imazighen*” – which implies that all Tunisians are Imazighen but got Arabicized – who favor the usage of Arabic over *Tifinagh*. In this process, another type of opposition is created between those who perform evidence of their *Amazigheity* through their endorsement of *Tifinagh*, and those who do not (the reason why they are labelled *elamzeegh elmusta’arabeen* ‘Arabicized Imazighen’). Irvine and Hall (2000) name such a binary opposition “fractal recursivity.” In the context of script choice, being identified as a *Tamazight* speaker might become invalidated when processed through the work of fractal recursivity, if choosing *Tifinagh* is not articulated explicitly. The binary structure makes the choice of *Tifinagh*

a “categorizing and differentiating cultural ‘object’” (Gal 2002, p. 80). In other words, fractal recursivity determines who of the *Tamazight* speakers is an authentic, original, and indigenous by virtue of choosing *Tifinagh* and who is not, hence, called “an Arabicized Amazigh” connoting *fakeness, un-indigeneity*, and even *deceitfulness*. In this sense, fractal recursivity works in sync with erasure within the Amazigh community itself. The use of *Tifinagh* as an evaluation measurement does not only create hierarchies within the community, but also renders individuals or speakers who cannot be forced into either side of the binary unrecognizable (Accordingly, non-speakers of the language who identity as Imazighen or non-speakers who support *Tifinagh* use even if they have not learnt how to use it yet, have no consideration at all as Amazigh people.

In the example below from Gildo’s page, the use of *Tifinagh* takes the form of an epistemic stance through which the stance-taker presents himself as possessing linguistic expertise and command of *Tifinagh*. Gildo’s post features a text written strictly in *Tifinagh* with no orthographic transliteration or translation despite the fact that whoever sees it in Tunisia is unlikely to be able to read it. By representing himself as a proficient writer of *Tifinagh*, Gildo is authenticating himself while simultaneously projecting his stance with regard to the use of such an orthographic system.

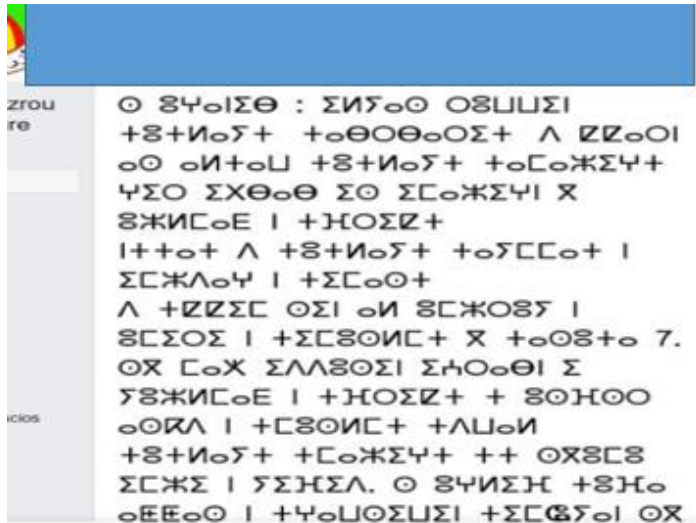


Figure 6.24: Gildo_Linguistic_st 26
Gildo's *Tifinagh* writing on Facebook

Berber language is commonly known as *Tamazight* language. Her speakers are called Imazighen. They live in North Africa. It is the mother tongue of the inhabitants of *Tamazgha*. It is a resisting language across the history. It has resisted till the 7th century when Islam first came to North Africa. When the Arabs came to North Africa to preach Islam, *Tamazight* was still very well spoken at that time.

In the following paragraphs, I examine other examples in which *Tifinagh* writing is displayed on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook. It is notable in all these examples that *Tifinagh* is not deployed for pragmatic, communicative or instructional purposes, but rather as a performative and emblematic act through which ritual greetings, places, logos, actions, announcements and other cultural forms and linguistic forms are made more *Tamazight*.

٤

ⵜⴰⴳⴷⵓⴷⴰ (tifawin)
bnjr
صباح الخير و تهاركم زين



Figure 6.25: Gildo_cultural_st_image30
'Good morning' in *Tifinagh* followed by French and Arabic translation

Figure 6.25 is a post from Gildo's Facebook with "good morning" greeting above the image written in *Tifinagh* first, then translated in French and Arabic. Below the greeting is a photograph of a little Amazigh girl with facial tattoos. Some of the motifs of the tattoos are rooted in the *Tifinagh* alphabet. According to Gildo there is at least a dozen Amazigh tattoo motifs that are *Tifinagh* letters, such as Yaz and letter T also called *Syala* when it appears on the chin. Positioning these letters on visible spots of the body, such as the chins and cheeks converts the tattoo motifs into a primordial symbol of Amazigh identity.



Figure 6.26: Aksil_Cultural_image18
Identity in *Tifinagh*

The term ‘identity’ written in *Tifinagh* on top of the image.

(Arabic text): “We are from North Africa not from Najd or Aleppo. Our ancestors are Imazighen. They have never been Arabs.”

(Inside the blue color blue): ‘identity’; (inside the green color): ‘language’; (inside the yellow color): ‘culture’.

In Figure 6.26 Aksil engages in a process of proving his *Amazigheity* using *Tifinagh* along with the symbolic colors of the Amazigh flag, the blue, green, yellow and red. In combining the textual and visual with *Tifinagh* as most salient feature, Aksil creates a frame for his explicit statement in which he disputes the oriental hypothesis that attributed the origins of *Tamazight* to the Middle East (Chapter 2).



Figure 6.27: Gildo_cultural_image 36
Azrou’s Amazigh Association logo in *Tifinagh*

Figure 6.27 features the logo of the Azrou Association on the upper left. The logo contains only the name of the association in bold *Tifinagh* around the top of the logo and a translation in Arabic in the lower portion. The name of *Azrou Association of Amazigh Culture* also appears in French above the word “Amazighe” in the top center of the image. As it clearly shows, French is written in small size as opposed to *Tifinagh* which appears in bold. The multi-orthographic compositions of these postings reflect different values and meanings that the Amazigh participants have attributed to them during the processes of editing and sharing them on the Facebook space. As shown in Figures 6.26-6.27 above, *Tifinagh* is always placed above other languages with Arabic towards the bottom. The placement of *Tifinagh* on top of Arabic contributes to the linguistic landscape of ‘originality’, ‘precedence’, nativeness, and ‘indigeneity’. Featuring *Tifinagh* in various settings, such in logos, tattoos, or event announcement also provides more exposure to *Tamazight* through its unique orthographic system, while resisting claims that depict *Tamazight* as only an oral language, and allowing those who affiliate themselves with *Tamazight* to demonstrate their position as ethnolinguistically core members of the Amazigh community (Davis 2013), as well as promote the revitalization efforts of Tunisian *Tamazight*.

Additionally, these language practices are evidence of ‘cultural capital’ (Bourdieu 1972, 1982, 1991) that points to a collective Amazigh identity shared by anyone participating in discursive activities on Facebook. The presentation of *Tamazight* as a ‘unified’, ‘written’, and compatible with the keyboard technology responds to the ubiquitous demands and pressure of ‘modernity’, but also empowers it interactively by increasing its social and cultural status (Lafkiou 2014). Nonetheless, the *Tifinagh* writing system remains limited to acts of performativity unless it is followed by Latin or Romanized script and a translation time since

very few people can read it. Thus, even though *Tifinagh* is ideologically constructed as a predominant and essential linguistic marker of *Tamazight*, we find that Latin/Roman script through its association to French to be a more common (and functional) way of writing it overall.

6.4.2.3 Latin functions: Performing a modernized identity

Using pragmatic language, such as greetings and thanking expressions in *Tamazight* represent symbolic and practical markers of an Amazigh ethnolinguistic identity for Tunisian Imazighen. As discussed previously, they are crucial symbolic resources (Bucholtz 2017) that assist Imazighen in authenticating their *Amazigheity*. As far as this study is concerned, there are numerous examples showing that participants tend to deliver *Tamazight* greeting and thanking expressions in Latin script. The function of greeting and thanking is ultimately derived from a certain communicative intent. Expressions such as *azul* ‘hello’, *azul fellwen* ‘hello’, *tifawen* ‘good morning’, *ayuuz* ‘Bravo’, *tannemirt* ‘thank you’, are often written in Latin script.

In most cases, these expressions are followed with an image of an Amazigh village landscape, *Tamazight* women dressed in traditional clothing, or a descriptive message about aspects of Amazigh cultural, ethnic, or linguistic patrimony in Tunisia. Note that the message is often displayed in *Ettounsi* or MSA due to the lack of fluency in *Tamazight* among Tunisian Imazighen as mentioned in previous chapters. For better illustration, see the Figures 6.28-6.29 from Gildo’s, and Massinissa’s pages. Figure 6.28 shows an image of two kids from the village of Azru riding an overloaded donkey with some sort of crops. Again, the letter “Z” in the word Azru appears as the most salient element in the picture reminding us of the indexical notions of this letter. Gildo’s comment on top of the image includes the greeting term ‘Azul’. Figure 6.29 is taken from a cultural event in the village Azru as well. The inhabitants of the village are gathered to watch some sort of cultural race. Gildo’s sends a ‘good morning and love’ message to his

readers through this image. At last, Figure 6.30 is a thank you message written in Latin/Romanized *Tamazight*. Massinissa mentions the names of a number of Amazigh activists that he wants to thank you for the work they have contributed during an Amazigh cultural event.



Figure 6.28: Gildo_cultural_image 22
Azul ‘Hello’ from Azru



Figure 6.29: Gildo_cultural_image 23
‘good morning and love’



Figure 6.30: Massinissa_cultural_st42
‘Thank you’ message, directed at a number of participants at an Amazigh cultural event

Tamazight pragmatic expressions function as identifiable emblems of *Tamazight* affiliation. These expressions more often displayed and included in multilayered semiotic discourse (e.g. text, image, and sometimes a translation into either French or Arabic). Village

landscapes, tattooed women, Amazigh jewelry and outfits, for example are often displayed beneath the greetings as indexical elements of *Tamazight* culture as in Figures 6.28 and 6.29. Combining pragmatic language with cultural images serves symbolic purposes by turning each of post into an emblem-like or an iconic representation of Tunisian *Tamazight* linguistic and cultural identity. The choice to write *Tamazight* in Latin script in these three examples continues to appear in other areas of communication, particularly in didactic posts on the *Tamazight* language shown in Figures 6.31- 6.32 from Gildo, Teziri, and Yuba's Facebook pages.

<p>في السجلماسة اليهودية (أوربية حسن العز) (70isième classe) يصبى ما تجده من الطبيعة الساسية - لفرض الوصاية والظلمة والتبعية وتكريس نظرة الدونية حيث - (l'âge médiéval) القروسطية الشخصيين وممارسة المجون على البنات في قصور دمشق وفرض دفع الجزية رغم إسلام عدد من الأمازيغ ...</p> <p>(دون غيرها من التسميات، والتي جمعها السلام هو "amazigh" أما الأمازيغ فقد أطلقوا على أنفسهم تسمية وقد يحدث أن تطرأ تغيرات صوتية عليه : (imuzagh) كما تجمع جمع تكسير (imazighn) وهو ما يسمى بـ " الكنجرة " - يفتح الحاء - الذي تجده (h) و (z) - حدوث الزياح صوتي بين الصوتين : كما في الأمثلة التالية (imuhagh) عند أمازيغ الصحراء حيث تنطق :</p> <p>+ Azul : ahu! (salut).</p> <p>+ Amizi : amihi (le danger).</p> <p>+ Izi : ihi (la mouche)</p> <p>+ uZuD : uhuD (le mal)</p> <p>+ ...</p> <p>حدثت الزياح على مستوى الزاي حيث يفتقد جهازه لتلطق سبدا ثم يتغير مخرجه الصوتي إلى الحار - (Amacq) يتلطق شيئا (ظاهرة التغير) ويحدث التناوب الصائتي بين العين والغاف فحصل على اللفظة .</p> <p>(amajiq) اكتساب الشين صفة الجهر لتلطق جيما فنحصل على -</p> <p>وصمية " أمازيغ " متداولة عبر ربوع شمال إفريقيا الأمازيغية وإن طوالت التسمية على المستوى الصوتي من قطر لآخر، وهناك أدلة كثيرة على أصالة هاته التسمية تاريخيا وأدبيا وتداوليا ...</p> <p>" فقد وردت هذه التسمية في الكتب القديمة سواء اليونانية أو الرومانية والفرعونية منحلولة من مثل (الليبيين) "libu" وهذه اللفظة ارتبطت أكثر إلى جانب لفظة " Masuc ... "Mazigs/Mazigs</p> <p>بالأمازيغ المسككين مع الفراعنة بمصر أو المجاورين لهم بليبيا وشمال السودان (دارفور وما جاوره) . الذي هزم "Cicung" أو "Cicnq" ينتمي القائد الأمازيغي "Maswac" أو "Masuc" وإلى قبيلة الفراعنة وترجع على عرش الأسرة الثانية والخشرين منذ 966 سنة ق . م .</p> <p>كما أن هناك من أسماء الأماكن تلك التي حافظت على هذه التسمية مثل اسم مدينة " الجديدة " قبل تحريب ولها احتمالات : (Mazagan) اسمها، حيث كانت تسمى " imazighn" حيث نجد تحريفا بسيما لكلمة "mazaghan" : 1 - الاحتمال الأول أي المنطقة المستوية (كونها عبارة عن منطقة سهلية) " mm izaghan" : الاحتمال الثاني - 2 خمس دلالات ممكنة : "amazigh" وللنظرة "zax" وقد يفتقد العين جهازه فينتطق خاء "zagh" - : اسم فاعل يفيد الصفة من الفعل amazigh « 1. والذي يفتقد صرفة الكأنيث وصفاته الاستهلاكي فقدم الصامت - (tazaxht) (tazaxht) والذي مصدره - وتحتي التبل والشهامة والمروءة والكرم وعد قبول الضيم - (zaxht) (zaxht) "الموالي له فتنتطق (azaxmam) (azaxmam) " والمسكنة . فامزيغ بهذا المعنى يفيد الإنسان الحر النبيل، وتوحي لفظة (المودي نفسه والذي من المحتمل أن تكون اليم الثانية منطبة احتمالا عن (نون) بما معناه : الروح الأثيمة ومن . (zuxmmu, zuzghmmu) وإن كانت مشتقة من الفعل (zagh + iman) (azaghman : الأليات الشعرية التي يرد فيها هذا الاسم نجد tdda zzaght ili ur yad da tettyafa mqqar ibna ka g l3ib, ur t annin.</p>	<p>... Ad algh imTTi, 3awdgh am d, a tala sg ma ayd udrgh i zzaght, nadr ak, a ul</p> <p>وله معنى الفعل الأول أعلاه، ومصدره "mmuzgh" « : اسم فاعل يفيد الصفة من الفعل amazigh « 2. الذي يعني الكرم والجد والمروءة والشهامة . "timmuzgha" " بمعنى " فُكّر " ومن مرادفته "smizgh" « : اسم فاعل يفيد الصفة من الفعل amazigh « 3. بمعنى التفكير ورجاحة العقل . "asmizgh" والذي مصدره (xrrs) (xrrs) "swingm" (حارب) بمعنى المحارب الشديد المراس . ولعل "azgh" « : اسم فاعل من الفعل amazigh « 4. تاريخ النضال والمقاومة الذي عاشه الإنسان الأمازيغي في مجاله التاريخي والحيوي الذي هو شمال إفريقيا المتميز بموقعه الجيوسراتيجي الذي شكل مطمع عدد من الدول الاستعمارية المتعاقبة . وهذا المعنى يتكامل مع معنى " الإنسان الحر " الذي أورده أعلاه .</p> <p>(بمعنى ليس وجف) وهو "azgh" من الفعل (nom de qualité) « : اسم صفة amazigh « 5. بمعنى (اليابس والجاف) إما في إشارة إلى نمط عيشه المصم (amazagh) في الأصل متطلب عن الاسم بالوعورة أو فسأوه الطبيعة الجغرافية التي يتخذها مجالا لعيشه . في معناه العام الطلاقا مما ورد أعلاه يعني الإنسان المفكر اللبيب الحر النبيل الشهم "amazigh" إن ف الكريم ذو المروءة المحارب عبر القابل للذل والخوع والمصم نمط عيشه بالاقتصاد على الأساسيات والتكيف مع فسأوه ظروف المجال الجغرافي .</p> <p>عبر أن ما يلاحظ هو الحصار التسمية في بعض المناطق من شمال إفريقيا الأمازيغي لصالح التسميات " icnwiyn", "irifiyn", "ich'iyn" الجغرافية المحلية أو توطينها جذا إلى جنب مثل "imZabiyn", "iqbayliyn", "icawiyn", "iZnagn", "izwarn", "infusn", "isiwan", "isusiyn" أو استعاضتها بتسميات فصحية متبداة لاشعوريا مثل " فتلحين " وهي لفظة مقترضة من ... " isusiyn" (اللغة العربية وتعني الشخص الحار من اللباس ومعرض طريق عابري السيل، وإن كنا نتوفر على كلمة تادر (C - I - h) التي تحيل على نوع من الألبسة التي توجد في بعض المناطق (إلا أن الجذر 'aclih) الاستعمال والوجود في أغلب المتغيرات ولا تتوفر على كلمات أخرى من الجذر نفسه - في حدود ما تم تجميعه من معجم أمازيغي وما تم الاشتغال عليه - كما أن توفر هذا الجذر على حرف الحاء - وهو من الأصوات عبر الأصلية - في اللغة الأمازيغية يعزز كون التسمية مزرعة . عكس ما تجده في الأطلس المتوسط حيث التثبيت بالتسمية الأصلية للدلالة على الإثنية واللغة . ونجد ذلك في الجنوب الشرقي من أرض مراكنس وإن بدرجة أقل، حيث توظف في الأشعار القديمة ومن مثل ذلك ما ورد في البيتين الشعرين التاليين حيث وضعت الكلمة بين قوسين :</p> <p>1 - Kyiin a s bddun (imazighn) RRay Ad af ittnum amm ugadir wawal.</p> <p>... 2 - Ixxa i Lmgghrib iga bu tmunnaD Mr taghul s (amazigh) ad agh tRwu .</p> <p>عبر أن ما يلاحظ هو ميل الشباب الأمازيغي الذي تخرج من مدرسة الحركة الثقافية الأمازيغية والحركة</p>
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Figure 6.31: Gidlo_Linguistic_It7
Meta-commentary on the term *Tamazight*, its lexical and morphological derivations

Figure 6.31 is an excerpt of a long text posed by Gildo on linguistic and grammatical properties of *Tamazight*. The text is written in Arabic. However, whenever there is a mention of the term *Tamazight* or one of its derivative forms, the author writes them in Latin script. When Teziri learned her first two *Tamazight* sentences as in Figure 6.32, she announces her learning achievement in French while she opts to use Latin orthography to write them. Comments on Teziri’s accomplishment include thanking and flattering expressions written in English (<you are a queen>) and *Tamazight* using Roman script (<tanemirt> ‘thank you’; <Ayuz> ‘Bravo’).



Figure 6.32: Teziri_Linguistic_thread9
Learning first *Tamazight* sentences

(French and *Tamazight* at the top of the Figure):
I am happy to announce that I can make a sentence in *Tamazight* now: “where are you from? I am a *Tamazight* from Tunisia”.



Figure 6.33: Yuba_Linguuistic_image63
Tamazight computer vocabulary

In Figure 6.33, Yuba uses Latin script for translating French computer jargon into *Tamazight*. In doing so, Yuba is not only involved in teaching *Tamazight*, but also modernizing it and expanding its domain by displaying a list of modern computer terminologies. A close examination of the list reveal that there is no phonetic assimilation of the words as loans. It is rather based on a semantic approach where the meanings of each of the computer words is expressed with a native *Tamazight* term. For example, the *Tamazight* word for computer is *Asekim*. Yuba’s purist tendency in adopting computer terminologies is very clear through this post. And yet, by making the choice of Latin orthography, he implicitly makes a statement about its usefulness for modern life as well. Hence, *Tamazight* is presented a language that has the vocabulary needed for diverse goals and it can be used to talk about modern matters, such as urban life, technology, and politics. Behind making choices like this, *Tamazight* should no longer be stigmatized for being “poor”, “ugly”, “timeless”, or “backward”. Of course, by no means is this stance limited to Yuba only. This is what most Tunisian Imazighen seem to adhere based on

their discursive practices on Facebook. The linkage of *Tamazight* to languages of modernity and progress, such as French and English serves as source of empowerment to *Tamazight* language.

Tunisian Imazighen almost exclusively use Latin orthography in postings featuring cultural materials, events, proverbs, poems, or other form of literary products. What is found to be more interesting is the use of Latin script in didactic posts meant to teach *Tamazight*. Teaching neologisms, particularly computer jargon, and more quotidian words such as the days of the week, pronouns etc. is done through the written medium of Latin script. More examples are shown in Figures 6.34 and 6.35 from Gildo's page. In the former, he shares a *Tamazight* poem with a French translation. In the latter figure, Gildo is asked about how to say the phrase "Azrou tribe" in *Tamazight*. *Azrou* is the name of his village. Etymologically the term means 'stone'. Hence, he gives the *Tamazight* equivalents of the terms used in the phrase. He even uses the Romanized alphabet or Arabizi to write the Arabic words, such as *qabila* (Arabic word for tribe) and *jami3 sukkan Azrou* (Arabic phrase for 'all the inhabitants of Azrou'). Writing Arabic in Latin script acquires a semiotic potential, suggesting a shift in the hierarchies of these two languages. Latin or Romanized script is constructed implicitly as a symbol of power, progress, and modernity. Additionally, Latin script is put forth as the linguistic matrix towards which Arabic is shifting to assert its value, not vice-versa.



Figure 6.34: Gildo_cultural_poem1
Tamazight poem by Belarhzali



Figure 6.35: Gildo_Linguistic_thread 15
 Translating *Tamazight* to Arabic using Latin orthography

At this point, it is possible to argue that Latin or Romanized script is treated as the default for *Tamazight* based on the Tunisian Imazighen Facebook interactions I have observed. The choice of a Latin-based orthographic system is ideologically tied to various assumptions regarding French well as its linguistic and cultural capital. The French orthography is commonly considered, both in academic and activist circles, the most practical and ‘modern’ system for

writing *Tamazight* language (Souag, 2000, 2004). Additionally, in some of the examples above it is clearly observable that French functions as meta-communicative tool assisting in the acquisition of *Tamazight*. Although in some of the previously analyzed examples in previous parts of this study, MSA and *Ettounsi*, both seem to have had the same meta-communicative functions, it is important to recall that both codes are limited to specific functions of use (religion and affective functions respectively).

Additionally, when these languages are used for translation purposes in Facebook's posts, they always appear in a lower position(s) than *Tamazight*. French in the examples above is displayed either in parallel position with the *Tamazight* script (Figures 6.33 and 6.34) or on the first line of Facebook message as in Figure 6.32. The preference for Latin or Romanized script over the other two scripts could be also understood in terms of the well-established historical and sociocultural links between France and North African countries. Following Lakfioui (2014), it is also possible to argue that the choice of Latin/ or Romanized alphabet as the default script for communication on Facebook "allows for accommodation through meta-linguistic re-contextualization, which is indispensable for successful content transmission among non-fluent and ethnically diverse participants" (pp.140-141). The instrumental function of the Latin or Romanized alphabet is discussed further in a brief interview with one of the twenty-three Imazighen whom I interviewed. Idr was a thirty-three-year-old from the Island of Jerba. This happened when I sent him a *Tamazight* sentence written in Arabic to translate for me via Skype. He replied in Arabic:

Excerpt 6: Idr – age 33, July 31, 2017

اكتبني بلاتينية أوضح. شكون قالهاك الجملة؟ قوليله يكتبهاك بحروف الفرنساوية أوضح. مش مفهومة بالعربي.

"Write it in Latin. That makes it clearer. Who gave you this sentence? [Jerba knew that I am not a *Tamazight* speaker] Ask him to rewrite it using the French alphabet because it is clearer. The sentence is not comprehensible in Arabic" (Idr – age 33, July 31, 2017)

The excerpt above reflects the attitude of many Imazighen who favor the use of a Latin-based script to write *Tamazight*. Clarity, flexibility, and ease of communication and comprehensibility are some of the positive meanings associated with Latin script, which ultimately stem from its linkage to French, and to other culturally powerful international languages, such as English and Spanish. Writing in Arabic script, in contrast, seems to be associated with vagueness and presented as an inhibitor of comprehensibility. Imazighen's negative attitudes towards Arabic are transformed into a resolved desire of distinction and illegitimation (Bucholtz & Hall 2005); often articulated explicitly in meta-commentaries, such as the one below from Takfirinas' page (Figure 6.36):



Figure 6.36: Takfirniass_Linguistic_thread17
 Attitudes towards the World Arabic Day

December 18 is World Arabic day!!!

Why would the world celebrate the Arabic language? What did the Arabs accomplish in sciences? How did they contribute to the progress of this world?

Should I celebrate this day with you or should simply write “ridiculous” and move on. If I had to celebrate a language day, I would pick up February 21st instead (referring to date that relates to a *Tamazight* event)

Commentator1: December 18 is my birthday. I only celebrate my birthday [laughter]

Commentator2: Arabic is the language of male servant. Only male maids celebrate that day

Commentator 3: When Imazighen used to valorize woman, treating her as a symbol of pride and honor, Arabs used to bury her alive.

Here, Takfirinas writes that celebrating World Arabic Day is *ridiculous*. He draws on the iconic link that exists between Arabic and Arabs’ ‘backwardness’ in modern science and technological discoveries. The process of associating Arabic language to failure and backwardness due to general derogatory assumptions about its speakers relates to Irvine and Hall’s (2000) discussion of identity formation during which:

The Other, or simply the other side of a contrast, is often essentialized and imagined as homogeneous. The imagery involved in this essentializing process [...] images in which the linguistic behaviors of others are simplified and seen as if deriving from those persons' essences rather than from historical accident. Such representations may serve to interpret linguistic differences that have arisen through drift or long-term separation (p. 79)

Distancing themselves from Arabic language and culture through explicit meta-commentaries or explicit discursive structures is what Amazigh Facebook interactants attempt to accomplish through their Facebook linguistic practices. Accordingly, favoring Latin over Arabic could be interpreted as an act of differentiation or dissimilarity with whatever evokes meanings of backwardness and an act of association or alignment with whatever evokes meanings of modernity. Souag (2000, 2004) states that “Latin is often seen too unpatriotic” being associated with a colonial language. This notion does not hold strongly on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook. In

contrast, the Facebook space seems to have reframed Latin script due to its association with French – and other modern languages – “[...] away from an asymmetric system in which it takes a dominant and normative position towards a more symmetric system in which its sociolinguistic functions are locally negotiated and assessed, hence engendering a ‘more multi-centered sociolinguistic culture’ (Coupland 2009, Lafkioui 2014). Adopting a Latin-based system of for writing *Tamazight* with no formulaic or strict system of spelling (e.g. The name of the village of Azrou is sometimes written phonemically as <Azru> and in other times in French orthography as <Azrou>) is still significant in that they are the product of debate in which *Tamazight* language is regarded as great cultural capital. Following Lafkiou (2014), any use of this language, whether formulaic or impressionistic, is highly indicative of Tunisian Amazigh identity and serves, even indirectly, in the construction of intersubjective spaces that support the Amazigh claim. In fact, even explicit stances as the one taken by Takfirinas against Arabic implies that *Tamazight* language has a vital cultural value that deserves to be celebrated nationally or even globally. Hence, its acquisition become strongly valued and valorized. Additionally, the display of *Tamazight* in parallel structures with French elevates the symbolic power of *Tamazight* as both dominant and powerful.

The framing of *Tamazight* on Facebook as a flexible and prolific language able to adopt and invent new words, demonstrates how these neologisms can act as markers of social and cultural changes, and reflect attitudes about the language. Writing *Tamazight* words in Latin script while using Arabic as a medium for meta-commentary about the grammatical, phonological and spelling properties of these words indexes *Tamazight*'s position as the key language and enregisters Latin as the way it should be represented orthographically (Figure

6.31). Accordingly, in these online spaces, *Tamazight* overrides the dominant position of Arabic supported by Arabo-Islamic ideologies and pan-Arabism discourse.

Hence, the shared multilingual and multi-orthographic resources on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook play pivotal roles in the semiotic and performative construction of a Tunisian *Tamazight* identity and in legitimizing the language. When *Tamazight* and *Ettounsi* are – almost- equally employed as markers of ethnic and cultural values, Arabic is reallocated from a dominant position to a more limited context of use. Similarly, the script choice and orthographies on Amazigh Facebook require us to examine “orthography as social action” (Sebba 2012; Jaffe et al. 2012). Tunisian Imazighen do not know how to write *Tifinagh* or Latin script as none of these scripts has been ever instructed to them even though the majority of them is expected to have at least reading knowledge of French. Out of the nine participants in this study, only Gildo has an advanced literacy in both orthographies. He claims that he is self-taught. Other participants would always refer to the resources found on the internet, such as the *Tifinagh* chart (see appendix 3) to write in *Tifinagh* or use the Roman²² letters. Arabic orthography, however, is supposed to be the most accessible resource since all the participants can write in Arabic. Nonetheless, the results of my quantitative analysis (although limited by the small size of the corpus) demonstrate that Arabic is the least favored script among these Amazigh activists on Facebook. Analysis of the semiotic and multimodal functions of the three scripts of *Tamazight* language reveal they are selected based on social and ideological factors where questions of identity and linguistic differentiation are the most enduring.

Amazigh Facebook interactions point to the emergence of new unified ideological movement in which the concept of an “Amazigh community” is strongly present. People who participate in reinforcing this concept on Facebook constitute a kind of *language community*,

²² Many Tunisian Imazighen assume that Latin and Roman have the same characters.

which indexes the interactants' belief that they speak or write the same language (Silverstein 1998, Lafkioui 2014). The concept is in contrast with that of *speech community*, which refers to a group of people sharing the same language and set of grammatical norms and rules. The following example from Dihya shows a video teaching *Tamazight* in *Tifinagh* without specifying what variety of *Tamazight* is being taught (Figure 6.37). As discussed earlier, no official writing form has been agreed on since the debate over the three scripts is still ongoing. And yet, *Tifinagh* is presented as the default writing system of the language in this video while *Ettounsi* is used as meta-communicative tool assisting in the acquisition of the target language, *Tamazight*.

درس في اللغة الأمازيغية

Tamazight Leçon 06 (Pronoms Possessifs)

www.youtube.com



24

10 Shares

[See All](#)

Figure 6.37: Dihya_Linguistic_video1
Teaching *Tamazight* in *Tifinagh* and *Ettounsi*

The video of which there is a screenshot in Figure 6.37 is an example of a series of teaching videos produced by a Tunisian Amazigh speaker as part of his volunteering participation in revitalizing the language. The videos are targeting both children and adults. Each lesson is centered on one theme, such as numbers, names of the week days, months, or seasons, pronouns, etc. The screenshot in Figure 6.37 is from a video on *Tamazight* pronouns. The instructor who is a male in his thirties shows in each video wearing a red traditional Tunisian hat

called *Kabbous*. For many Imazighen that type of hat is originally Amazigh for the mere reason that it is Tunisian. Many Tunisians, however, attribute it to an Andalusian origin. As depicted in Figure 6.37, the instructor displays the *Tamazight* possessive pronouns on the left side of a small white board that he uses and writes their Arabic correspondents on the right. In this process, *Tifinagh* is placed first, taking more space and visibility on the board. Based on this display, one may infer that *Tamazight* is a “primordial” and “literate” language. The title of each video in the series is usually written in Arabic and French.

These videos, however, are not about the use of these two languages. Something else is at stake when the decision is made to teach *Tamazight* using *Tifinagh* and *Ettounsi*. The reproduction of these videos on an online platform, such as Amazigh Facebook, characterized by its multilingualism and multiple scripts (*Tamazight*, Arabic, and French) and multimodality make them more accessible to a larger audience. Interestingly, *Tifinagh* is not only a means to represent *Tamazight* as a written language, but to foreground other written linguistics varieties (Arabic and French in this context) characterized by their dominant linguistic value, and to be juxtaposed against them. According to Ivković (2015), multilingual semiosis as such are about “linguistic otherness”. He argues that the property of multilingual representations is based on foregrounding other variety, juxtaposition it against the dominant linguistic matrix in a given context (p. 34). Another series of cartoon videos was also produced by a few volunteers from the village of Tamazret as in Figure 6.38 below:



Figure 6.38: Dihya_Linguistic_video2
Video teaching *Tamazight* to children

This video series represented in the screenshot in Figure 6.38 is devoted to teaching children. Interestingly, it uses *Tamazight* as medium of instruction. These videos contain subtitles in *Tifinagh* followed by a French translation. The video attempts to present *Tamazight* as a ‘unique’, ‘unified,’ and ‘written’ language which responds not only to the ubiquitous demands and pressure for ‘modernity’, but also empowers it interactively by increasing its social and cultural status. The choice of a *Tifinagh*-based script alongside Latin is motivated by a highly-ethicized and oppositional stance vis-à-vis hegemonic Arabic, Arab nationalism, and pan-Arabism in North Africa. The transfer of these pedagogical genres of videos from a limited-local offline to the online context require that they are comprehended by trans-local receivers. This is done by multimodal means, such as the textual and visual. The use of French in this context, constitute an essential requirement for the reconstruction process of a translocal Amazigh identity. According to lafkioui (2013), for reasons of repositioning the *Self* and the *Other* in the

global interactive space, trans-localism (trans-nationalism) forms an important impulse for the reconstruction of group identities (p. 143).

6.4.3. Section three conclusive remarks

The presumption that *Tamazight* is a unified coherent verbal medium used the same way by all Imazighen erases a multitude of *Tamazight* languages and dialects that differ from each other to the same extent that French is different from other Romance languages and from Latin. *Tamazight* is not a single uniform language. However, presenting it so is consistent with how Imazighen tend to view their language and identity. When other *Tamazight* varieties get “filtered through cultural and institutional ideologies” (Ehrlich 2001:4), the work of counter-erasure begins. Presenting *Tamazight* as a one language involves an oversimplification process of *Tamazight* multiple languages and dialect variability. The counter-erasure practice is also observable through using *Ettounsi* (first video) or French (second video) as a medium of instruction or translation while excluding MSA. This becomes clear when we know that that most of the viewers of those videos are more likely to be versed in MSA than in French. Accordingly, script choice and language use on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook is charged with symbolism, in that the presence or absence of a language or script in the multilingual digital space, transmits symbolic message as to the “legitimacy, relevance, priority, and standards of languages and people and groups they represent (Shohamy 2006:110).

To sum up, users on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook have a great number of language and script resources and choices. Multilingualism and multi-orthographies represent some of the main defining features of CMC discourse. Each of these language and script choices is constrained by interactive functions, social values, meanings, and ideologies, which have resulted into the production of a linguistic hierarchy in the online space. Therein lies the

processes of counter-erasure. The outcome of these processes is that when *Tamazight* language or scripts appear in multilingual combinations and settings, it acquires new semiotic interpretations that lift *Tamazight* above the status of ‘minority’, ‘spoken’, ‘endangered’, ‘poor’ language and make it ‘majority, literate’, and ‘unified’ language as any dominant language. Another outcome, is that Tunisian *Tamazight* discourse surrounding language and identity is more about the people and their ideologies than about documenting the language and fostering its actual use. The Tunisian Amazigh community is clearly mobilizing *Tamazight* language under certain ideological conditions and is clearly engaging in their own form of erasure while constructing narratives that reverse and even counteract the ones that led to the long-standing erasure of their language and identity. And yet, even when these processes discursively and semiotically are interpreted as acts of reversing or reproducing new forms of erasure, they remain important for the revitalization of *Tamazight* and also for the construction of a more pluralistic Tunisia where its varied cultures, ethnicities, and languages can no longer be tailored into a pure and neat Arab essence (Salemeh 2010). Other identities also exist and deserve recognition and validation. Therefore, Amazigh language and identity ideological discourse is also valid if that is what is required to voice the fact that *Tamazight* is a fundamental constituent of Tunisian cultural, linguistic, and historical identity.

Chapter Seven

CONCLUSION



Tamazight is an identity, language, civilization, land, and history. It is not ethnicity, race, or anything alike. He whoever inhabited North Africa, regardless of his origin, and got integrated in Amazigh civilization becomes necessarily Amazigh even if he doesn't speak Tamazight.

7.1 Tunisian Tamazight language and identity construction in discourse and semiotics summery

Facebook in Tunisia has introduced a space of new communication that facilitates connections and communications in ways that have never been possible before the 2011 Revolution. The rise in use of such a social networking site combined with the political and social changes following the Revolution have had significant impact on the linguistic landscape in the country. Resurgence of a *Tamazight* language and identity revitalization discourse constitute a major shift in linguistic perspectives among Tunisians. Drawing on insights from theories of language and identity, studies of semiotics, and computer-mediated discourse (CMD), this dissertation analyzes discursive and semiotic performances and constructions of Tunisian *Tamazight* language on Facebook in the hopes that these efforts will lead to future revitalization and revalorization of the language. It was demonstrated throughout this study, that Facebook for Tunisian Imazighen is not simply a communication space, but a flourishing discursive platform where participants construct and contest ideologies about language and identity almost on a daily

basis. Some of these ideologies are visible through symbolic group identity markers while others are less explicit and require some acquaintance with the historical, cultural, and social contexts.

Across the history of the Tunisian *Tamazight* language, a continuous cascade of obstacles has contributed to the decline in its use and transmission across generations as well as to the erasure of Amazigh ethnic, cultural, social identity components in Tunisia. These obstacles include, but are not limited to the growth of urbanism, economic deficiency, diasporization of speakers, competition with dominant languages for association with nationalism, uniformity, and/or modernity, suppression-oriented language and education policies, but primarily the ongoing pressures of Arabization., Taking the form of both a policy and an ideology, its intended goal is to transform Imazighen’s cultural, social, and linguistic ethos. Using these historical realities along with the debates over the etymological origin of the terms “Berber” and “Amazigh” and the typological classifications of the *Tamazight* language family and Tunisian *Tamazight* in specific, I devoted Chapter 2 to re-discuss these issues with the benefit of more updated perspectives.

In doing so, I demonstrated that the term “Berber” does not really hold derogatory meanings as most Imazighen tend to believe. It is found that the term has rather semantic roots in few *Tamazight* varieties, particularly in few Algerian *Tamazight* toponymical places and by the Tuareg where it refers to meanings close to the one of “roaming around”. Stating these etymological explanations is equally important as approaching this online ethnographic study from an emic perspective. Indeed, this study is among the pioneers in considering the natives’ preferences and using only the term *Amazigh* (pl. *Imazighen*) to refer to the people and *Tamazight* to refer to the language. Objection to the term “Berber” is basically an example of folk etymology, inspired by an objection against the Arabic equivalent term “*barbari*”, which

has been appropriated by Arabization and Arabo-Islamic ideologies to demonize Imazighen as barbaric and ignorant. Involving and emic approach allows for a closer and more empathetic view of Tunisian Imazighen and the motives behind their Facebook discursive and linguistic performances. Similarly, revisiting the typological classification of *Tamazight* was necessary, not to raise questions about its structural and functional features, but to present a refurbished typological model of *Tamazight* language family and of Tunisian *Tamazight*.

Taking into consideration Imazighen's preferences of how they want to call the language and how they want to be called as its speakers or representatives are the motivations for redoing the typological tree. Accordingly, Chapter 2 provided a typological tree that employs the term *Tamazight* instead of the traditional terminology *Berber* as a name of the language family and of some sub-branches of that family. Tunisian *Tamazight* has not had any previous representation on *Tamazight* typological trees. This dissertation is possibly the first to include a tree featuring *Tunisian Tamazight* as a separate branch of *Tamazight* language. In addition, it is a pioneer in describing the dialectical variations within Tunisian *Tamazight*. Based on a study by the author, Tunisian *Tamazight* can be classified into three different groups: Plosive, Fricative and Affricate varieties. The first group refers to the dialects that have kept the original proto-*Tamazight* dental plosives as plosives as in the village of Douiret. The second group involves the varieties where the dental plosives have evolved into fricatives as the village of *Azrou/Zrawa*, while the third group involves varieties where the dental plosive are shifting into affricates as the *Tamazight* varieties spoken in the Island of *Djerba*. It is important to notice that the latter variety is still hard to classify since the dental plosives has not changed completely to the affricate status (Bahri, to appear). Including a sketch of the Tunisian *Tamazight* dialectical variations provided some background showing why some Imazighen view the phonological system of *Ettounsi* or varieties

of *Ettounsi* as highly influenced by *Tamazight*. This was illustrated in Chapter 6 where I showed how Yughurtha ascribed the lack of the interdental in *El-Mehdia* city variety to the impact of *Tamazight*.

Facebook as a catalyst of social, cultural, and political change in Tunisia has offered unprecedented fluidity and multiplicity of discourse and language practices. With the awakening of the Amazigh movement, multiple factors such as ethnicity, language, culture, and politics are intertwined in one space in discussions around constructing and reconstructing the post-revolutionary *Tamazight* identity. An issue that was considered taboo before 2011 under the hegemony of a nationalist discourse fostered by the Arabo-Islamic and Arabization ideologies. To discuss the ideological erasure of *Tamazight*, I divided Chapter 3 into three major areas of focus: literature on *Tamazight* erasure, literature on *Tamazight* identity erasure in other North African countries, and a review of theories of linguistic identity as an interactional and ideological product.

Regarding the first issue, I showed how Facebook is a digital space where both, the forces of Arabization and *Amazigheity* co-exist. Most importantly, I demonstrated how actors of Arabization continue to produce a discourse of exclusion and erasure of the ethnolinguistic Amazigh component on the online space. This is visible in their metalinguistic statements shaped by assumptions iconizing *Tamazight* as a lexically poor and primitive language, unable to have linguistic influences on other languages. Describing Amazigh voices as “over-sentimentalized” denies Tunisian Imazighen the capability of participating in an equitable discussion over the ethnolinguistic identity in Tunisia. This view reflects the larger sociopolitical dynamics of language ideologies that are less about *Tamazight*, and more about the Amazigh people demanding political and linguistic recognition. Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) maintain that

language ideologies “are not only about language. Rather, [they]...envision and enact links of language to group and personal identity, to aesthetics, to morality, and to epistemology” (pp. 55–56). The reductionist and oversimplification of the *Tamazight* lexicon is an example of erasure that occurs when the “facts that are inconsistent with the ideological scheme either go unnoticed or get explained away” (Irvine and Gal 2000, p. 38). In the context of Tunisia, it is motivated by the desire to continue delegitimizing *Tamazight* practices not only in public and private sectors (as it has been historically), but also in contemporary digital and social media spaces. Due to the vital significance of Facebook in post-revolutionary Tunisia, demands to Arabize Facebook are often voiced directly by authors, politicians, and the so-called authorities.

At this point, my dissertation’s contribution is entrenched in addressing how hegemonic Arabization and the prevalent assumptions about Tunisian *Tamazight* are constructed through Facebook. Most notably, however, it shows how Facebook has become a more democratized space where both homogenizing ideologies and heterogeneous language practices can co-occur. Sharing the Facebook posts of Arabization advocates on Imazighen’ Facebook pages have always triggered a certain form of speech as [sarcastic] “likes” and visual or textual comments among Imazighen. This reflects the repositioning of power relations where it is no more a relation of dominant and dominated, but rather of processes of identity construction in the interaction context. Lafkiou (2014) provides a compelling statement on how this happens in Tunisia:

[S]peech as a social process can be a source of gaining and exercising power, and thus is fundamental for the (re)construction of identities by minoritised or oppressed groups and individuals [...] Recent political events, such as the Jasmine revolt in Tunisia, show the consequential impact of electronic media on national and international socio-political discourses, empowering ‘dominated’ individuals and groups by allowing them the ‘right to speak’ (p.137).

The interactional paradigm argues that identity as a social category needs to be understood as an interactional achievement that can mark particular practices and people as similar to some and differentiated from others. This required looking at the interpersonal tactics of identity proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), a series of meaningful practices and processes that serve to either establish resemblances or distinctions, to authenticate or denaturalize and to authorize or make illegitimate forms of social action.

Analysis of the linguistic policies in Morocco, Algeria, and Libya found that they are generous towards acknowledging the *Tamazight* element in their national and ethnolinguistic sense of identity, both constitutionally and institutionally. Nevertheless, *Tamazight* continues to be marginalized and devalorized in local Tunisian discourse produced and reproduced about this language (Groff 2018). By, recurrently using “*Berber*”, which has become an ethnically marked and stigmatized term highly disfavored by the majority of *Tamazight* speakers, Moroccans, Algerians, Libyans, and Tunisians distance themselves from the Amazigh people along with the negative social meanings and stigmas attached to *Tamazight* language and ethnicity (e.g. barbarism, ignorance, and even paganism) (Almasud 2014). Despite the fact that *Tamazight* varieties spoken in Morocco and Algeria have resisted extinction, they remain vulnerable to such a threat as long they lack the symbolic power granted by educational, economic, religious, and/or political status. The iconization of *Tamazight* varieties as barbaric, ignorant, poor, and pagan is essentially tied to the low sociopolitical power of Imazighen. These iconic comparisons are recurrent in the public space and social media, particularly on Facebook. This leads me to describe the status of *Tamazight* in Tunisia.

Unlike Morocco, Algeria, and Libya, *Tamazight* in Tunisia has already been pushed into a status of endangerment (Hamza 2007, Gabsi 2011, Sayahi 2014). Attempts to revitalize the

language emerged only after the 2011 Revolution. While an unprecedented number of social and cultural activities have been taking place in the offline space since then, this dissertation argued that a considerable part of the revitalization work is done through the mobilization of *Tamazight* language as a discursive category through the use of CMD on Facebook. In Chapter 5, I started the data analysis by investigating the effects of the revitalization work five years after the revolution through an online questionnaire administered in 2016. The results revealed that there is a positive change of attitudes towards *Tamazight* among Tunisians.

In this way, I argued that *Tamazight's* value has increased in Tunisia as a result of the emergence and rise of an Amazigh discourse on Facebook. The dissertation recognized the role that this social media outlet plays in empowering marginalized languages and identities. Facebook provides the space where a new linguistic diversity in Tunisia is being fostered. The new multilingual reality and linguistic diversity is marked by an excessive use of *Ettounsi* and the unprecedented emergence of *Tamazight* in public spaces on Facebook. Tunisian Imazighen cultivate *Tamazight* language usage on Facebook in ways that defy the long-held assumption that Arabic is the mother tongue of Tunisians in line with the one-language one nation ideology.

Acknowledging the emerging multilingual Tunisia, however, in any official or legal context, might still need more time. With regard to *Tamazight*, two factors may delay its recognition by politicians. First, there is a lack of serious documentation work on the language. There is still much to be done in the form of writing grammars, dictionaries, readers, and pedagogical materials. Arabo-nationalists in power may find the lack of linguistic written materials an excuse to continue to deny the existence of *Tamazight* in Tunisia. Second, one of the defining aspects of Tunisia's transitional phase since the 2011 Revolution is the resurgence of religious ideologies and religious actors assuming political significance in ways that the country

has never experienced before. The rise of religious ideologies is usually accompanied by the idealization of Arabic language and rigorous antagonism towards *Tamazight*. This echoes Al-Masud's (2012) stating:

The colonization of *Tamazgha* (referring to North Africa) is not physically imposed by an outside 'Arab' population, as in settler colonialism, but is a distinct form of colonization enacted by a 'post-colonial' state and maintained by an Arab-Islamic ideology internalized by a historically elite sector [...] Arabic is asserted as the 'language of God' and superior to the Indigenous *Tamazight* (p. 133).

Imazighen are thus prevented from maintaining their own language and customs due to the processes of Arabization and Islamization, in which Amazigh culture is perceived as inimical to the proper practice of Islam. In this sense, the novel multilingual discourse on Facebook may continue to face the threat of erasure as the rising current sociopolitical forces may attempt to police and reshape the online discourse according to the Arabo-Islamic ideology. This interpretation is based on an idiosyncratic analysis of the vulnerable social and political transitional phase that Tunisia is going through at the present.

What is visible through the data in this study is that revitalizing the *Tamazight* element is achieved through the adoption of a modernist language ideology focused on countering hegemony through the assertion of a counter hegemony. To this end, I argued that Tunisian Imazighen are using linguistic, discursive, and semiotic resources to reverse their erasure through what I call 'counteracting-erasure'. Irvine and Gal's (2000) three semiotic processes—iconization, fractal recursivity and erasure—provided a framework to analyze how the same language ideologies are re-constructed and reproduced on Facebook by Tunisian Imazighen as part of the counteracting-erasure processes. The dissertation defines this concept as a strategy used by Imazighen to distance themselves from any influence of the dominant Arabic identity. It also refers to linguistic and cultural practices of a linguistic group to challenge the hegemonic

and dominant representations through constructing positive and equally essentialist images of their community. Accordingly, and like all social identities, Tunisian *Amazigheity* is produced in and during interactions with others. The consequence of this interaction has been the production of ‘representations’ of other individuals and groups in terms of real or attributed differences (Harris et al. 2013).

Following the relationality principle of identity construction (Bucholtz and Hall 2005), the study also used the framework to look at how Tunisian *Tamazight* identity is constructed and reconstructed through various, often overlapping, complementary relations, including *adequation/distinction*, *authentication/denaturalization*, and *authorization/illegitimation* (Bucholtz and Hall 2005, p. 598). While resisting erasure of their language and identity, Tunisian Imazighen reconstruct an ideology that invokes an essentialist relationship between being Tunisian and being Amazigh. They consistently argue that most Tunisians are essentially Imazighen in ethnicity and culture. They also consider Tunisians who do not identify themselves as Imazighen to be *musta’arabeen* or ‘Arabicized’. Although the term literally means ‘to make someone or something Arabic’, it appears to be undergoing a process of pejoration when used by Amazigh community members to connote lack of rootedness and agency. *A musta’arab* is “inauthentic Tunisian”, “betrayer or disloyal to his or her ethnic roots”, “fake”, “ignorant”, and mainly “subordinated”, and “unfree”. Such group categorization or labels are often stated explicitly in the meta-linguistic commentaries.

In discussing this, I devoted the second section of Chapter 5 to demonstrate how Tunisian Imazighen use varied semiotics to engage in an over-indigenization processes of Facebook. I argued that *entextualization* through processes of *contextualization* and *decontextulization* play a key role in Amazigh identity indigenization and performativity. The

focus was not only on language use, but also on other multilingual semiotic resources, such as images, texts, symbols, emblems and discourses that have been reallocated for the purpose of new meaning-making and the creation of new effects. An example is the entextualization of the *Tamazight* character for *Yaz* (the letter Z) from the Amazigh flag as new symbol of the Tunisian flag, map, and other cultural materials. The iconic representation of this grapheme constitutes a redefinition of the entire Tunisia and Tunisians as essentially Amazigh. Another example is in relation to the *Tamazight* term *Tines*, the name of Tunisia in *Ettounsi*. *Tines* is etymologically derived from *Tamazight* and means ‘key’. The use of *Tines* and other toponyms as iconic determiners of Tunisian *Amazighity* indexes Imazighen’s ideological tendencies towards the construction of an Amazigh indigenous identity for all Tunisia. Recurrent references to toponyms with a *Tamazight* substrate in *Ettounsi* often function as essentializing markers for exclusionary and purist ideologies of Amazigh identity for all Tunisians.

As pointed out by Gal and Irvine (2000, p. 37), the machination that naturalizes or essentializes a given linguistic feature and the community who uses it also works in sync with erasure. In the process of erasure, facts that are seen as inconsistent with the official story are “filtered through cultural and institutional ideologies” (Ehrlich 2001, p. 4) and explained away, making ‘victims’ understandings of the events ... unrecognizable or imperceptible” (Ehrlich 2001, p. 1). In attempting to over-indigenize the linguistic, ethnic and cultural resources in Tunisia as ideological contestation to the erasure imposed on them, I argue in Chapter 5 that Tunisian Imazighen have reproduced the same processes by erasing the existence of other linguistic, ethnic, and cultural identities for Tunisians. The idea that Tunisia is crossroads of many civilizations and languages gets a pass in their discourse only if it does not reinforce the discourse that these civilizations have left some traces that shape the current Tunisian identity.

Narratives reinforcing pluralistic identities in Tunisia are seen as a threat to the “Amazigh-resistance identity”. For Imazighen activists, such narratives undervalue the importance and effectiveness of their struggle against assimilation across history. Seeing Imazighen as receptive to the influence of other identities implies they were weak and should be taken accountable of letting the “others”, or the “outsider invaders” affect or even ‘taint’ their *Amazigheity*. Therefore, promoting a mixed or hybrid identities in the context of Tunisia is particularly subject to denaturalization and illegitimation as long as it threatens the ideological expectation of Tunisian Imazighen (cf. Røyneland, 2018).

While resisting the hegemonic ideologies of Arabization and Arabo-Islamization, Tunisian Imazighen reconstruct an ideology that evokes a strong assertion that Tunisians are, if not totally, mostly Amazigh or at least “non-Arabic”. This was demonstrated in the second part of Chapter 5 and reinforced in more metalinguistic commentary from the Facebook pages of the participants as in Figure 7.1 from Teziri’s page below which features the photograph of the politician Mohsen Marzouq and an excerpt of one of his Facebook posts in which he describes his feelings when he was leaving Tunisia towards Morocco in one of his recent trips.



Figure 7.1: Teziri_social_st_image 38
“Arab-Amazigh Maghreb”

Teziri’s comment on top of the politician’s text: The thing that I liked most [in the politician’s comment] is “the Arab-Amazigh Maghreb” [followed by the sarcastically laughing emoji]

The politician’s commenting: [...] Today as I was leaving Tunisia towards Morocco and right before the takeoff, Bakhur scents, Andalusian, Guinewi and folkloric music, the arches, and the Zaafran tastes, all felt like they were entwining and blessing me from head to toe. It is about one culture and a shared destiny
A united African-Arabic-Amazigh Maghreb is the dream of all of us and of our ancestors and we will continue working towards it.

Teziri’s post in Figure 7.1 is a mix of semiotic signs including text, pictures and emoticons. She employs a sarcastic tone through the use of the emoticons to express rejection of considering the Maghreb Arabic and Amazigh at the same time. While Teziri counteracts erasure implicitly through discursive cues such as sarcasm and CMC affordances such as emoticons to infer her internalized ideological perspectives and point of view against considering an Arabic constituent in the Maghreb identity, Yuba engages himself in a more overt metalinguistic statement in Figure 7.2. He explicitly excludes the Arabic element as a component of Tunisian

identity. The photo was taken in 2014 during a protest on Habiba Bourguiba Avenue following the adoption of the new Constitution. The states explicitly that those who connect to the Arabic identity belong to the Arabian Peninsula where the Arabs originally came from, not to Tunisia. As such, he held most Tunisians to be Imazighen even if only some associate themselves with Amazigh identity and even if there is still a vast majority of the Tunisian society who are unfamiliar with the language, ethnicity, and cultural proclivities of the Amazigh people. Yuba's posting was shared by most of the participants indicating that there is a counter-hegemonic discourse and a reverse erasure ideology at the heart of the newly developing Amazigh discourse in Tunisia.

Following the analysis of semiotic multimodalities, the dissertation concludes that Tunisian Amazigh discourse on Facebook “may contain ideological and practical features that defy and reverse the very essence of fragmentation, hybridization, destabilized identities” (Blommaert et al. 2009).



Figure 7.2: Yuba_Social_Image46
Arabs do not belong in Tunisia

(Translation of Yuba’s description in Arabic above the photograph):

This is not a racist discourse. Tunisia is for all, but this is our war against all the inadequate delusional ideas. Let’s be Tunisians and let’s not look to the Gulf except for prayers (referencing the fact that Muslims face east when they pray).

(Translation of the sign):

Arabs... belong to the Arabian Peninsula.... This is Tunisia!

Other examples similar to the ones from Dihya and Yuba were examined in Chapter 5 to demonstrate how Tunisian Imazighen deploy different semiotic processes to make ideological representations that lead to linguistic erasure. In this respect, I showed how participants have been constantly engaged in an intensive labor of identity performance on Facebook. Accumulating indexical signs to create “a relevant context” (Silverstein 1992, 1993, Reyes & Wortham 2015) of a surviving “*Amazighity*” in Tunisia is the process through which most participants have been engaged diligently. A salient example is the use of *yaz*, the letter ‘z’, that

is featured on the Amazigh flag ✖ and functions as an Amazigh identity sign, emblem, and a theme of metalinguistic comments which presupposes a specific affiliation with a specific indigenous identity. Indigenizing their identity sometimes requires an exaggerated yet crucial act of performativity in order to be recognized and be made visible as indigenous Imazighen of Tunisia. The dissertation argued that the indigenization of Amazigh Facebook, also called Facebook *amizighicization* serves as counter-hegemonic force to camouflage other ethnolinguistic identities that played a role in forming Tunisian identity. Tunisian Imazighen do not limit themselves to the work of accumulating of all these indexical signs, but also tend to re-use them in the making of meaning of indigeneity for all Tunisians. Linguistic anthropology calls such a discursive practice entextualization (Bauman & Briggs, 1990, 73; Blommaert, 2005, pp. 46-48; Silverstein & Urban, 1996).

The *yaz* figure has been appropriated, reframed, and reinterpreted by being decontextualized from Amazigh textual and semiotic materials such as from the Amazigh flag or *Tifinagh* scripts and recontextualized in Tunisian textual and semiotic materials, such as the national flag, maps, etc. Through this recontextualization, participants construct a dominant group identity aimed principally at challenging “the minority image” that Arabism and Arabo-Islamic ideologies have confined them to. In doing so, I show how Tunisian Imazighen present themselves as “active agents” for whom entextualization is ‘act of control’ (Bauman and Briggs, 1990, p. 76) through which they claim a degree of social power. This power manifests in various ways: it appears in their access to the activity of entextualization, in the legitimizing act of reusing the texts, in their competence in such reuse, and in the differential values attached to various types of texts (Leppänen et al., 2013). By engaging in this process Tunisian Imazighen

not only reject the label “minority”, but they even modify and appropriate the dominant majority discourse.

Such a discursive practice was further examined in Chapter 6 through the multilingual practices Imazighen engage themselves in. On Facebook, the findings suggest that Tunisian Imazighen’s networked multilingualism (Androutsopoulos, 2013) is shaped by language functions and ideological motivations tied to Amazigh identity construction and contestation of Arabic language ideologies. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), *Ettounsi*, and *Tamazight* represent the three most used languages on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook. Building on the ideology of linguistic differentiation (Irvine and Gal 2000), I explain that each of these linguistic resources carries competing social meanings and ideological associations that deconstruct and reproduce linguistic hegemony. This echoes Vigouroux’ (2015, p. 244) and Røyneland’s (2018, p. 153) understanding of heteroglossia as the simultaneous use of different chunks of ‘named languages’ or registers that will often entail tensions and conflicts between different types of varieties or features, based on the historical associations they carry with them. Accordingly, despite the endangerment status of Tunisian *Tamazight*, the analysis demonstrated that it is constructed as not only a living language but also a very instrumental and functional language. This was exemplified in posts containing long texts in *Tamazight* in different genres, including poems, stories, and even analytical texts about *Tamazight* grammar.

When sharing more than one linguistic repertoire, *Tamazight* is shown to have precedence over the dominant languages of MSA and *Ettounsi*. Such Facebook display of *Tamazight* is most iconically associated with a set of language ideologies about its rootedness, localization, and nativeness which presupposes that other languages, MSA in particular, are “foreign” and “strange”. However, *Tamazight* proficiency is not a requirement in constructing

and performing an Amazigh identity. Using their pragmatic knowledge of *Tamazight* pragmatic language such as greetings, thanking, and address terms such as *ulma* ‘brother’, *dadda* ‘uncle’, or *mass* ‘Mister’ is sufficient not only to index someone’s *Amazighity* but also to signal disalignment with Arab identity. Hence, the use of *Tamazight* on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook does not only index identity affiliation and authenticity, but also acts as an exclusionary membership symbol.

Respectively, the use of *Ettounsi* is also associated with issues of Amazigh identify and belonging. Findings of the dissertation suggested that ideologically for most Tunisian Imazighen, *Ettounsi* is a combination of numerous structural features originating essentially from *Tamazight*. By holding this belief, they adapt this code as a substitute identity marker for those who do not speak *Tamazight*. On the basis of this, I showed that there are some Imazighen who even view *Ettounsi* as simply a different version of *Tamazight* with some Arabic borrowings or influence. This led me to conclude that such views act as a nascent force on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook, erasing other sources of input in the make-up of *Ettounsi*. Despite the limited number of proficient *Tamazight* speakers in the context of Tunisia, Tunisian Imazighen reject being viewed as a “linguistic minority”. *Ettounsi*, according to many members of the community, is sufficient to safeguard their linguistic dominance because it is spoken by all Tunisians. As for MSA, despite its dominant status in society as the language of government and religion, on Facebook its role is symbolically reduced to metalinguistic and meta-pragmatic comments about *Tamazight* language and identity or to a medium of paraphrasing content posted in *Tamazight* language. Interestingly, MSA was largely viewed as tool to challenge its own ideologically hegemonic position and to construct a counter-hegemonic position for *Tamazight*. I base this supposition on an explicit statement by Takfirinas as in figure 7.3 below:



Figure 7.3: Takfirinas_Linguistic_st53
MSA is a tool to assert an Amazigh identity

Translation of the Arabic comment:
I write in Arabic to tell the Arabs that I am not Arab.

Tamazight is typically written using three different systems of writing: *Tifinagh*, Latin or Arabic. Investigation of script choices revealed that Tunisian Imazighen also tend to deploy indexical signs and harbor ideological associations with each of the writing systems they used on Facebook. *Tamazight* posts in Arabic orthography occurred mostly in religious contexts. This discursive practice was interpreted as an alignment strategy meant to establish and perpetuate an ideology that defines them as Muslims while simultaneously taking an oppositional stance to the Arab-Islamic ideology. *Tifinagh* script was found to present a major distinguishing feature of *Tamazight*. It was important for Tunisian Imazighen to highlight the fact that such a script exists even if only few may know how to use it. *Tifinagh* enregisters *Tamazight* as “written” with its own orthographic system and counters oppressive language ideologies describing it as an essentially oral language. Writing in *Tifinagh* is deployed as a performative act through which ritual greetings, places, logos, actions, announcements and other cultural and linguistic forms are made more “*Tamazight*”. The use of such a script thereby elevates the symbolic value of *Tamazight* language as vital and important. The predominant tendency to use Latin script to

write *Tamazight* was explained as a function of the symbolic power that languages which are written in this script have in the global economy (especially French and English). Even though there is no debate over the script choice for writing *Tamazight* among Tunisian Imazighen (unlike in Algeria and Morocco), the linguistic practices on Facebook suggest that Latin might be favored going forward. This echoes Jaffe (2000, p. 506) who observes that “it is not only important to have an orthography, but it is also critical for the orthography to have prescriptive power-to be standardized and authoritative like orthographies of dominant languages”.

Overall, the multilingual and multi-orthographic choices that Imazighen make in their Facebook interactions play a critical role in their identity formation. Through these choices, they constantly engage in a discursive and semiotic making and remaking of what Tunisian Amazigh identity should look like. The case of Tunisian *Tamazight* provides an illustrative example of the complex interrelationship between language, ethnicity and other identity markers, such as nationality or religion. The exercise of choosing one language over another and one script over another on Facebook represents acts of resistance against hegemonic Arabization in North African while mobilizing *Tamazight* language as a discursive category. This works not to create group belonging and to oppose the idea that Tunisia is essentially an ethnically Arab and Arabic-speaking country, but also to produce a counter hegemonic discourse or even counteract erasure ideology that defines Tunisia as an Amazigh Arabized country rather than an Arabic country in which *Tamazight* is a minority speaking- language or even a dying language.

In this respect, Tunisian *Tamazight* language revitalization is not only about a successful or failed project, but also about mobilizing new categories or redefining old ones in order to change ideologies, define new groups, establish or impose new positions of power, and erase

other types of social actors or other social processes. It is, in other words, a constant *rapport de force* or power struggle (Costa 2015).

The dissertation concludes that Tunisian Amazigh Facebook is an arena where hegemonic discourses and erasure ideologies can be defied or reversed. In this sense, knowing about the *Tamazight* language revitalization project may not be sufficient without understanding the discourse that accompanies this project. Through the analysis of linguistic and semiotic practices on Facebook, this study demonstrates that Tunisian *Tamazight* revitalization is not limited to reclaiming linguistic and cultural rights, but also aims at recreating and reconfiguring the semiotic connection between common Tunisian cultural materials, linguistic materials, and semiotic signs and various Amazigh iconic, indexical and symbolic links. According to Feliciano-Santos (2011) these recreations and reconfigurations are “persuasive due to their ability to be entextualized, emblemized and taken on by others” (p. 86).

In view of this, it is possible to attribute the change of attitudes towards Tunisian *Tamazight* observed in this study to precisely these discursive practices where ideologies of erasure are disclosed and contested then reproduced and reversed in what is called counter-erasure process. Tunisian Imazighen do not claim minority status during the process of reclaiming their rights or calling for recognition. Rather, they present themselves as the dominant group that constitutes a linguistic, ethnic, and cultural majority. I argue in Chapter 6 that it is through this discourse that Tunisian Imazighen are simultaneously engaged in a heterogeneous language practice in attempting to over-amazighify everything in Tunisia. “*I don’t remember who said scratch a Tunisian and you will find an Amazigh person*” said Yughurtha during my interview with him in his reproduction of David Hart’s (1999) famous saying, “*Scratch a*

Moroccan, find a Berber". Implicit in this saying is a tacit assertion that Tunisians are Imazighen in essence despite *Arabization*.

7.2. Dissertation contribution

To sum up what I believe this dissertation has contributed, I start with the mythological aspect. Analysis of the discursive and linguistic practices on Tunisian Amazigh Facebook contributes to the study of indigenous languages revitalization in online digital spaces through a combination of methodology of ethnography, sociolinguistics, and the field of language focused CMC studies. With regard to the impact of Facebook in ongoing political and social change in Tunisia since the 2011 Revolution, the dissertation showed that this online platform has been a major catalyst not only of the revitalization movement of Tunisian *Tamazight*, but also of the future sociolinguistic situation in the country.

Despite the continuing lack of any comprehensive documentation efforts along with the lack of systematic efforts to teach the language at the national level, there is no doubt that *Tamazight* status has been elevated and more awareness of its impact on the forging of the current Tunisian identity. Even if *Tamazight* revitalization efforts are more focused on challenging or counteracting erasure ideologies through the online discourse, these efforts have raised awareness of the language and its link to identity and also provided the means by which such affiliation is possible (such as using Facebook to inform visitors that the language has a writing system, using pragmatic expressions, or instructing the etymology of the toponymy in the country).

The deployment of ideologies through Facebook discursive practices such as indigenizing or *Amazighicizing* everything that is Tunisian or defining Tunisians as ethnolinguistically Imazighen even if they don't know *Tamazight* and only speak a variety of a

language (*Ettounsi*) that was influenced by *Tamazight*, is viewed as one of the factors that has raised the visibility of *Tamazight*. Seeing *Tamazight* written on Tunisian Facebook and as the main theme of metalinguistic and meta-pragmatic comments and discussions or in use as pragmatic language, in events flyers, in names of Facebook pages, pictures of places, in signs and other revitalization materials become a part of a mobilizing discourse that has created a new linguistic landscape in Tunisia. With that said, this dissertation is ground-breaking as the first sociolinguistic study of Tunisian Imazighen's cultural and linguistic awaking following the 2011 Revolution.

What I hope to have accomplished in this dissertation is to shed light on the emergence of Tunisian *Tamazight* consciousness, the efforts going on in its revitalization, the significant role of Facebook in providing a space for the construction and reconstruction of this language and identity, and more broadly, the complex relationality between *Tamazight* language and identity, and being Tunisian. This dissertation is the first to analyze erasure and counter erasure strategies from the perspectives of Tunisian Imazighen themselves. While countering erasure is the framework that is framing Imazighen's activism, it is evidently reinforcing *Tamazight* visibility.

On a more general level, this study contributes to our understanding of the how language revitalization takes place in digital spaces. The presence of Tunisian *Tamazight* on Facebook provides an example of an endangered and indigenous language that has gained attention for potential maintenance and revitalization. It is shown in this study, that the introduction of these languages in digital media may not only promote their functional use, but also provide possibilities for transformation of their "ideological valuation" (Eisenlohr, 2004), a goal that all minoritized and endangered language activists aim to achieve. Nonetheless, as much of this study acclaims the opportunities offered by new social media sites to maintain and revitalize

endangered languages, the researcher is aware of the possible risks that placing too much reliance on these sites may entail. One of these risks is related to the unknown future of the social media outlets. While Facebook continues to be the most visited site in the context of Tunisia, for example, there are talks about a growing use of Instagram as well. This being so, it is important to stay alert to the fact that sociolinguistic research on social media, like any other field of research, is ongoing and dynamic (Barton & Lee 2013:183).

7.3. Limitations and future research

There are limitations to the research presented in this dissertation that I would like to state while hoping to address them in future research. Most of the findings in this study are based on online ethnography rather than traditional fieldwork in the community. I did not have the opportunity to engage in fieldwork in Tunisia and interacted with my participants through skype. While realities between online and offline contexts are often connected and the interplay between online and offline communication suggests that these different aspects of social life should not be investigated as distinct from other areas of everyday life (Saehr 2013), I still think that a better grasp of the *Tamazight* revitalization project requires more immersion within the community through an extensive fieldwork in the local community.

Clearly, then, my plan for future research will focus on documenting as many aspects of Tunisian *Tamazight* as possible, and eventually write a grammar of the language. I intend to start by building a corpus of visual, oral, and written texts through an extensive fieldwork within the community. My goal is to produce a grammar out of this research experience for and with the assistance of the speakers. Writing a Tunisian *Tamazight* Grammar will help to preserve the language for future generations, but also encourage its present functionality. Currently, numerous Tunisian Imazighen are interested in teaching or learning *Tamazight*. Yet, they are forced to

import language materials from Morocco, Algeria, and Libya when *Tamazight* varieties spoken in these countries differ to large extent from the varieties spoken in Tunisia. While revitalization efforts on Facebook are important for shifting people's language ideologies, they do not involve any language documentation. This situation may change if both efforts are combined. To this end, I aim to create teaching materials and documentary corpus of *Tamazight* where the community can participate actively instead of relying on outsider linguists. Throughout this study I tried to adopt an emic approach where most of analysis depended on the perspectives of the participants. I aim to follow the same approach during my future field work where the speech community will be involved as partners rather than consultants in the teaching and documentation project.

The use of *Tifinagh* in public space is highly discouraged by the so-called authorities in Tunisia. Based on a recent incident that occurred sometime in October 2018, a pharmacy owner in the town of *Matamata* received order to change the sign in front of his business because it contained *Tifinagh* writing. The Amazigh community was outraged over this incident and engaged in a campaign of writing *Tifinagh* on various public spaces, such as houses front sides, street signs, advertising billboards, walls graffiti. Studying this changing linguistic landscape in the Tunisian public sphere is another potentially rich area for future research. I believe that investigating the effects of the increasing presence of *Tifinagh* in bilingual and multilingual locales in Tunisia will change the way Tunisians think about linguistic diversity in the country. Examining how the new symbolism, social meanings, and layers of signification of this new linguistic landscape will affect the Tunisian sociocultural and linguistic matrix will undoubtedly prove to be a captivating area for future research.

APPENDIX

(1)

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
The Graduate Center
Department of Linguistics

Sociolinguistics Interview Questions

Title of Research Study: Semiotic and discursive displays of *Tamazight* identity on Facebook: a sociolinguistic analysis of revitalization efforts in post-revolutionary Tunisia.

Principal Investigator: Soubeika Bahri
PhD candidate

Faculty Advisor: Cecelia Cutler, PhD
PhD faculty
Lehman College
Interdisciplinary Program in Linguistics

Research Sponsor: None

- 1) Do you identify yourself as Amazigh?
- 2) Do you speak any *Tamazight*?
- 3) If yes
 - a) Are you fluent?
 - b) Did you speak it since childhood?
- 4) If no
 - a) Why not?
 - b) Is it important to speak *Tamazight*?
- 5) What are other languages you speak?
- 6) Do you understand all other *Tamazight* varieties, such as those spoken in Morocco and Algeria?
- 7) Is *Tamazight* a language or a dialect?

- 8) What do you think about the hypothesis that *Tamazight* is nothing but another dialect of Arabic?
- 9) Are there purely Amazigh people in Tunisia?
- 10) Why is that people didn't seem to know much about *Tamazight* until after the 2011-revolution?
- 11) What do you think about the current status of *Tamazight* in Tunisia?
- 12) Why is *Tamazight* surviving in Algeria and Morocco, but not in Tunisia?
- 13) How does *Tamazight* language relate to Tunisian language?
- 14) What remains of Arabic origin in Tunisia?
- 15) Do you accept to be called "Berber"? Why or why not?
- 16) Did *Tamazight* influence Tunisian language?
- 17) Can you give example of words or semantic usages that are *Tamazight*, and yet viewed as Arabic?
- 18) *Tamazight* is considered an oral language though it has a writing system, the *Tifinagh*. How do you explain this?
- 19) Do you think most Tunisians are Amazigh? How do you comment on those who don't like to be identified so?
- 20) Do you recall an anecdote or case where you and someone else where you were discriminated because you spoke *Tamazight* or talked about *Tamazight*?

APPENDIX

(2)

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
The Graduate Center
Department of Linguistics

Sociolinguistics Online Survey

Title of Research Study: Semiotic and discursive displays of *Tamazight* identity on Facebook: a sociolinguistic analysis of revitalization efforts in post-revolutionary Tunisia.

Principal Investigator: Soubeika Bahri
PhD candidate

Faculty Advisor: Cecelia Cutler, PhD
PhD faculty
Lehman College
Interdisciplinary Program in Linguistics

Research Sponsor: None

You are invited to participate in a research study. Your participation is voluntary. You must be 18 years or older, and you must be a Tunisian residing in Tunisia. You may ask for help from anyone who speaks and understands English including the investigator of the research (see contact information below), if you find difficulty with the language.

I am conducting research on language attitudes in Tunisia. The survey takes about 10 minutes.

Your voluntary participation in this study will provide you with an opportunity to share your experiences with Tamazight language and identity. You may choose not to participate or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty to you, but I hope you will help this research project gather this information by participating. There are no right or wrong answers, and you will not be scored or assessed in any way. There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life.

Your answers will be kept anonymous. No personally identifying information is collected or encouraged in this survey.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York has approved this study.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Soubeika Bahri, at wafafedy31@gmail.com.

Consent Statement and Signature

I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study, by clicking "I agree" below:

I agree

I disagree

1) What is your age? _____

2) What is your gender? Male Female

3) Which state are you from? _____

4) What is your level of education?

No school

High school

Elementary

University

5) What are the languages that you speak?

Darija (Tunisian Arabic)

Tamazight

Modern Standard Arabic

Italian

French

German

English

Others _____

6) If you are a *Tamazight* speaker, which village variety you speak?

Douiret

Taoujout

Zaraoua

Guellela

Tamazret

Ouirisighen

Matmata

Ajim

Chninni

Others, please mention the variety.

Germessa

7) How do you evaluate your fluency if you are a *Tamazight* speaker?

I don't speak *Tamazight*

Good

Low

Excellent

Intermediate

15) Tamazight is part of Tunisian heritage

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree to an extent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I do not care | |

16) The death of Tamazight language is unimportant

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree to an extent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I do not care | |

17) Tamazight language revitalization is a waste of time

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree to an extent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I do not care | |

18) Tamazight is useless in modern Tunisia

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree to an extent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I do not care | |

19) Tamazight should be taught

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree to an extent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I do not care | |

20) Tamazight should be constitutionalized

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree | <input type="checkbox"/> Agree to an extent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I do not care | |

21) Tunisian Tamazight is an ugly language (you can choose more than one option).

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | |

22) Tunisian *Tamazight* is a poor language.

Yes

I do not know

No

Please justify in few sentences whatever option you will pick (you can write your answer in English, French, or Arabic. Please use as much space as you need)

APPENDIX

(3)

Neo-Tifinagh for Tamazight

ⵝ	ⵙ	ⵓ	ⵖ	ⵏ	ⵉ	ⵓ	ⵏ	ⵙ
ya	yab	yag	yag ^w	yad	yaḍ	yey	yaf	yak
a	b	g	g ^w	d	ḍ	e	f	k
[æ]	[b]	[g]	[g ^w]	[d/ð]	[d ^ʕ]	[ə]	[f]	[k/ç]
ⵙ	ⵏ	ⵏ	ⵏ	ⵏ	ⵏ	ⵏ	ⵏ	ⵏ
yak ^w	yah	yaḥ	yaε	yax	yaq	yi	yaj	yal
k ^w	h	ḥ		x	q	i	j	l
[k ^w]	[h]	[ḥ]	[ʔ]	[x]	[q]	[i]	[ʒ]	[l]
ⵏ	ⵏ	ⵓ	ⵓ	ⵓ	ⵓ	ⵓ	ⵓ	ⵓ
yam	yan	yu	yar	yaṛ	yagh	yas	yaş	yac
m	n	u	r	ṛ	gh	s	ş	c
[m]	[n]	[u]	[r]	[r ^ʕ]	[ɣ]	[s]	[s ^ʕ]	[ʃ]
ⵏ	ⵏ	ⵏ	ⵏ	ⵏ	ⵏ			
yat	yaṭ	yaw	yay	yaz	yaż			
t	ṭ	w	y	z	ż			
[t/θ]	[t ^ʕ]	[w]	[j]	[z]	[z ^ʕ]			

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