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ABOUT THE TRANSMISSION OF *MAGHREBI* ARABIC IN FRANCE

1. NORTH-AFRICAN/MAGHREBI ARABIC: A DEFINITION

What I am referring to are the languages spoken in the North of Africa, next to Berber, as a mother-tongue or a second language (for berberophones).

Among the Arabic 'cluster' (David Cohen calls it 'l'élément arabe'), it is not neutral to decide what is a language and what is a dialect; it shows indeed, a political and ideological position.

Linguists will say that Classical Arabic, Moroccan Arabic and Algerian Arabic form separate linguistic entities/systems that function differently, especially on the level of syntax or such categories as aspect or nominal determination, as well as that of lexicon.

Since the independences, a national koine is in the making (especially for Morocco or Tunisia), which leaves space to dialectal variation inside the country.

These languages are learnt naturally inside the family or with friends, whereas Classical Arabic, or its modernised version, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) can only be acquired at school or in the mosks. There is no inter-comprehension between Algerian Arabic and MSA or Yemeni Arabic and Moroccan Arabic.

As far as France is concerned, Maghrebi Arabic (MA) refers to the languages spoken in France by people whose family originates in the Maghreb. One may also wonder whether a new variety of Arabic is not in the making with this new situation of linguistic contacts between people coming from different countries or regions of the Maghreb. There is no ready answer to this question yet, but there are hints that this may well be the case in some places of heavy mixing.

Speakers of Maghrebi Arabic are very numerous in France (an estimate of 2 or 3 millions, see below). Several sources and cross-checking are necessary in the absence of any official figures.

People have been migrating from these countries which are former French colonies or protectorates for over a century now.

This is the reason why a new situation was created by the recognition of 'arabe maghrébin', as one of the 'Langues de France' (in what is called the Cerquiglini report, april 1999), when France was about to sign the European Charter for regional and minority languages of the Council of Europe. Bernard Cerquiglini listed an impressive number of languages and invented a new concept, i.e. that of "non-territorial languages"; the list is as follows: "berbère, arabe dialectal, arménien occitonal, yiddish, romani". These are languages spoken and transmitted by French citizens for several generations, not migrant languages which are excluded from the Charter.

As a rule, Colloquial Arabic has an inferior status in the Arab countries and situations of migration, because it has to bear the weight of MSA and for religious reasons, Classical Arabic, which acts as a roof under which their existence is often denied.

In the case of France, we do not know for sure the effects of this 'minorisation' on transmission in France and we shall have to study this in more detail; but we do know that, fortunately, there are also cases of valorisation in the French society.

We are now working on a small project funded by the “Observatoire des pratiques linguistiques en France”, from the DGLFLF¹, Ministry of Culture.

2. TRANSMISSION OF MAGHREBI ARABIC IN FRANCE

There are no legal figures which could give us the number of French citizens originating from the Maghreb ; this question cannot be asked because it would be discriminatory. Thus means that we have to work on estimates and cross-referencing in order to get an idea of the population concerned. Some figures will be more demographic, with the criteria of nationality, others more linguistic when people are questioned about the language they used with their parents.

2.1. SOME ESTIMATES

What we do know officially is the number of persons holding a passport from one of the three countries of the Maghreb : Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia ; this can be a start, but this will never give us a clue as to what language is spoken, Maghrebi Arabic or Berber, or both.

2.1.1. Figures

A low estimate would be to say that there is a minimum of 3 million people originating from the Maghreb, 2/3 of which speak Maghrebi Arabic and 1/3, Berber.

This was confirmed by the Secrétaire d'état aux affaires étrangères, Renaud Muselier, who gave us some extremely interesting figures in his address to the present conference, when he said : “there are four to five million Muslims in France, which a little under ten percent of the population. Muslims in France come from no fewer than 123 countries, although *more than seventy percent* hail from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.”

Seventy percent of four to five million makes between **2.8 and 3.5 million** people originating from the three countries, with either French nationality or from one of the three countries (there a good number of bi-nationals). This probably includes the children under 18. Later, he adds : “In reality, only **one and a half million** French Muslims vote.” This gives us the number of people originating from the Maghreb who have both French nationality, and are over the age of 18.

This is very important, especially when cross-referenced with our sources.

For example, we know that, all age groups included, in 1996 :

- two million people originated from Algeria, two third of which have French nationality (1,200,000), and one third (650,000), Algerian nationality.
- 700,000 people had Moroccan nationality, of which 69% were born in Morocco, and 31% in France.
- 200 000 people had Tunisian nationality.

If we add up all these figures, this gives 2.9 million people minimum, because there may be some persons who only have French nationality and are not included in the Moroccan and Tunisian figures.

¹ Délégation Générale à la Langue française et aux langues de France, Ministry of Culture and Communication ; our project is on « Transmission familiale et acquisition non didactique des langues : Arabe maghrébin : dynamisation de la transmission familiale par la visibilité dans le domaine public (musique, comédie, reconnaissance dans le système scolaire) ».

2.1.2. Arabophones or Berberophones ?

We know that berberophones are over-represented in migration, inside the countries of origin as well as in France and probably more so in the North of Europe (Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany etc.).

Some sources give, for France, 40 % berberophones for Algerians, and 50 % for Moroccans (very small for Tunisia, 1.5 % max.), for all age groups (see Chaker 1997 and in this issue). This would mean :

1,200,000 arabophones from Algeria, 350,000 from Morocco and 200,000 from Tunisia; i.e., a total of **1,750,000 arabophones** and 1,000,000 berberophones (of which a good number also speak Algerian or Moroccan Arabic). This seems very low compared to today's situation (as given by R. Muselier).

All these figures are based on nationality of origin and are not interesting to us from a linguistic point of view ; besides, they are only estimates. In the recent years, some more language-oriented figures have emerged.

2.2 – REAL DATA

We have several sources to check the state of transmission; the last census (1999) which included a family survey where a question was asked about the linguistic practices. At a more modest level, we have figures concerning nearly 10,000 candidates at the national 'baccalauréat' (end of High School), where there used to be an optional test in 'arabe dialectal' (Colloquial Arabic), organised by our Institute (INALCO) for five years (1995-1999). The comparison between the two types of figures is interesting.

2.2.1 - The census of 1999 : "L'Enquête 'famille'" (see INED and INSEE 2002)

For the first time ever in France, during the national census of 1999 (which concerns the residents in France), a special family survey ('enquête famille'), was lead by INSEE and l'INED². 380,000 adults (age 18+) were questioned on family transmission of languages : « quelle(s) langue(s), dialecte(s) ou patois vous parliez, quand vous aviez 5 ans, votre père et votre mère »³. The result was that one adult out of four (26%, i.e., 11.5 million adults) had parents who spoke to them a language other than French. Christine Deprez (see her paper) was the linguist in charge of the linguistic analysis of these figures.

23,000 mentioned Arabic (numerous names were used) ; starting from these raw figures, they deduced a total of **1,170,000 adults** who received Arabic from their parents; to which one must add the population under the age of 18. This includes people without French nationality (the census is about residents in France), but excludes people of North-African ascent who do not speak the language anymore or, more to be more precise, did not mention Arabic in the survey⁴.

It is important to compare this figure with that given by R. Muselier (see above) when he says that 1.5 million can vote (i.e. are French and over 18).

² Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques et Institut national d'études démographiques.

³ What language(s), dialect(s) or patois did your mother and father speak to you when you were 5 (all the time, sporadically)

⁴ Some people may not have thought it worth-wile or fit to mention Colloquial Arabic.

Arabic, one of the best transmitted languages in the survey

The figures are high, but a comparison with the situation of the other languages is important. 6,700 various names of languages were given, which could be reduced to 400 identified languages

The best transmitted languages are as follows : Arabic, Alsatian, Portuguese, Langues d'occ, Langues d'oïl, Spanish, Italian, Breton, German, Polish, Berber, Creole, Turkish etc.

INED gave me some figures about the rate of transmission by region : (from 0.25 % in Bretagne to 4 % in Rhône-Alpes and PACA, 5 % in Ile de France and nearly de 6 % in Picardie) : The average amounts to 2.67 % on the national level.

Transmission to the next generation

As for the transmission to the next generation, Arabic comes in the 10th rank, after Turkish, Chinese, Serbo-Croatian, Tamoul (which are all much more recent migrations) and Alsatian, the best transmitted language of France and before Basque, Berber, Corsican, Creoles and Breton (which is in 24th position)

One must bear in mind that all these figures are based on voluntary declarations, and have to be taken with care. But it can be compared with another form of confirmation from **personal sources**, on a basis of nearly 10,000 students, in the form of an optional test which could be taken at the French baccalauréat⁵.

2.2.2 - The optional test in 'arabe dialectal' ("épreuve facultative d'arabe dialectal") at the Baccalauréat

This test was part of the numerous options a candidate can choose in order to gain a few extra marks at the baccalauréat. Since the beginning of the XXth century, the French 'baccalauréat' has allowed people who had knowledge of a home/second language (not taught in schools) to take this test. In France, marks are given out of 20 ; in optional tests, only the marks above average (10/20) count.

France has a policy of offering a range of 21 languages offered at the national level ; they are named "LVE" (Langues vivantes Etrangères) or "LCR" (Langues et culture régionales). In addition, it offers the possibility to take this test for a list of 28 languages, defined as "ne faisant pas l'objet d'un enseignement". It is a way of taking into account learnings acquired outside school.

Until 1994, it was an oral test, where all you needed to prove was that you could hold a conversation; but the candidates were becoming too numerous (this was actually because of Maghrebi Arabic and Berber with more than 12.000 candidates) and the exams proved difficult to organise. The choice was made, under the influence of the Inspection d'arabe, to transform it into a *written* test (see Caubet 97, 1999, 2000a).

INALCO was then chosen by the Ministry of Education to organise the (written) exams and the marking for a list of 29 languages (Amharic, *Arabe dialectal*, Bambara, Berber, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Fulfulde, Swahili, Tamoul...).

The figures are very impressive, since from the beginning, Maghrebi Arabic represented from 65% to 77% of all papers.

The success rate of students (who got from 11 to 20/20) was 72 % in 1999.

⁵ The degree students take at the end of secondary education, around the age of 18.

I have gathered the information over the five years (1995-99) that the test existed and taken into the account the evolution. It is interesting to note how the number of students increased :

<i>Year</i>	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Maghr. Arabic	5225 (65.1%)	6976 (74.9%)	7517 (74.9%)	8253 (77.7%)	9296 (75.47%)
<i>Algerian Arabic</i>	2097 (40%)	2374 (34%)	2570 (34.2%)	2638 (32%)	2848 (30.6%)
<i>Moroccan Arabic</i>	1983 (38%)	3157 (45.25%)	3380 (45%)	3866 (46.8%)	4231 (45.6%)
<i>Tunisian Arabic</i>	1045 (20%)	1448 (20.75%)	1567 (20.8%)	1749 (21.2%)	2127 (22.8%)
Arabic script	2058 (40.1%)	2465 (35.3%)	2527 (33.6%)	2510 (30.4%)	2171 (25.5%)
Latin script	3071 (59.9%)	4511 (64.7%)	4990 (66.4%)	5743 (69.6%)	6348 (74.5%)
Oriental Arabic	155 (2%)	172 (1.8%)	216 (2.1%)	230 (2.1%)	225 (1.8%)
Berber	1448 (18.2%)	1143 (12.3%)	1277 (12.7%)	1083 (10.2%)	1750 (14.2%)
27 other langu.	1173 (14.7%)	1030 (11%)	1025 (10.2%)	1058 (9.9%)	1046 (8.49%)
Total 29 langu.	7958	9312	10035	10624	12317

Source : Dominique Caubet - INALCO

The number of candidates is impressive ; it represents 1.87% of all candidates :

<i>1999</i>	<i>TOTAL regist.</i>	<i>Total arabe maghrébin</i>
<i>bac général</i>	344,243	4,663 (1.35%)
<i>bac technologique</i>	185,368	5,174 (2.79%)
TOTAL	529,611	9,886 (1.87%)

Unfortunately, in September 1999, three months after its official recognition as a Langue de France (see below), we learned that this ‘arabe dialectal’ had been ruled out from the test; this was done under the influence of the same Inspection d’arabe who had decided to make the test a written exam.

In its place, they introduced a test in Arabic (with no qualifier), presupposing a knowledge of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) ; the candidates are to bring ten pages of documents written in arabic script.

Knowing that this test is, as we saw earlier, NOT prepared at school, one wonders where the students could have learned to read MSA, which is not transmitted in the families. Why suppress it ?

Because the authorities (Inspection d’arabe) imagined that ‘arabe dialectal’ should not be tested independantly from MSA, when it had been for nearly a century... The idea was to introduce the feeling that Arabic is one language, in accordance with the pan-arabic ideology.

3 - ARABE DIALECTAL, A LANGUAGE OF FRANCE, BELONGS TO THE REPUBLIC’S PATRIMONY

To be recognised as a ‘Language of France’, implies that it has been spoken and transmitted for several generations by French citizens : it is NOT considered as a migrant language anymore.

A new situation was created by the recognition of 'arabe maghrébin', as one of the *Langues de France* (in what is called the "Cerquiglini report", april 1999, see Cerquiglini 1999), when France was about to sign the « Charte européenne des langues régionales et minoritaires » of the Council of Europe; B. Cerquiglini established an impressive list of languages (75), and brought a new concept, that of "non territorial languages"; he listed five: "berbère, arabe maghrébin, arménien occidental, yiddish and romani".

The condition, for a languages to be recognized, not to have any official status in an other state (Chinese, Wolof, Spanish, Portuguese or Polish were not eligible); by definition, the languages of migrants are also excluded from the Charter. This means that arabe maghrébin is considered as a language of French citizens. How can this be?

3.1. THE DEPTH OF THE PRESENCE OF ARABE DIALECTAL IN FRANCE

Because of the colonisation of the Maghreb⁶ by France and several migration waves (soldiers from Algeria in the successive wars:1870, 14-18 and 39-45, the recruitment of migrant workers since the beginning of the XXth c., after the independence, in 1962, non-muslims came back massively to France: one million people arrived in France in less than a year; they were called "rapatriés"; they were "pieds noirs" (French settlers, Jews (who had acquired French citizenship in 1870 via the "Décret Crémieux"), harkis (muslims who fought on the French side). In the 60's and 70's, there were more recent migration waves.

In the mid 70's, there was a somewhat contradictory policy; they decided a) to stop immigration, b) to instore family groupings. This is the time when wives and children arrived massively and completely changed the spirit of migration, making it more definitive.

The men had come alone, leaving their families and taking migration as provisional; the coming of families gradually made the "mythe du retour" impossible to achieve, even though old people think about it with nostalgia. We are now on the third generation and sometimes more.

The plurality of Maghrebi Arabic

One must note the plurality of Maghrebi Arabic in France :

- It was the language of the Jews of Algeria who became French citizens since 1870; a number came to France as early as the beginning of the 20th century.
- Immigration from Algeria celebrated its centenary in 2002 ; the first to come were Kabyles (see Chaker). But they were followed, as early as the 20's by Muslims.

In 1962 (end of the war, with Algeria), nearly 20 % of the 1,000,000 of "rapatriés" were jews or muslims ('harkis') and were arabophones.

3.2. – MAGHREBI ARABIC IS VERY PRESENT IN THE FRENCH CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF TODAY

More often than not, the speakers of MA are not proud of their mother tongues, which are described as 'dialects, patois, argot, l'arabe de la rue', the noble language, for ideological and mostly religious reasons, being Classical Arabic.

Vitality of MA in France : Cultural productions

Fortunately, there are circumstances when they can *regain pride* and a positive image; this is obvious in several domains of French culture :

⁶ Algeria was considered as three departments of France, Tunisia and Morocco were protectorates.

1 - cooking, with *couscous*, which is ranked as the 3rd favourite dish of the French⁷ (in the land of cuisine !)

2 - music : with groups or singers as famous⁸ as *Zebda, Khaled, Cheb Mami, Faudel, 113, K-mel, Freeman, Rachid Taha, l'Orchestre National de Barbès, Gnawa Diffusion, etc.* : they are part of the French musical scene. Paris is said to be the capital of 'world music', it is certainly the case for raï and rap in various languages: French, English, Occitan, Breton, Algerian Arabic...

Artists like Khaled, Mami, Faudel, Rachid Taha, Zebda (lit. beurre > 'beur' (verlan/slang for 'arabe'), l'ONB (Orchestre National de Barbès), Amazigh Kateb (Kateb Yacine's son) and his group Gnawa Diffusion, whose fame is national, convey a very positive image for youngsters who can be proud to show that they know these rhythms and understand the language.

3 - humor, the best paid actor in France, more than Depardieu, is *Jamel Debbouze* (who played in *Amélie Poulain*, and in *Astérix et Cléopâtre*); young people love *Gad Elmaleh*, adults prefer *Fellag, Smain, Boujenah* etc.

4 - cinema, where arabe maghrébin is present : in *La Vérité si je mens !* (MA is spoken by young Jews from the Maghreb in their thirties, as a language of intimacy), *Le gone du Chaâba, Inch'allah Dimanche !* (whers migrant workers are featured)

5 - writers : Kateb Yacine, Mohamed Dib, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Aziz Chouaki, Fellag (who received the « 1^{er} Prix Raymond Devos de la Langue Française », in March 2003).

6 - Ways of speech, slang:

A series of words and expressions from MA have entered the varieties of French slang, which is spoken by kids of all origins in the suburbs.

The general intonation of suburban French sounds strangely North African.

Words like, 'zarma' ('as if; so called' > *zeÇma*), 'kiffer' ('to like'), 'gaori/gouère' ('non Muslim' > *gawri/gwÀr*), 'foutre la darwa' ('mess up' > *deÇwa*), 'khalouf' ('pork' > *ƒellÜƒ*), 'r'nouch' ('cops' < 'snakes' > *ƒnÜ-(a)*) etc., and many more have entered the language of youths in the suburbs, but also the centres of towns.

All this is now part of **the plural French culture** (it is not a situation where people are mixing cultures: a new culture is being built, in a dynamic process).

3.3 - THE RECOGNITION OF MAGHREBI ARABIC BY THE CIVIL SOCIETY IS MUCH MORE ADVANCED THAN THE INSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION

From what we have seen, there is an implicit recognition in the civil society of a very important influence of North Africa inside the French culture.

It would seem important that this language should *appear publicly* and become visible on the public scene, and not remain in the family frame (private sphere).

But, the institutions are held back in their official recognition, because there are two contradictory trends :

In 1999-2001, when Lionel Jospin was Prime Minister, the recognition of Maghrebi Arabic was encouraged by his services and the various ministries of culture : Trautmann

⁷ See Fellag 2003.

⁸ Most of them were crowned with 'Victoires de la Musique' in 2000 or 2001.

and Tasca. J.-J. Aillagon, the new Minister of Culture (since 2002) is also in favour of it. The ministry of interior is very pragmatic and always encouraged this trend.

But, on the other hand, some forces hold back and want to conform to the official position of the Arab states ; they are the Ministry of Education (J. Lang and L. Ferry), with the Inspection Générale, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, all this being linked to the « politique arabe de la France ». The idea is that France has nothing to do with Arabic and everything has to be decided officially in the Arab states; in a word, it cannot be a language of France.

The later trend is dominant so far and is comforted by the speakers of the language who are often ashamed of it.

4 – MINORISATION VS VALORISATION

There is a complex attitude towards Maghrebi Arabic ; it is often devalorized, not being considered a proper language, but, on the other hand, there are occasions when one can feel some pride.

If the institutions were to take it into account officially, the valorisation would be much more common and might help solve some problems in French society.

4.1 – LINGUISTIC INSECURITY AND MINORATION

Resignation ?

A worrying feeling is rising among youngsters whose parents come from the Maghreb : hearing about the suppression of the optional test in ‘arabe dialectal’ at the French baccalauréat (see above), which she had passed a few years previously, gaining 18/20 (« C’était génial, j’ai mis cinq minutes pour arriver à le lire ! »⁹), a brilliant young woman of Algerian origin reacted as follows : « Pourquoi ils ont fait ça ? Ah, ben oui, c’est normal, c’était un truc bien pour nous ! »¹⁰. She immediately associated this to the cancelling of a TV journalist, Rachid Arhab who presented the midday edition of the news on the public channel ‘France 2’ in 1999-2000, after only one year¹¹. Resignation, finding this discrimination common or normal...

Not bilingual

The mastering of two or more languages is not thought of as being bilingual, because one of the languages has no status, no existence (dialecte, patois, it is not written, it has no normative grammar). This is a case of ‘unbalanced’ or ‘subtractive’ bilingualism (see Vermes 1997).

This is not considered as a real knowledge because it is not learned at school; what is sad is that this feeling was encouraged by the Ministry of Education when they suppressed the optional test, arguing that this was not worth marks for the baccalauréat (this was one of the arguments developed).

F. Melliani (2000 :66) explains : « Ainsi Mohamed ne s’estime pas réellement trilingue dans la mesure où il aurait appris l’arabe marocain et une langue berbère au seul sein de la

⁹ “It was great ! it took me five minutes to learn how to read it !”

¹⁰ « Why did they do that ? Well, of course, it’s normal ! It was something positive for us !”

¹¹ Voir à ce propos, dans Caubet 2000b, une déclaration de Jamel Debbouze au *Vrai journal*, Canal+, 9-01-00) : « On commence à être de plus en plus représentés ! Rachid Arhab sur France 2 ! Zinedine Zidane ! On commence à véhiculer une image positive ! ».

famille : « - es-tu trilingue ? – trilingue ? non (...) j(e) les ai apprises sans l(e) vouloir/ (...) c'est pas parce que j(e) l'ai voulu/ j(e) les ai apprises par l'éducation quoi/ » »

Self-hatred or linguistic insecurity ?

How can these attitudes be described ? Is it “lack of self-esteem” or only linguistic insecurity ? What is certain is that the lack of valorisation of the family language and culture can lead to serious disturbances. What happens is that the youngsters turn to other forms of valorisation in order to regain self-esteem, like religion, and too often, fundamentalism.

3.2. – PRIDE AND TRANSMISSION ???

One must also look at the positive sides, in the form of valorisation : the recognition, together with Berber, as a Langue de France; but unfortunately, this was not publicised enough and they do not know about it!

3.2.1. Cultural scene, artists

As we saw previously, this is very important, because the youngsters are in a position where they can teach something to others, where they are the one who know !

They can help translate the words, teach how to dance, how to pronounce Arabic in the *karaoke*'s.

I heard a very recent statement by Faudel, a young *rai* singer born in France of Algerian origin. He said that a father told him that his daughters had started speaking Arabic again when he started singing, and he says : “You cannot imagine how proud I was to hear this”. So the pride affects both, the artist himself, who feel comforted and the young fans...

3.2.2. Passage to literacy¹²

Another potential source of pride could be the passage to literacy.

When the optional test became a written exam, it had another result (unexpected by the authorities): the students were surprised and proud to realise that their mother tongue could be written and that they were actually ABLE to read and write it.

We had given a choice of two graphic systems : arabic and latin script; writing (of another language, MSA or Classical Arabic) is not transmitted in families where parents (40+) are illiterate in Arabic, and very often in French too !

The younger generations are perfectly literate in French, especially when they reach the level of the baccalauréat, but NOT in Arabic.

Before the test, they were worried, because they thought they would not be able to manage it (it had not been taught at school). When they discovered that they could learn to read, and write in two hours' time (in the latin script, of course), they expressed pride.

It was an interior pride, but also social, when they could the director of their Lycée that they got additional marks for the baccalauréat.

This went on for five years (1995-1999) and tests were kept in families and passed on to the next year; and the numbers of candidates went up 1,000 each year reaching 10,000. This is when they decides to suppress it.

3.2.3. SMS, e-mail, chats in the Maghreb and in Europe

Never has arabe maghrébin been written so intensively, by millions and in latin script, both in the Maghreb (see Caubet forthcoming, Berjaoui and Babbassi) and in Europe.

¹² Thanks to Joel Sherzer for finding this equivalent in English of the French expression “passage à l'écrit”.

Young people has grasped the new technologies and jumped from hardly any writing, to massive, but completely unofficial writing, in the form of chats and SMS on cell-phones.

They have developed conventions for writing on chat networks (see Berjaoui); but it is also used by cell-phones users, especially in Morocco (see Caubet forthcoming).

One must bear in mind the importance of cyber-cafes in the Maghreb where people cannot afford a computer. In Europe, it is used to chat all over the world (see Babbassi).

For SMS (see Caubet forthcoming; the following examples are taken from the article) in Morocco, from 2 to 8 million SMS are sent daily, and mostly in Moroccan Arabic. It is also used in France, often in combination with French.

Here are a few examples from Morocco :

- **mabrouk aïdkom, wach chbaâto chy lham. ândak matkhaliwlich haki man dwara ou chwa ou lham drass** (frère > famille)

mabrûk çid-kum, wâ... baçtu... i l'em. Çand-ak ma txalliw l-i... feqq-i men ed-duwwâ@a u e... wa u el-l'em d-e@-@âs

My best wishes for the Aïd, have you eaten enough meat? Don't forget to leave me my share of tripes and méchoui and the head of mutton.

- **I. ândak tnsay tgehi lkhetah rah ândna mtihan rada flârbiya. ana tnârfak maândak âkal** (copine > copine)

l. Çandâ-k tensây tgûli l-xit-ek @â-h Çend-na mtifân •edda f-el-Çarbiya. Âna tanÇerf-ek

I, Don't forget to tell your sisters not to forget that we have an exam in arabic tomorrow. I know that you forget...

Answer :

- **nti alhamka li ma maândak âkal**

nti, a el-femqa, lli ma Çend-ek Çgell!

You are the crazy one that forgets!

4. CONCLUSION : WHAT STATUS FOR 'ARABE MAGHRÉBIN' AS A 'LANGUE DE FRANCE'?

The position of Maghrebi Arabic in France is full of contradiction ; there was a curious concomitance of two decisions of vital importance in 1999, but they go in opposite directions :

The official recognition, together with Berber (their fate is linked) of MA as a Langue de France;

The suppression of the optional test for MA only, contrary to Berber which continues happily (see Chaker).

We have seen on several official occasions that they are not treated equally; contrary to MA, Berber has no prestigious language over its head; it has no real official existence, no instances in the Ministry of Education, no ambassadors to take care of it, which is probably an advantage. France feels more free to take action as far as Berber is concerned. Berber also has numerous militant associations, actively acting in its favour.

MA is much more present in fact on the cultural scene, but it has no militants so far to push it; only individuals, artists or linguists stand up for it.

Why develop this self-hatred, opposing to their REAL knowledge, to a distant dream language, linked to religion and identity (arabity)?

In these conditions, what future is there for MA in France? On the level of family transmission, institutional position (when its name has been banned from primary and secondary education, in favour of "Arabic")? How can these two factors interfere? We cannot predict it...

The future will tell...

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