Research Approaches

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Language and Religion
Moroccan and Turkish Communities in Europe

In the 1960s labour migration from Morocco and Turkey to Western Europe started to take place. This labour migration was incited by the shortage of manpower in the European market. Initially these labourers had a short-term goal in mind, to earn money and return to their countries of origin. This option of return soon changed into a myth. Spouses and children joined the working men and soon their children were born in Europe.

At present the Moroccan and Turkish communities in Europe count 1.2 million Moroccans and 2.5 million Turkish people. The largest Moroccan communities are found in France (more than 500,000), the Netherlands (around 160,000), and Belgium (around 150,000). Spain is a recent immigration land for Moroccans (80,000 persons). The Turkish community in Germany is the largest (nearly 2 million), followed by the Netherlands (around 200,000) and France (also around 200,000). All figures are based on the nationality criterion. In terms of generations one can distinguish the first generation, which consists of the labourers that came in the sixties and their wives; and the second generation, the children of the first generation born either in the homelands or in Europe. At present a third generation is being formed of which the members are nearly all born in Europe. Migration has not stopped yet. Uniting of families still takes place and through marriage new migrants from Turkey and Morocco come to Europe. These last groups form as it were new groups of 'first'-generation migrants.

The Linguistic Heritage

The Moroccans that came to Europe took with them the linguistic heritage of their homeland. Morocco is not, as is the general rule in nearly all states, a monolingual society. Its official language is Arabic in its formal form (Modern Standard Arabic or Literary Arabic, which is a modern variant of Classical Arabic). Arabic in its dialectal forms is spoken by nearly all Moroccans but is the mother tongue of only about 45% to 50% of the population. For the rest, the mother tongue is one of the three Berber languages spoken in Morocco. Berber and Arabic are, linguistically speaking, quite distant from each other. Berber in general is not understood by arabophone Moroccans. The Moroccan Arabic dialect serves as the general language of communication in daily life in Morocco. Finally French, and to a smaller extent Spanish, still plays a role in Morocco. The rate of illiteracy in Morocco is quite high with percentages of 41.7% for males and 67.5% for females.

The majority of the Moroccans that came to Europe in the sixties were illiterate or semi-literate. They came from the north of Morocco, the Rif area, where the berber language Tarifit is spoken. In Belgium and the Netherlands the majority of Moroccans is berberophone while in France this percentage is around 50%. In Europe the berberophones form, in general, the majority of the Moroccan community as opposed to the situation in Morocco. The Turks that came to Europe were generally better educated than the Moroccans. A minority of them is kurdophone.

A New Language Situation

Members of the Moroccan communities took with them their specific linguistic characteristics but were confronted with societies that were, linguistically speaking, totally different. For the first generation, there seemed to be no urgent need to adopt the new languages as they were in Europe only on a 'temporary' basis. This is why many of these migrants hardly acquired German, French or Dutch. But when children came and new children were born the situation changed drastically. These children were and are much more open-minded to the new societies. They had to enter into the educational system and thus were exposed to the new languages. In general this intergenerational language shift follows the following model (cf. Jaspaert & Kroon, 1993):

- G1 minority language dominates majority language;
- G2 minority language and majority language are in balance;
- G3 majority language dominates minority language;
- G4 majority language replaces minority language.

This implies that in due time the minority languages will disappear. Of course this is a model and as such cannot be considered as the standard path that is followed. Research on this situation in the Netherlands has already shown that the process is more rapid for the Moroccan community than for the Turkish community (De Ruiter, 1995, 1997). This seems to be caused by the fact that Moroccans are linguistically more diversified and thus the impact of the Dutch language is far greater than for the Turkish and Kurdish-speaking communities.

At present one can state that the first generation Moroccans still predominantly use Moroccan Arabic and/or Berber as the vehicle of oral communication. If literate, Arabic to a small extent is used as the language of reading and writing. The second generation is still quite capable of oral receptivity of Moroccan Arabic and/or Berber, but certainly more so for Dutch. This generation hardly uses Modern Standard Arabic as its language of reading and writing. Instead, Dutch is used. The third generation will be much more proficient in Dutch in all respects. For the Turkish community these processes are not so far advanced as for the Moroccans. Especially the first, but to a large extent the second, generation still in majority masters Turkish and/or Kurdish. The second generation as a whole seems to be relatively bilingual in Turkish or Kurdish and Dutch. But the process of Dutch becoming increasingly predominant will continue in the third generation.

Home Language Preservation

If the processes as described above continue to take place the end result will be that the Moroccans and Turks in Western Europe use German, French or Dutch exclusively. Of course this will be a matter of long duration because migration still takes place. For integration into the host societies, mastering the languages of these is a great advantage. But should this also imply the 'loss' of the original linguistic background? Most European countries installed a form of *Home Language Instruction* (HLI). Home Language Instruction is a form of education in which the language of the home countries of -in this case- Moroccan and Turkish children at the elementary school level is taught. Nearly all Western European countries offer some form of this type of education (cf. Obdeijn & De Ruiter (1998) for the state of the art of the Moroccan HLI in Europe). The original aim of this HLI, in the seventies and early eighties, was to preserve the home language and culture of these children, for eventually they would return to their lands of origin. In order for them to properly function there, they should maintain a minimum proficiency in these languages as well as maintaining knowledge of the cultures. Later on the goals changed into 'preservation of the original language and culture while integrating into the new receiving society'. It was considered essential that these children would not forget where they came from yet at the same time would integrate in the European societies. HLI hardly obtained a strong position in the curricula of elementary education in the various countries and its teachers often feel marginalized. Also in most countries it is taught only 1 to 3 hours per week which does not yield satisfactory results in terms of knowledge of the original culture and proficiency in either Modern Standard Arabic or Turkish.

Language and Religion

Generally all Moroccans that come to Europe are Muslims. Islam and the Arabic language are strongly linked. Does not the Koran say: *innanâ anzalnâhu qur'ânan ᶜarabiyyan* (sura Yusuf, 2)? This distinct relation can be seen in the Moroccan communities in Europe. It is striking to see that especially the parents (most of them still from the first generation) want their children to follow HLI because Arabic is the language of the religion of Islam. Their children, though, show more practical motivations. They want to learn Arabic because it is handy when they correspond with family in Morocco or go on holiday there. A more essential problem lies in the educational systems of the divers European countries. The teaching of religion is not self-evident especially for instance, in France, where it is not allowed within the national educational system. In the Netherlands and Germany, although not forbidden, the teaching of religion is marginalized. Furthermore, there is no clear definition of what the – religious – contents are to be. Actually, HLI does not seem to contain much religious instruction. The little research done on HLI shows that the contents of these courses consist in the teaching of languages for at least more than half of the time. Of course cultural and religious themes are tackled as well but only to a limited extent. It is important to consider that the Muslim community is not undivided: It is characterized by a large variation. One finds all political and religious main- and substreams in it. Within this context it is interesting to see that in the Netherlands a number of Islamic elementary schools (including one secondary school) have been recently established. The Dutch Educational Law provides the opportunity to establish schools on a denominational basis. We observe then that -in majority- it is either Moroccan or Turkish religious organizations that found these schools. Thus ethnicity seems to play a role within the Muslim community. Not much research has been done on these schools but it seems that Islam is given more expression in them.

A more recent development consists in Arabic and Islamic lessons given in the mosques of Western European countries. This could be due to the fact that the number of hours of HLI is limited and its effects are not optimal. Furthermore, HLI does not contain explicit religious education. Research on 'regular' HLI nearly always includes questions to children on the measure in which they follow 'extracurricular' HLI or mosque education. Most studies point to percentages varying from around 15% to around 45%. The number of hours that these children follow Arabic or Islamic lessons outside school varies from 1 to 10. Unfortunately, hardly any research is conducted on this kind of education. The world of the mosques in Europe is not an easy one to approach. Nevertheless, some studies do show that the mosque education does not significantly contribute to proficiency in Arabic. This seems to be caused by the conservative methods applied. Reciting the Koran by heart does not imply that one is fluent in Arabic.

It is not only the mosques that offer lessons in Arabic: secular autonomous organizations do so as well. These courses comply much more with modern teaching methods. In this context it is interesting to see that for example the Spanish authorities have recognized ATIME (*Asociación de trabajadores inmigrantes marroquíes en España*) as an official means for offering HLI to Moroccan children residing in Spain (Obdeijn & De Ruiter, 1998). Also in France secular organizations are active. The establishment of many Berber associations which strive for the promotion of Berber language and culture, possibly even within the context of HLI, is noteworthy.

The Research Group of Language and Minorities

The Research Group of Language and Minorities of the Faculty of Arts at Tilburg University has been focusing its attention on researching home languages and the instruction thereof. This small article is of course not sufficient to reflect all activities of the research group.

Interested readers are therefore referred to the following address to obtain more information:

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