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Transnational Education Systems In Morocco: How Language Of Instruction Shapes Identity

Sarah Robertson
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Transnational Education Systems In Morocco: How Language
Of Instruction Shapes Identity

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Spring 2015

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ABSTRACT

The North African country of Morocco boasts a rich history of linguistic diversity, which was further compounded with the introduction of the French language under the protectorate in 1912. Through a complicated mix of Fus'ha (Modern Standard Arabic), Darija (Moroccan Dialectical Arabic), French (historically the language of the protectorate), and most recently, the introduction of English, the system of education with respect to linguistic instruction is left in a bind. The divide between the public schools, private schools, traditional Arabic schools, and well-established French schools only grows, as the Moroccan Education system hurts for change. If language shapes education, and education shapes a person, then to what degree does the question of cultural identity factor into Morocco's debate on language of education? In this paper, I seek to take a closer look at this issue and examine the common perceptions that fuel the debate on the *Transnational and Multilingual Moroccan Identity*, public schools, private schools, and where Moroccan education hopes to be going next.

I approached the question of linguistic identity with a study of a select few private schools in Rabat, Morocco's capital. My research included interviews, varying by age and academic background. Through a careful analysis of these interviews coupled with existing academic discourse, we find that through the evolution of Morocco's deeply flawed education system, multilingualism is paving the way for a new, transnational Moroccan identity, and through an understanding of this cultural identity, the education system may find grounding for positive future change.

Key Words: Language, Linguistics, North Africa, Education, Identity.

INTRODUCTION

“Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression in their society” (Sapir, 1929 p. 209). These profound words come from American linguist Edward Sapir’s publication in 1929, as he worked alongside Benjamin Whorf in establishing their famed hypothesis of the *Theory of Linguistic Relativity*, claiming that a person’s thinking is directly shaped by their language, and thusly, that people who speak different languages perceive and think about the world in very different ways. This school of thought is a fascinating one in multilingual societies, such as Morocco, with its complicated mix of languages and varied linguistic identity. In this research, I strive to find a representation of linguistic relativity within the context of Morocco, in examining how the language of education – French, Arabic, and now English – shapes personal identity, and through this, forms the broader frame of Moroccan culture.

I came into this study through a long-standing personal interest in socio-linguistics, more specifically, bilingualism and language acquisition. Having spent a semester in Aix en Provence, France and having just begun a semester in Rabat, Morocco, I was intrigued by the system of education in both countries. My interest was sparked while attending a lecture given by the Moroccan writer Fouad Larouy in Amsterdam, during which he discussed the intricacies of the language debate in Morocco, a topic developed in-depth through his book *Le Drame Linguistique Marocain*, a book which became an integral part of the background for this study.

The question of identity factored into the discussion when I read Larouy's compellingly charming novel, *Une Année Chez les Français*. The novel tells the tale of a young boy from Beni Mellal as he enters into the French Lycée Lyautey in Casablanca at age 10, thanks to a government grant. The story follows trials and tribulations as young Mehdi adjusts to life as a boarder at the school, in a seemingly French world within Morocco. Though a work of fiction, Larouy's personal experience through the French school system makes it clear that this novel undoubtedly reflects real emotions, real people, and plausibly real situations. I was fascinated by this idea of being a stranger within one's own country, as was reflected through the novel. Was it really possible to feel so estranged at school that it no longer reflects home? If such cases exist, how do these individuals see their own identity? How much of this identity is shaped by their culture, their language, and ultimately their education?

I approached the question of language identity with a study in Rabat, and more specifically a study of a select few private schools in the area. The question of language is best interpreted through direct one-on-one conversations, and this topic required a variety of viewpoints and different perspectives. My research was composed of nine extended interviews with individuals varying by age and academic background to widen the scope of opinions and offer a broad perspective on such a delicate matter. In speaking with individuals, I was able to gain the most appropriate collection of research, through which I began to gain insight to the above questions and come to conclusions regarding the present state of cultural identity and language of education.

This research finds its place in the wider frame of academia on the subject, as the present state of education remains in a state of distress. Much of the literature available highlights the problems that exist today and the extensive historical background of these problems, but offers little hope for the future. In presenting a more valid understanding of the specific effects that these school systems have on individuals, and how the Moroccan identity is changing, this research seeks to open more doors to education reform, and to widen understanding of the Moroccan multicultural identity, as less of a problem, and more of an evolution as the country adapts to today's modern world.

This paper is composed of a review on present literature that sets a background for the study, followed by an in-depth explanation of methodologies used to conduct the research at hand, a breakdown of the findings collected through interviews and observation, and an in-depth analysis of these results to place the research into the broader frame of scholarship on the topic. The ethical considerations of the interviews conducted will be addressed in the methodology section of this paper, along with the limitations that arose through this study concerning timing and access. Appendices included at the end of this document will outline specifics on the interviews conducted, namely interview questions, and consent forms that were utilized.

This study shed light, ultimately, on the intrinsic transnational nature of Moroccan society, coupled with the deeply flawed Moroccan education system. Through its linguistic history, however, Morocco shows a linguistic future of a growing and changing system of education, one in which the layers of language and

cultural identity of the country are highly valued. This is part of a transition to a new kind of Moroccan identity, one that through a strong value of transnationalism, makes any Moroccan's kinship for Morocco as their home, that much stronger.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature available on language ideology, education, and identity in Morocco was a prevalent publication during the end of the 20th century, as the issue gained popularity with the changing of legislation and a strengthening public sentiment on education and language within the country. Schools of thought and prominent discussions are centered around five main categories, which will make up the body of this literature review: the historical impact of the French protectorate, the Arabization movement with its strengths and faults, the present state of the French language, the relation between language, culture and identity, and the vast divide between private and public education.

Historical impact of the French protectorate

Contemporary and past scholars on the issue of language and education agree on the undeniable lasting impact that France's protectorate between 1912 and 1956 had on language ideologies in Morocco. Looking back through history, scholarship notes that "Centuries before the introduction of French into Morocco, the Moroccan school system was rooted in Islamic tradition in which Arabic was the language of instruction and theology was the main content." (Alalou, 2006, p. 409) French did see a slight introduction through the end of the 19th century and early 1900's as small French-Moroccan schools began to open. However, the important shift occurred with the entrance of the French protectorate into Morocco in 1912.

Scholars recognize the protectorate as one that intended to preserve Morocco's own culture to some degree, a movement attributed to General Lyautey, the French Resident General. Indeed, Spencer Segalla (2009) writes that "while some aspects of colonial discourse invited a nationalist counteraction, others complemented and reinforced the nationalist conception of Morocco" (p. 208), a point echoed in by Ali Alalou (2006) "General Lyautey created the modern Moroccan public school system which cemented the importance of the French language [...] Ever since this introduction into mainstream education, French has played an important role in Moroccan culture" (p. 410). A less optimistic position is offered in scholarship that regards French colonialism in the Maghreb as a whole (characterized as Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco). While primary school enrollment nearly doubled in Morocco during the 1920's, "The vast majority of those in school were the children of French settlers" (Heggory & Zingg, 1976, p. 573), and the approach to language instruction is reported as follows "Arabic and Islamic studies received minimal emphasis. Arabic language studies, for example, were optional, and even when taught, were scheduled outside of the regular school hours. French educational goals supplanted traditional Muslim aims" (Heggory & Zingg, 1976, p. 574). Grandguillaume (1983) reflects this point, noting that the French school system introduced into Morocco benefited both Europeans and Moroccans living in cities (p. 171). This discrepancy in views of the French approach to education during the protectorate cements this period as having something of a controversial effect on education, and differentiates the effect of the protectorate on Arabic instruction from the effect on Berber (indigenous) education – a common theme as well, and a source of great unrest. As

this research focuses on the differentiation of French and Moroccan Arabic in education, the Berber policies during the protectorate will remain minimally discussed, but their importance is viably noted, as scholarship exists in this area as well. “Under the Protectorate, although vernacular Arabic served as the *lingua franca* in many rural regions, French policymakers and administrators attempted to discourage its use. [...] Similarly, in rural Morocco, Arabic became the de facto administrative language for the French (who rarely learned Berber) [...]” (Hoffman, 2008, p. 727). Though views differ on the positivity of the protectorate’s impact, the universal stance through literature is that France’s protectorate in Morocco remains a primary component of the current state of education.

After independence, the educational policies imposed by the Moroccan government expressed an ambivalence to the French colonial system, as the legislation made points to utilize “public education to promote a Moroccan identity based in Arabic and Islam,” (Segalla, 2009, p. 248) while simultaneously encouraging a continuation of Francophone instruction. The few years after the protectorate led to a disaccord amongst policy-makers as to the future of language instruction, until finally the policy of Arabization began in 1983. The scholarship surrounding the Moroccan government’s policy of Arabization in schools at this time is widely-versed, and makes up the second vital component to a comprehensive review of literature on the subject.

Impacts of the post-protectorate Arabization Movement

A policy that began taking form in 1957, Arabization was officially implemented in 1983. The policy to shift language of instruction in schools from

French to Arabic was formulated in stages, and is widely regarded by scholars on the subject as a failed attempt at nationalization in schools, and viewed primarily as a step back for Moroccan education as a whole. Joshua D. Angrist (1997) writes,

Beginning in 1983, the language of instruction for new cohorts of Moroccan sixth graders was switched to Arabic. The estimates suggest that the elimination of compulsory French instruction led to a substantial reduction in the returns to schooling for Moroccans affected by the change. This reduction appears to be largely attributable to a loss of French writing skills (p. s48).

He later adds to this concept of a negative aftermath of this policy by saying, “Strong native language skills may prove to be of more enduring value in the local labor market than French language skills. In the short term, however, language reforms appear to have contributed to the popular impression that Moroccan schools ‘are now turning out bilingual illiterates’ “(p. s50). Ali Alalou (2009) echoes the importance of addressing Arabization,

After independence, the countries of the Maghreb began to reform their educational systems. One of the aspects of this reform was the progressive replacement of French with Arabic as a medium of instruction: a policy known as Arabization. Any discussion of the status of French in Morocco involves addressing the Arabization policy (p. 558-559).

In his prior publication, Alalou (2006) recognizes the negative results of this policy, as the French language remained strong despite these efforts, “Ironically, Arabization seems to have reinforced the notion that French is the language of the elites, a notion that the bilingual education system seemed to have a chance to break down” (p. 413).

Additional scholarship criticizing this policy recognizes Arabization as a main factor in the present problems seen in the education system,

I maintain that Arabophone education has been in fierce antagonism with the recycling of French protectorate pedagogical visions in the school, the job market, and processes of national development and that the widely acknowledged crisis of public education relates intimately to this competition (Boutieri, 2012).

In their economics study on the direct impacts of Arabization, Angrist and Lavy concluded,

The loss of French writing skills is probably not the sole reason for the reduction in returns to schooling experienced by students subject to the Arabization program. These findings suggest, however, that policies designed to reduce the private costs associated with the switch in language of instruction would be most effective if they focused on additional training in written French (Angrist & Lavy, 1997, p. s72).

As the process was instated by Arabic nationalist supporters, scholars also note the intrinsic connection between the Arabic language and Islam, and view this link as having been strengthened through the movement, “Standard Arabic has

been revived through the Arabization process, which has led to the strengthening of the Muslim faith and to the revival of Islamic convictions” (Ennaji, 2005, p. 2). This is recognized as one of the few strengths of Arabization, and once again, recognized collectively as so through the principal scholarship on the matter. Entire works have been published on the impacts and repercussions of the movement, and all notable scholars recognize its validity in the linguistic debate in Morocco. After having stressed the importance of noting Arabization within the context of linguistics in Morocco, we turn to education and language in its current position.

Present state of the French language

This third resounding theme through literature on our topic is the importance of the French language presently, regardless of the efforts in the past to revive the content of Arabic within schools. Alalou (2006) reports,

Despite the government’s efforts to promote Arabization, French is still widely used among professionals in business meetings and conversations – Face-to-face or by telephone outside of the workplace. More interestingly, Elbiad’s (1985) surveys show that many Moroccan bilinguals claim that they express their ideas more clearly in French (p. 202). Similar results were reported by Ennaji (2002) (p. 82). (p. 413).

The French language is recognized as the language of the educated, often alluding to it as the language of the upper class, but is not without conflict. “French is seen either as an expression of modernity, a tool to access technological and scientific knowledge, or a symbol of domination that has contributed to identity

crisis and acculturation” (Alalou, 2006, p. 408-409). Echoed here, Moha Ennaji (2005) writes, “French is regarded as the language of social prestige and success. It is spoken and written by educated technicians, secretaries, managers and directors of companies. French is usually associated with social promotion, wealth, sophistication, modernity, quality, reliability and similar Western values” (p. 109). Economically as well, in the Angrist/Lavy (1997) study, it is reported that “The relationship between language skills and earnings among Moroccans suggest that going from minimal skills to functional competence in written French raises earnings by about 17%” (p. s71). The current state of the French language with respect to Morocco’s language policy, or lack thereof, is discussed as well:

In the National Charter of Education, which outlines the language policy adopted by the State, the mother tongues (Berber and Moroccan Arabic) are marginalized, as they are not considered languages of mass communication. Moroccan Arabic is excluded from education [...] For lack of a better language policy, French tends to dominate the linguistic market and to be imposed *de facto* as the “official language” (Ennaji, 2005, p. 201).

Again with respect to policy, Charis Boutieri (2012) quotes inspector Ahmed Ziarai in a meeting of the Moroccan Ministry of Education in 2008, “The French language in the Moroccan context is the key to professional and social success; what will our students do after the baccalaureate?” (Boutieri, 2012). This note of Morocco’s official language and language policy is an important one, as Morocco’s official language is Modern Standard Arabic.

These scholars' remarks are widely recognized, and literature reflects this view of French becoming a *de facto* official language. Another crucial work is Fouad Laroui's (2011) *Le Drame Linguistique au Maroc*, an extensive study on the linguistic balances and evolution, primarily of Arabic (both standard and dialect) and Amazigh, through Morocco's history. Even Laroui (2011), however, recognizes the intrinsic importance of French, "Il faut ajouter que le français est aussi langue de distinction sociale – point n'est besoin d'être Bourdieu pour voir cela immédiatement – ainsi que langue d'ouverture sur le monde, bien qu'elle commence sur ce point à être menacée par l'anglais " (p. 75). Not only does Laroui recognize the importance of French through scholarship on the subject, he brings in this inevitable introduction of English that has happened in recent years and is growing stronger. An additional common thread, the English language is noted as the primary foreign language taught now in Morocco. As this is a more recent development in Morocco's linguistic balance, not much scholarship focuses on English in Morocco, but it is noted nonetheless as a vital international language, and has entered this scope alongside French.

The role of Language in Cultural Identity

We now turn our review of literature to the question of Identity as it plays into Language and Culture. A great deal of scholarship on the subject exists, though less so with respect to Morocco, particularly in present day. Moha Ennaji (2005) addresses this point here, "Language attitudes in Morocco, as in many multilingual societies, reflect a complex sociocultural piece of Moroccans at the individual and societal levels, which accounts for hesitation and ambivalence in terms of language

choice and attitudes” (p. 157). She also addresses the convergence of culture and identity in reference to the Whorfian hypothesis, “Modern anthropologists are concerned with the relationship between language and culture, and have for the most part developed their theories through the Whorf hypothesis, which stipulates that the various forms of meanings created in the patterns of language reflect a view of the world and a culture” (p. 20). In a third point, Ennaji (2005) addresses the convergence of language and culture with respect to identity, “Languages, and more particularly mother tongues, are important for identity-building. They have a symbolic role as they represent cultural elements that affect the first identity of individuals” (p. 24).

The sociocultural importance of bilingualism in Arabic and French is highlighted through literature as well, and Laroui (2011) notes that “Tout Marocain cultivé, ou ayant suivi une scolarisation « normale » est en principe bilingue arabe-français” (p. 132). Boutieri (2012) echoes this sentiment: “Moroccan sociolinguists have repeatedly raised questions about the hierarchy of what is naturally referred to as Arabo-French bilingualism. Surveys of language attitudes continue to reiterate that Moroccan students consider French to be a key instrument to social promotion” (Boutieri, 2012). However, this question of bilingualism is then raised as having a very negative affect on mother tongues and identity, “in some situations, bilingual shift to a second language may not lead to the absolute erosion of language identity, [however] in some bilingual situations, the second language is so powerful that it provokes loss of the mother tongue” (Ennaji, 2005, p. 25). To conclude her point with relation to Morocco, Ennaji states,

Pluralism is both a historical tradition and a way of life in this region of the world. This is one of the reasons why most Moroccans do not view multilingualism and multiculturalism as a danger for national unity. Morocco is a complex country in the sense that it is linguistically and culturally diverse. Islam, Arabic, Berber and French are pillars on which national identity is built (p. 26).

Fouad Laroui (2011) addresses this intersection and the issue of mother tongues with language of instruction as well,

Les marocains se trouvent confrontés, dès leur petite enfance, à plusieurs langues: 1 - La langue maternelle,[...] qui peut être l'arabe dialectal marocain (la *darija*) ou le berbère/tamazight. Plus rarement, ce peut être le français, dans le cas d'enfants de couple mixtes ou de couples très francisés. 2- Les langues de l'enseignement [...] C'est le plus souvent l'arabe classique/littéraire, mais ce peut aussi être le français [...]. Il ne fait donc aucun doute que la question linguistique est fondamentale au Maroc. [...] On ne peut pas comprendre les problèmes culturels qui se posent au Maroc - et en particulier, on ne peut pas comprendre dans quelles conditions la littérature marocaine d'expression française est née au Maroc, au XXe siècle, pourquoi elle perdure, comment elle a évolué et comment elle a agi en retour sur la société - sans d'abord analyser la question linguistique (p. 7-10).

This debate between bilingualism, particularly in Morocco, being of harm or hurt is a complicated one - I offer here a final point made by Charis Boutieri. (2012)

Through her analysis, Boutieri returns to linguistics and identity, and quotes two famous sociolinguists, “In postulating language mastery as the outcome of power relations, Dell Hymes and Pierre Bordieu have memorably opposed an understanding of linguistic competence as the universal practical sense of a language by its speakers, a perspective I readily support” (Boutieri, 2012). She then quotes Ahmed Moatassine,

Motassime understands this educational bilingualism as competitive instead of complementary and as suffered rather than mastered. He considers this linguistic competition to be the primal cause for school failure, especially for students of modest backgrounds who have little contact with French in everyday life and, therefore, face classroom bilingualism as an “unsurpassable obstacle.” He connects what he forcefully labels as “savage bilingualism” with “under-development” and suggests that the country’s inability to advance may have a lot to do with linguistic tensions that bear on the confidence and creativity of students. (Boutieri, 2012)

The literature concerning language in conjunction with culture and identity proves paradoxical when set alongside the question of bilingualism in Morocco, as is proven by this differing of views amongst publications. Though scholars agree upon the dominance of Arabic-French bilingualism, they fail to conclude on its ultimate results upon the individual, with respect to culture and identity.

The vast divide between Private and Public education

In a final conceptual category found through literature on the topic, we turn now to the apparent gap in the separation of Public and Private schools in Morocco. Mentioned with regard to the Arabization movement, Ali Alalou (2006) writes, “Fairly or unfairly, Arabization is often identified as the cause of the crisis in Moroccan education, and those who can afford to send their children either to the French schools or to private schools have fled the system” (p. 414). This imbalance is reflected by Boutieri (2012), “participants reappropriate aspects of the public school’s design in order to advance their own agendas. This reappropriation leads to even more fragmented and unanticipated paths to educational promotion and social integration than those envisaged by educational policymakers” (Boutieri, 2012). With a final note, we turn to Fouad Laroui (2011), who defines Morocco’s educational dilemma as one of a “statu quo” nature, where one can either hope for change or rest on their laurels, and argues the case that the problems and divide within the system of education leave any idea of reform hopeless,

Le statu quo rendra impossible la réforme de l’enseignement et **perpétuera l’enseignement à trois vitesses** caractéristique du Maroc d’aujourd’hui: la Mission française (et assimilés), le privé bilingue et le public. (C’est une typologie qui nous semble définir et pérenniser une division en classes – élite/bourgeoisie/ « le reste » - bien mieux que ne le font les rapports de production, même s’il y a une évidente homologie entre les deux définitions...) (p. 139).

Scholars concur on the divisiveness of education, though with uncertainty as to future steps - "In this article, educational anxiety emerges as a sociocultural critique. The circumvention of public education through privatization, parallel schooling, corruption, or charity – all responses to this anxiety – is telling of the radical uncertainty about how to plan the future of the next generation" (Boutieri, 2012). Public/private school divide is widely regarded by scholars as one of the downfalls of Morocco's education system. However, scholarship is lacking in potential solutions to this dilemma.

Missing Perspectives and Areas for Future Study

Present scholarship on this subject matter discusses the five areas addressed above, the historical impact of the French protectorate, the Arabization movement with its strengths and faults, the present state of the French language, the relation between language, culture and identity, and the vast divide between private and public education. However, not much literature exists to address the current status of education. With a select few from the past three or four years, many of these publications are from 2006 or before, and most scholarship comes from before the 21st century. The Moroccan education system has not yet seen reform, and the movements towards English are not widely addressed in the existing literature, a topic that demands attention. Additionally, while a great deal of scholarship discusses primary, middle and secondary school, the higher education system lacks a developed body of scholarship, and the transition for high school students to university – within Morocco or abroad, is virtually untouched. Through this research, I will build upon the existing literature, and add to the academic

community by expanding the debate of language of education and identity to the English language, the current state of schools in 2015, the transition to university, and the higher education system as a whole.

METHODOLOGY

This study took place over a one-month period of time, during which I completed scholastic research, personal interviews, and on-site field work in various educational institutions. When addressing the question of language, and more importantly, the question of identity, I recognized that qualitative research methods would prove much more insightful than quantitative. While I was limited with time constraints, and a quantitative study would have offered a wider range of participants, it would have limited the level of insight of responses, and not allowed for the depth of discussions that was possible through the interviews.

My semester of study in Rabat during the spring of 2015 took place through the School for International Training (SIT), and my academic program focused on Migration and Transnational Identity in Morocco. Through coursework and excursions within Morocco and to Amsterdam, I gained a well-rounded scope of comprehension of Morocco's close ties to migration as a country and as a culture. I linked this knowledge to my proposed research in the Moroccan education system, and set forward to understand Morocco's transnational identity and the tendencies of migration within the educational scope.

In my original proposal for research, I planned to center my study on the Lycée Descartes in Rabat's quartier Agdal. The long-established institution was primarily on my radar through direction from my SIT academic director at Rabat's

Center for Cross Cultural Learning and as a counterpart to the Lycée Lyautey in Larouy's novel. However, once I began to seek out contacts at the institution, I realized that my scope could be widened to include multiple international schools, and still remain in the same geographic area. I added the Rabat American School and the André Malraux French school to my study both out of accessibility and to gain a broader perspective. Additionally, I was able to gain access through my academic advisor to the Rabat American School, which was a crucial first step to my fieldwork. I also gained access to information about the André Malraux French school, as my advisor connected me with a current student whom I interviewed.

I began my research by collecting information on the framework for education in Morocco and by outlining the history of language of instruction throughout and after the French protectorate. I then introduced the sector of private schools in Morocco to this research, and completed my frame of reference around which to form my fieldwork.

My second step of research was qualitative information gathering through interviews and an informal focus group. I obtained written consent from all participants prior to each interview, and recorded the audio of the interviews with both verbal and written consent. Some of my interviews were with minors under the age of 18, but as they were all students, I was able to obtain the permission of the school administrator of the institution. I also obtained verbal consent from the students prior to the interview. All participants' privacy, anonymity and confidentiality were carefully protected, and any names included in this work have been changed to protect these individuals. All interviews were transcribed, and the

transcriptions and written consent forms are preserved in my personal research records.

Interviews took place in the Rabat American School, at the Language Workshop in Agdal, and in various Cafés. The informal focus group took place in a classroom at the Rabat American School with permission of both the teacher and the school administrator, and students participated in the discussion at their own will. As all of my participants spoke English, interviews were conducted in English, but all were offered the option of French had they been more comfortable.

My research was limited by access, and the schools in which I completed my fieldwork changed from my original proposal. As I was able to utilize a direct connection at the Rabat American School, this became my primary site of fieldwork, instead of the Lycée Descartes as stated in my proposal. At the Rabat American School, I interviewed two teachers, two 11th grade students and one 7th grade student. The fieldwork at the Rabat American School proved instrumental to my study, and led to one follow-up interview with a teacher whose academic background coincides with this research.

At the suggestion of my academic advisor, I approached the Lycée Descartes to conduct similar research, but their strict protocol limited my ability and I did not obtain clearance to speak with students. I was able to observe the Lycée itself for a short period of time and gain some outside observations in this way. I supplemented my lack of interviews with Descartes students by interviewing two alumni of the Lycée and one student of another French school in the area. I also

interviewed a University student who was a graduate of the traditional Moroccan school system.

Existing scholarship on the issue varies with methodology, but surveys are used in many cases. I chose not to use surveys in my study of identity and culture, as these matters are personal and unique for each individual. In using surveys, I would have risked asking leading questions, and participants may have changed or tailored responses in response to the questions posed. With open-ended interview questions and comfortable discussion with each individual, I had access to the most accurate findings possible with relation to these issues.

My personal position on the matter is important to noted. As an English and French-speaking American student, I was able to most easily gain access to the Rabat American School, and speak comfortably with French-speaking and English speaking individuals. My access to traditional Moroccan schools was limited, and I only had the opportunity to speak with one student through a personal connection on behalf of these institutions. Had this research been conducted over a longer period of time, I would have sought to gain access to both the Lycée Descartes and into Moroccan Traditional schools, and this lack of access is a limiting factor to my research conclusions.

The materials used throughout this study are available in the appendices. Consent forms in both English and French are available in appendices A and B. As the interviews conducted were personalized, the questions asked varied between participants, however, a sampling of example questions is attached in appendix C.

FINDINGS

Despite the time constraints of a four-week research project, this study turned out a substantial quantity of results. Through the 9 interviews and informal focus group, I gained a wide perspective and keen insights with respect to Morocco's education system, language and identity. The structure of each interview was a comfortable, relaxed environment, and participants often had a great deal of information to share on the topic. Identity and education are subjects that people tend to talk about with ease and comfort, and my participants often kept up long conversations, extending far beyond my preliminary questions. This findings section is organized as follows: A brief background of participants, a historical account of education within Morocco, learned perceptions of the Rabat American School, learned perceptions of the French School(s), the variety and consistencies on individuals' conceptions of language use, an account of students' plans for university, experiences of school transitions, and participants' definitions of Moroccan culture and identity.

Participants:

First, we will discuss the background of the participants in my research. With the Rabat American School as the starting point for my research, I conducted four interviews in my fieldwork at RAS, along with the focus group. My first interview was with a non-Moroccan teacher who serves also as an administrator within the facility. This teacher informed me of the school's background and provided personal accounts that included experiences in classrooms, experiences within the Moroccan society, and some experiences of her husband and children.

This teacher then introduced me to two of her students whom I then interviewed. One male and one female, both were Moroccans in the 11th grade. The female student's parents were both of foreign origin, but settled in Morocco to raise her and her siblings. The male student's parents are both of Moroccan descent, and was raised an only child in Morocco. Following these two interviews, I attended an 11th grade chemistry class, where I spoke to the students as a group with permission from the teacher. The class contained a mixture of Moroccan and foreign students and the lively discussion amongst students provided interesting findings. Finally, I encountered a third student while having lunch with a teacher in the school's cafeteria. I spoke to the student with explicit permission of the administrator, who knows the student personally. This male student was in 7th grade and had moved from the Casablanca American School to RAS two years prior. Both of the student's parents are Moroccan and he has been raised with his siblings in Morocco.

Following my work at RAS, I coordinated a follow-up interview with one teacher whom I met during my fieldwork. This non-Moroccan teacher shared a vast knowledge on the subject of Moroccan private schools, and a lively interview stemmed from this shared interest. The final three interviews offered the perspective of the French school system. As noted above, access to the Lycée Descartes was denied, resulting in different interviews than originally proposed. I did, however, still gain a varied perspective on the subject, and interviewed two alumni of the Lycée Descartes and a current 11th grade male student of the École André Malraux. With these interviews, I was able to gain insight to the French schools in Rabat, despite the limitations of access to the Lycée Descartes itself.

Moroccan Education – Historically:

Before discussing the findings of on-site research and interviews, a historical background must be addressed to frame the current discourse. The system of education in Morocco has a long, complicated past. Here, we focus specifically on the language of instruction, which begins with Arabic. The first Moroccan school system was rooted in the Islamic tradition, so due to the intrinsic link between Islam and Arabic, the language of instruction was naturally Arabic. In this traditional system, there were three levels of instruction: the Msid, the Madrassa and the Qaraqiyine University. From the most primary level, the Misd, children were taught how to read, write and memorize the Qur'an. This continued through the Madrassa, with an inclusion of grammar, theology and law into the curriculum. The university was founded in the ninth century in Fez, and there, students specialized their education, usually in mathematics, grammar, law, medicine and logic.

After centuries of tradition, the first French school was introduced in Tangiers in 1898. This was two decades before the protectorate, and overall numbers of French learners were miniscule. It's important to note though, that there was in fact, a slight introduction of French before the beginning of the protectorate itself. 6 years later, in 1904, a second French school was established in Tetouan, a third in Larache in 1905, and a fourth in Oujda in 1907. At this time, there were a total of 208 Moroccan students learning the French language.

The next stage in the history of Morocco's education is, of course, the establishment of the Moroccan public school system in 1912 with the entrance of the protectorate, by French resident General Lyautey. The French school system

and importance of the French language were strongly upheld through the protectorate, until independence in 1956. It was in 1957 that ideas of Arabization began to take shape, but the formal replacement of French by Arabic was not officially instated until 1983. We also recognize around the same time, however, two additional school systems taking shape: the schools managed by the French Cultural Mission, under the control and direction of the French Ministry of Education, and the private Moroccan school system. This shift in the status of French here is important. With the strongest significance, of course, in the French managed schools, and a somewhat strong significance in the private schools, French's status in public schools was weakened greatly as a product of Arabization, and this time is seen as the start of the public school's downfall. This brings us to the current state of education. Similar trends remain through the three systems, particularly with the varying importance placed upon instruction of French. Next, we turn to learned perceptions of the schools within this study.

Learned Perceptions of the Rabat American School (RAS):

Currently, education in Morocco is composed of three primary systems to distinguish between: the traditional Moroccan school system, the French-directed school system, and the private sector. This third category, the private sector, is represented in this research by RAS, where four interviews and an informal focus group took place alongside observational fieldwork.

Primary logistical information about RAS was gathered through my interview with the long-time teacher and administrator who I interviewed. This teacher has taught at RAS for 23 years, and delved into a bit of history. Established

in the 1960s, the school was founded by a small group to provide educational opportunities to the children of Americans at the embassy. The first graduating class had only 5 students, but the school has grown immensely since. Today, RAS is a proud International Baccalaureate school that boasts a wide diversity of nationalities from all over the world. 85% of students are learning English as a second language, and around 60% of students are Moroccan. The school contains grades k-12 and is set up in the American style, with English as the primary language of instruction. Students are required to attend French classes as well, but Arabic sees something of a different treatment. Arabic instruction is required by law of all Moroccan students through primary and secondary school, but RAS offers an option for this Arabic study to be taken extracurricularly, that's to say that the parents agree to enroll their students in outside classes or provide their children with private tutors, and it forms something of a loophole for students, for once the parents sign this agreement, it's up to them whether or not they're actually doing it, according to my informant. Classes range in size from 4 to about 20, with specific classes such as IB Physics ranging on the smaller side. Students follow an American curriculum alongside the International Baccalaureate, and if seen through completion, will receive two diplomas.

Another notable aspect of RAS is the financial one, and this teacher recognized that, "We do have a fair amount of locals who come from what tend to be the more affluent families because it's quite an expensive school. A lot of the students who are here also have their education paid for by the parents' workplace

or embassy” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015), notes the teacher.

The international mix at RAS does stand out as a main differentiating factor as well. When students were asked about their network of friends inside and outside of school, and international theme arose. “We usually try to branch out to different nationalities” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015), noted the 11th grade Moroccan male student. “We try to be as diverse as possible, but what ends up happening, is the friends who we get attached to often have to leave after three years, and that can be kind of painful, so what we started doing is sticking together as Moroccans. But it’s really not always the case” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015). He later adds, “Our friends do see each other outside of school and we try to fit in with the international students and show them how this country is. I feel like we are conserving our Moroccan identity by sharing it in this way” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015). The second student offered similar sentiments: “Most of my friends are Moroccan. Before, when I was a kid, most of my friends were international, but they come and go. So around 9th grade, I started sticking with the Moroccans” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015). A younger group of students in the lunchroom expressed this openness between Moroccan and international students as well, “There are so many kids from other countries! It makes it kind of fun to have like, so many other countries here. Sometimes the Moroccans hang out with each other but we’re also comfortable to hang out with people who aren’t Moroccan, there’s no judging. At that table over there, there’s an Italian, a Moroccan, a boy

from Sweeden, a Spanish student and an American” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015).

The students and teachers offer insight to the general feel and rapport within the school. Students feel that RAS offers them an adequate mix of challenging academics and personal growth activities.

The Creativity-Action-Service program really pushes you out of your comfort zone and gets you to do things you otherwise wouldn't, for one of my projects, I raised money and took children in a rural village to the zoo. It was a blast, and we really felt like we were making a difference – it's this type of mentality that is planted within us as students. With this system I think, these things act upon you subliminally, you kind of acquire this view as you age (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015),

shared the 11th grade male student. Another student compares her experience at RAS to that of her friends at Lycée Descartes:

I made a lot of friends from Descartes last summer. For them, they don't have as many close ties, for us, we are at a very small school, and we're very close. The activities and opportunities we have here, well, it's not the same over there. They don't have sports trips or anything like that, it's just a lot more challenging for them, at a very young age, they have so much work (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015).

The students and teachers agree that RAS fosters an international environment for Moroccan students and international students together. Through rigorous coursework and added emphasis on extracurricular life, these students and teachers recognize RAS as an environment that builds a student as a person, and prepares them well for their future pursuits.

Learned Perceptions of the Lycée Descartes and the École André Malraux

Following the impressions of a private, international school, we turn now to impressions gathered of the French school systems. These findings stem from interviews with two alumni of the Lycée Descartes and a current student at Rabat's École André Malraux. It should be noted that both alumni also reflected the experiences of their own children, whether they had been through the French system or otherwise.

The primary characteristic that was reflected of the French-regulated school system was its academic rigor and competitive entrance requirements. "Today it's quite competitive. I'm not saying it was easy when I went there, but I just mean in the sense that if you applied, you had a decent chance to get in. Today though, it is extremely difficult" (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 21, 2015), remarks the first alumna. The Lycée Descartes requires an evaluation for admission into the highly sought after system. The second alumnus interview shared this viewpoint "The Lycée Descartes is hugely oversubscribed today, they've got something like 3,400 students. And it's quite competitive. But I think Moroccan parents tend to be quite ambitious and competitive for their kids, and sometimes it's a little unrealistic. If you've got somebody who's going to be a B student... well you

can't say he's going to be an A student" (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 22, 2015). This mentality reinforces the idea of challenge and rigor within this system. The student interview shared the same viewpoint, "I think that the French system is very difficult. Maybe it's a good thing for these years to come, but for me personally, I think it was too much. I had to choose between basketball and school, so I stopped basketball last year. You go to school, and then you go home and just have to work for hours and learn the lessons. That's all you do" (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 24, 2015). However, through its rigor, students, parents, and alumni concur that the French system provides an excellent background for higher education and professional life. One Lycée Descartes alumna shares:

I did everything that I could to get my daughter into the French system. I believe that the French system offers you something that develops a critical mind, critical thinking. The program is really heavy, you have so many things to learn, so many classes. I think it's a, a way of seeing things. Even in terms of methodology, in terms of working, we have a certain work ethic you could say. We take initiatives; we don't just wait for things to be handed to us (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 21, 2015).

The second alumnus agreed, "I feel like the Lycée really helped me later on, during my professional life, I feel that I have good insight into different things, and it really prepared me rather well. When I went to university, well I couldn't believe how

easy it was. It's a mindset and a mentality" (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 22, 2015).

Along with the mindset and mentality learned through the French school system, there is an echo of feelings of superiority. "Some people in the French school, they were a bit snotty about the Moroccan public school" (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 21, 2015), admits one alumnus. A similar thought is reflected through the other alumna interview, "These young people, getting out from the Lycée Descartes, they feel a little bit superior to the rest of the world. But the money is a factor too, basically, going to Lycée Descartes means that you're able to afford it and that you've got the right connections, like you're a VIP person" (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 21, 2015).

Learned discourse about the French school system from individuals within it reflects an academic rigor and competitive nature to the program. As the system follows the French model directly and is managed by the French Ministry of Education, the coursework and tests reflect this intensity. Though challenging, these schools do prepare students for a future in higher education and for their professional lives.

Individuals' Conceptions of Language Utility

Another key finding that resulted from the interviews of this study surrounds the perceptions and usage of languages of individuals. Participants were asked to describe what languages they speak and in what contexts, as well as what languages they feel most comfortable in – sometimes varying between written and spoken contexts. Responses varied widely, often dealing in a combination of family

background and schooling. All students at RAS reflected a strong comfort with the English language, as the primary language in the classroom and in all subjects (aside from foreign language), written and conversational English was seen as comfortable and useful. The student from the French school, André Malraux however, also reflected a strong use of English in the mix of French and Arabic. “With my family, I speak English, Darija and French because my mom is an English teacher and my dad is a translator. So they both spoke English to me” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 24, 2015). He then continues to note the importance of the language in Morocco, “I think that English should be required for all Moroccans, yes. I think it’s the main language, well the main language of the world. You can go anywhere and if you don’t know the language, you just turn to English. I think everyone should learn it, and it is progressing here” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 24, 2015).

A universal finding was the mix of Darija and French, especially within the home and amongst Friends. Even at RAS, where English is regarded as useful and comfortable, it came to light that the Moroccans still tend towards Darija and French. A teacher of chemistry at RAS notes on language use, “They really mix, all three languages actually. And they just switch mid-sentence. Sometimes they’ll make side comments to one another in Arabic, and I have to remind them – it’s English class, speak English. They’re extremely talkative, it’s a very oral culture I’ve noticed” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015). Students reflect this mix of the three languages, “I started getting close with other Moroccans, now we just communicate in Darija. We speak, well we speak all three – English French

and Darija, we just mix it all” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015). This 11th grade student reflected a consistent mixing of the three languages, despite an initial inclination to answer by saying that only Darija is used. Another 11th grade student reflects on school languages in contrast to those spoken at home, “I speak French and Arabic at home and in school I speak English” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015). A third 11th grader offered this perspective, once again reflecting a varied mix, “We speak a lot of French and Arabic and English, they’re our main languages. When I’m at home I’ll speak, well it depends on with whom I’m speaking. I’ll speak English or French with my parents, and they’ll respond in French or Arabic. And I speak Arabic with whomever else I’m speaking to at home” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015). Only one student in the focus group reported to speaking only Darija with their parents, but adding that some French gets mixed in. “ Yeah I speak only Arabic with my parents. Well Arabic with a little French. The Darija is mixed, it has a lot of French in it” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015). Finally, we turn to the alumni. These discussions highlighted French as much more common than Arabic in their habitual conversations. “In my home we speak mostly French. I think the fact that I have been to a French school affected them in that sense at home, my children have grown up very comfortable with French. It was most comfortable and also in a family context” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 21, 2015). She then reflects on her own upbringing, “I have sisters, and all five of us did the French school. My mother speaks French, she’s an educated person, and she was a teacher before. Often such problems would arise with grandparents, when they’re not

educated, we would need to switch to Darija, but still, we can switch to Darija easily” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 21, 2015). The second alumnus interview reflected a mix during his upbringing, “At home? Oh, Arabic. But with my sisters, French. And with my father we spoke French. My mother didn’t speak French so with her it was all in Arabic. But with the siblings, it was mostly French. We’ve got this language switching, it almost just comes completely naturally” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 22, 2015). These results proved that all three languages are vital and used within Moroccan society. An interesting common thread is that many responded initially saying that Arabic was used with most frequency, and then altered their answer to include French as evenly mixed in.

Students’ Plans for University

The next relevant section of findings includes the discourse on higher education. Because my study centered on primary and secondary education, the scope did not reach into the university setting. However, the question of university rose often, as the students spoke of their aspirations and goals. Additionally, university became a part of the story the alumni recounted in describing their education. For a brief background, the university system within Morocco is not separated the way that primary and secondary education is. There is one private university in the town of Ifran, the well-known and prestigious Al Akhawayn University. All other universities in Morocco are public, and thus, this discussion often turned to universities abroad, in France and around the world.

There was an almost universal response from students of a desire and goal to continue their education at a university outside of Morocco. When asked if RAS

students attend public universities in Morocco, the administrator replied, “Oh no. They would go to the private universities. But most of them, the vast majority, go abroad. I should imagine about 60% go to the states, and the others go all over to other parts of the world” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015). Some students had specific goals of where they planned to study, for example, the student from André Malraux voiced plans to study in Canada. “Personally, I want to go to Canada. Next year. People tell me that once people go to Canada, they stay there and never come back. But I think personally, I would always come back here, I can’t stay away” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 24, 2015). This idea of leaving for university, and then returning to Morocco was a majority opinion amongst students. The Lycée Descartes alumnus spoke of his family,

I’ve got a niece, for example, in Casablanca, and one day I asked her about her friends who went to France, like she did. She voiced that about 80% of her friends who had gone to France like her, returned to Morocco. In the long term, I think there is this idea that you go, get started, start your career, and later-on, you come back (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 22, 2015).

The 11th grade male at RAS shared, “Oh no, I won’t stay here for university. I mean, everyone you ask is most likely going to tell you they’re going to go somewhere else. To Europe or the States, because education here is not very advanced yet” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015). The sentiment was shared in the classroom focus group, the first student states, “Yes, I see myself leaving here for university, but I would come back after. I would want to use my education, the fact

that I had the privilege to go and get an education outside of the country, and bring back the knowledge with me here to work here and build a life here” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015). A second student chimed in, “Yes, after RAS, I’m looking to go outside for education, but I’m coming back to Morocco. My life must be here, but my education must be somewhere else” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015).

The two Descartes alumni, who had both attended a public Moroccan university after having completed their Baccalaureates at the Lycée Descartes, offered another perspective. Both entered the English department at the university. The first alumna noted, “I ended up going to the public university here, and I always still felt like the outsider. Most of the other students had come from the public school system. I felt very different very quickly, just in the way that I learned things” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 21, 2015). A final note from the Malraux student reflects both his sister’s and his own choice to attend a university abroad,

I think it is a difficult thing for my parents, yes, because they know they have to let you go and have the best opportunities in France or elsewhere. The best schools, well the best schools are not here. That’s a fact and everybody knows it. I want to go to Canada but I don’t want to live there, it’s too far away. You go, you experience the world, and then you come home (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 24, 2015).

Experiences of Transitions Between Schools

In revisiting the novel, *Une Année Chez les Français* (2010), we recognize the accounts of students who've experienced a transfer between school systems. In the novel, the transition from a rural traditional school to the Lycée was incredibly transformative, and often very challenging and isolating. How do real students' experiences differ or relate?

The most similar situation to that of the novel was the experience of the Malraux student.

I've been in the French system from when I was 7 or 8, so very young. I came from the public school system, and though I don't remember much, I remember that I was a very bad student. I didn't even care about school. I was always acting out. When I moved to the French system, I didn't have the problem of French like some people did. The transition was not very difficult. Also, I was young. I think it's easier when you're young (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 24, 2015).

He then continues, recounting the transition experienced by two friends of his.

If I had switched from the Arabic system to the French one at age 12 or 14, I think I would have felt the transition a lot more. I know some friends who did it. They arrived that the French system two years ago, and they were so bad at it. I know their grades were not good. Starting to study math and geography and economy all in French, this

was very difficult to them (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 24, 2015).

He notes difficulties outside of academia as well. “ They were very shy. They wouldn’t talk to the teacher, very closed off. With us, they were more natural. We spoke Arabic, well Arabic and French, they did know how to speak French. But there’s a difference between talking with your friends and writing papers” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 24, 2015).

Another notable transition is that from the French school system to the private schools, as many of the RAS students shared, some at a very young age, others a bit older. One 11th grade student in the classroom focus group moved school systems after 3rd grade.

I used to be in the French system until 3rd grade, when I moved to RAS. I mainly moved because my parents thought the French system was in many ways, too heavily academic, they saw that the American school builds the person as a whole, instead of just education. I think it was a great thing, it was one of the points in my life, well, a turning point, moving to RAS. I was a very shy child, but now I’ve grown out of it (*laughter from other students, as the speaker appears to be one of the more vocal in the class*)” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015).

The 7th grade student experienced yet another type of school transition:

I moved here two years ago from Casablanca, I was in CAS before and you see a big difference between the two. It’s more of an international

school here, whereas there, the majority are Moroccans. Also at that school, it's like one of the top schools in Casablanca, so I feel like people brag a lot if I'm being honest. People here are more, what's the word, modest. I like it a lot better here (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015).

Another transition arose in my discussion with the Lycée Descartes alumna. She spoke of her daughter's experience. "My daughter did not get into the system of the Lycée until the level of quatrième, when she was 13 years old. She was at another private institution before. It was very difficult for her, and specifically in languages, she was very bad in Arabic. I was quite worried about her" (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 21, 2015).

These transitions between schools are important to note, and proved to be a very common theme across the board in the stories of participants. Because of Morocco's varied education systems, when parents are dissatisfied, they make efforts to change their children's situation.

Participants' Definitions of Moroccan Culture and Identity

The definition of any culture is not an easily tangible matter, but in this study, it's important to note how the participants perceive Moroccan identity as a culture. As noted before, a common thread through discourse on university was a desire to return home for work after university abroad. The student from André Malraux states, "We've always lived here, and as we grew up, we saw people always, how they lived and how they are in Morocco, and our family told us, you can go do whatever you want, but later you have to come back here, because the best life you

could have is in Morocco” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 24, 2015). This emphasis on family proves universal through discussions of Moroccan culture and the values of Morocco as society. Families stay close physically and emotionally, long through adulthood.

Moroccan culture is also a proud and patriotic one. When asking young students in the lunchroom if they were Moroccan, four practically shouted out in unison, “I’m Moroccan!” and a fifth followed, “Yeah, Moroccan and proud!” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015). Moroccans are proud of their history, of their language, and of their traditions. The 7th grade student replied when asked to define Moroccan culture, “When you go to another country, you feel homesick. Their culture is not the same, here there’s couscous, like the Moroccan tradition. Moroccan culture is food, and Morocco is known for hospitality, we’re very kind to guests” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015). The student then adds later, “Another thing in Morocco that is not like other places is, like, if you see someone going down, you help them back up again. Help them to get their strength back” (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015).

A non-Moroccan teacher at RAS pointed out another matter of identity and language that is linked to culture:

They’re extremely talkative, you know, they’re just a very oral culture it seems like. It cracks me up, my boyfriend’s Moroccan and we’ll go places in a car and he can’t read a map. He’s a college-educated guy, but they don’t read maps, they ask for directions. Constantly, it’s a connection, even while they’re driving, they’ll just pull over and shout,

“Hey, hey, where do I turn for...” That doesn’t happen so much where we’re from because we don’t rely on other people for information. And they do (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 14, 2015).

A final note on Moroccan culture arose in my discussion with the Lycée Descartes alumnus when speaking of his sisters. He attended the Lycée Descartes along with his six sisters and remarked a difference between the girls and boys in their school/home balance:

To be honest with you, as a boy, I didn’t feel it so much. Because, as you know, traditionally, boys are sort of treated differently than girls, but my sisters did feel this disconnect between home and school, they were much more controlled, their life was much more regulated, because my mother was very traditional. There was this idea that you’ve got to keep an eye on girls, much more so than the boys, it’s, you know, the traditional patriarchal thing (S. Robertson, personal communication, April 22, 2015).

The participants offered a variety of views to define Moroccan culture. As a group ranging widely in age, educational background, and even country of origin, this variety is very important, and though identity is never something that can be implicitly defined, these select quotes help to form our frame of understanding.

ANALYSIS

In searching for the link between language of instruction and identity in Morocco, we find a plethora of factors that play into the complex Moroccan culture and linguistic identity. This study led primarily to a deep understanding of the

divide between Morocco's three principle educational institutions, along with the important role that language plays within them. Analysis of the above findings showed clear trends in sentiment about these issues, and help to frame the current state of Moroccan education. These findings primarily led to an understanding of the following: the persistent importance of the French language in academia and professional world of Morocco, despite its heavy history; the state of distress that the public school system is found in, and the ways in which private/French schools provide a solution; the discrepancy in transition to higher education and potentials for reform; and a changing Moroccan identity that encompasses a delicate balance between traditional Moroccan values and current transnational ideas.

The first and foremost point that has come to light through these findings is the persistent importance of the French language. Made heavier through the history of the protectorate, the French language is not without conflict. However, it has become undeniably clear that it makes up a considerable portion of Morocco's linguistic identity. In education, the resounding connection of Arabic to French was reflected in this study, and each participant echoed its importance in his or her personal lives. Previous knowledge in the field encompasses this concept, as Ali Alalou (2006) summarizes well here, "French is seen either as an expression of modernity, a tool to access technological and scientific knowledge, or a symbol of domination that has contributed to identity crisis and acculturation" (p. 408). The idea of French as a consistently viable tool in Moroccan society, specifically in education remains true. Moroccan universities expect French competency, and those lacking this ability experience great difficulties. Professional matters are

conducted with French as a norm. In understanding the linguistic importance of this aspect of Moroccan societies, we now turn to the understanding of primary and secondary schools as developed through this study.

Through conversations regarding Morocco's three distinct educational institutions, we learn that the root of educational conflict lies in the wide gap between the three. Sentiment echoes that the public education system does not adequately prepare students for University and professional work, and the gap is reinforced with financial factors, as public/French schools are undeniable financial burdens on parents. The findings of this study lead us to understand that the private schools are taking a turn for the better, and students are seeing successes in their future pursuits. However, the implications of this are less clear. The Moroccan government supports the development and growth of private schools, but lacks to widen access to them. Access is the limitation here, as shown through this research, and education reform must recognize that linguistic factors are largely at play in the crisis of public schools. Once again, we return to Ali Alalou's (2006) work, who states that "The majority of young people educated in public schools are linguistically ill equipped to compete in the job market, in which the mastery of French is all but mandatory" (p. 413). Though published almost 10 years ago, this statement holds very true, and the findings established here provide proof.

We now turn to the discussion of higher education that has arisen through this work as another primary component of identity. At the end of secondary school, Moroccan students find themselves in a bind because, despite their strong kinship for Morocco and its culture, they agree that higher education opportunities

are much more promising abroad. The fortunate students who are able to leave will pursue University abroad. The results of this study, however, strongly connect this with a preservation of individuals' Moroccan identity. There was resounding evidence through my findings that these students value their heritage in a very strong way. It is clear that Moroccan students of today aren't trading in their Moroccan identity for a foreign one. Instead, this is part of a transition into a new kind of Moroccan identity, one that through a strong value of transnationalism makes the Moroccan kinship for home that much stronger.

In dealing with the heavy, intangible issues of identity and culture, the results of this study still formed some undeniable truths. The Moroccan identity is shaped not only by language of education, but instructional institution, parental and family background, all placed into an international context. It's true that education is recognized to be in a state of crisis. However, in this research, we find areas where the education system is doing very well, it's just about making it more accessible to the general population. Education reform is no easy battle, but through this work, we see potential for improvement. Moroccan identity remains strong, and stays stronger through the linguistic diversity in this country. The system of education must reflect and support this linguistic mix, and this is where we see potential for future improvement.

CONCLUSION

In a project that began with a novel, I've uncovered an immense discussion of language, identity and their ties in Moroccan education. Instead of students struggling over French/Moroccan identity crises as a result of the French education

system, as I was expecting, I found the evolution of a much more complex and modern Moroccan persona. The students, teachers and alumni who made up the body of this study provided an insightful, surprising, and vast wealth of knowledge, that only opened my eyes to the huge potentials for more research and development that these topics hold.

The current generation of students is well aware of the deeply engrained faults that the education system holds today. The language mix is undeniable as a key component of Moroccan society, and the only direction that education may hope to follow is one that supports this balance of Arabic French and English. Identity has become clear as a very multi-faceted scope, but the evidence of language and education's importance in the formation of a strong identity could not be clearer. Through this research, we see plainly that Moroccans value their identity rooted in tradition and culture, but the modern world demands the upkeep of this linguistic diversity that makes Morocco so unique.

In the process of this research, I encountered a number of areas that hold vast opportunity for future study. I chose to separate my questioning and research from discussions about the impact of religion, but in a country where Islam does play such a crucial role in culture, the potential to study linguistic identity and education with respect to religion and Islam holds great promise. Additionally, I encountered Higher Education as an undeniable factor in the discussion of scholastics, but as my study focused around primary and secondary education, the university system in Morocco did not get as much attention as it demands. A continuation of this study rooted completely in the field of higher education would

be fascinating, and further develop the arguments held in this paper. This research also did not have the capacity to expand to Amazigh and all the intricacies that the indigenous languages of Morocco play into this linguistic mix, and future expansions of this work would benefit from an exploration into these languages.

Through this enlightening research process, I maintain that identity is intangible. I was, however, able to come to a grounded understanding of the evolution that Moroccan identity has seen, and its deep roots not only in language and tradition, but also through the transnational buildup of this culture. A mix of languages, a rich background and a set of incredibly strong values are all factors that work together in forming the unique identity of this country, and the future of Morocco's education lies in today's generation. This work successfully examined the intricacies of Morocco's school system and complicated linguistic balance, and has uncovered the reality of the present transnational and multilingual Moroccan identity that holds the future for a thriving and educated Morocco.

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APPENDIX A

SIT Study Abroad

a program of World Learning



CONSENT FORM

1. Brief description of the purpose of this study

The purpose of this study is to explore the question of Identity as it relates to the language of education in Morocco. Through fieldwork and interviews at the Lycée Descartes and the Rabat American School, I plan to gain a well-rounded basis of research upon which to base this discussion.

2. Rights Notice

In an endeavor to uphold the ethical standards of all SIT ISP proposals, this study has been reviewed and approved by a Local Review Board or SIT Institutional Review Board. If at any time, you feel that you are at risk or exposed to unreasonable harm, you may terminate and stop the interview. Please take some time to carefully read the statements provided below.

- a. **Privacy** - all information you present in this interview may be recorded and safeguarded. If you do not want the information recorded, you need to let the interviewer know.
- b. **Anonymity** - all names in this study will be kept anonymous unless the participant chooses otherwise.
- c. **Confidentiality** - all names will remain completely confidential and fully protected by the interviewer. By signing below, you give the interviewer full responsibility to uphold this contract and its contents. The interviewer will also sign a copy of this contract and give it to the participant.

 Participant's name printed

 Participant's signature and date

 Interviewer's name printed

 Interviewer's signature and date

The interviewer may be contacted by phone or email for any reason:
sarah.robertson2016@gmail.com; 06 55 29 24 38

APPENDIX B

SIT Study Abroad

a program of World Learning



DECLARATION DE CONSENTEMENT

1. L'objectif d'étude

Le but de cette étude est d'analyser la question d'identité et sa relation avec la langue éducative au Maroc. À travers les entretiens dans le Lycée Descartes et L'Ecole Américaine à Rabat, j'espère de gagner une base compréhensive avec laquelle je formulerai cette étude.

2. Notice des droits

Dans un effort de maintenir les critères éthiques de toutes les propositions des projets indépendants du SIT, cette étude a été révisé et approuvé par un comité local ou international. Si vous vous sentez à risque ou vous êtes exposé aux dangers déraisonnables à n'importe quel moment, vous pouvez terminer l'entretien. S'il vous plait, prenez vos temps de lire les déclarations écrit là-dessus.

- a. **Vie Privée** - Toutes les informations que vous présentez dans cet entretien sera possiblement enregistré et sauvegardé. Si vous ne désirez pas que l'information soit enregistrée, vous devez le dire aux chercheurs.
- b. **Anonymat** - Tous les noms dans cette étude serons gardé anonymes sauf si le participant chosiste autrement.
- c. **Confidentialité** – Tout effort de maintenir votre information personnelle confidentielle sera fait dans ce projet. Vos noms et toute autre information d'identification seront changés dans la description finale, et seulement connue à l'équipe de recherche.

Nom et Prénom

Signature et Date

Nom et Prénom du chercheur

Signature du chercheur et Date

Les chercheurs peuvent être contactés par E-mail ou téléphone pour n'importe quelle raison:

sarah.robertson2016@gmail.com; 06 55 29 24 38

APPENDIX C

Sample Interview Questions

Questions for Teachers:

- How long have you been a teacher here?
- What grades/ages/subjects do you teach here?
- Do you have both Moroccan and international students in your classrooms?
- Can you tell me about your experience as a teacher in a non-traditional Moroccan school?
- Can you describe a normal day of school in your classroom?
- What is your educational background?
- How do you think schooling here sets students apart from students at traditional Moroccan schools?
- How do you think schooling here prepares students for adult life in Morocco?
- How do you think schooling here prepares students for adult life elsewhere?
- How well-behaved are the students in your classes?
- What do your students do outside of class in their leisure time?
- How is your relationship with the parents of your students?
- How did you find yourself as a teacher here?
- What else can you tell me about your experience as a teacher here?

Student Focus Group Questions:

- How long have you been a student in this school system?
- What is your favorite thing about school here?
- What is your least favorite thing about school here?
- What do you like to do outside of class?
- How does your schooling here relate to your home life?
- Are your closest friends from school, from your neighborhood, or both?
- What language do you speak with your parents and siblings?
- What language do you speak with your neighbors and extended family?
- What language do you feel most comfortable speaking in?
- What language do you feel most comfortable writing in?
- What do you want to do after graduation from high school?
- Do you plan to travel outside of Morocco because of your education here?
- Do you plan to work outside of Morocco because of your education here?
- What else can you tell me about school here?

Questions for Alumni:

- At what year did you begin studies at the Lycée Descartes? Why?

- Can you tell me about your experience at the Lycée Descartes?
- How did your schooling here affect you socially?
- How did your schooling here affect your family life?
- What language do you speak on a regular basis/with family/with friends/in business? Why?
- How did your schooling help form your identity?
- How do you connect with Moroccans who are a product of the public education system? With difficulty or with ease?
- Did you spend most of your time with other students at the Lycée Descartes?
- What differences did you notice between yourself and other students of your age in Moroccan traditional schools?
- How did your education at the Lycée Descartes prepare you for further pursuits in education in Morocco?
- How did your education at the Lycée Descartes prepare you for professional/adult life in Morocco?
- How did your education at the Lycée Descartes shape your feeling of belonging in Moroccan society?
- How did your education at the Lycée Descartes influence personal and professional connections that you have presently?
- Is there anything else you'd like to add about your experience?