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Aspects of Bilingualism in a Mauritanian Context:
The Case of Nouakchott University

Abstract

Bilingualism is a linguistic phenomenon that implies the concurrent use of two distinct languages. This situation does not imply the automatic existence of two distinct speech communities, but it happens that the same community has recourse to the use of two, or more, different linguistic systems.

The linguistic situation in Mauritania is characterized by the existence of two main communities: a Berber-Arabic community and a Black-African one, a situation which has led the Mauritanians to use more than one language in their everyday speech. While Arabic and some Berber characterize the former, the latter community can be split into a number of sub-tribes on the basis of the different languages each one uses, particularly Soninke, Pulaar, Wolof, etc.

The major objective of this work is to shed light on the issue of bilingualism as it occurs in Mauritania focusing our research work on Nouakchott University. We have divided the work into three main chapters. The first chapter is about the literature review and definitions of bilingualism. The second chapter is about the linguistic situation in Mauritania and the historical events that lead to today's linguistic repertoire in the country

Lastly, the third chapter contains analyses of the data collected from the questionnaire and the methodology tools, quantitatively and qualitatively. It is important to mention here that we have based this research methodologically on a questionnaire containing thirteen questions about Nouakchott University students' attitudes toward bilingualism, their motivations and, on the other hand, direct questions to the teachers and students, adding to that, participant observation during the collection of the data.

Dedications

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Ould Ahmed Sidi Mohamed

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ACRONYMS

AOF	Afrique Occidentale Française
BAC	Diplome du Baccalauréat de l'Enseignement du Secondaire
BEPC	Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle
BTS	Brevet de Technicien Supérieur
CEPE	Certificate of Primary Elementary Studies
CMS	Comité Militaire de Salut National
CMSN	Military Committee for National Salute
CSET	Centre Supérieur d'Enseignement Technique
DEUG	Undergraduate degree in University Studies.
ENA	Ecole Nationale d'Administration
ENI	Ecole Nationale d'Institutueurs
ENS	Ecole Normale Supérieure
ENSP	Ecole Nationale de Santé Publique
ISERI	Institut Scientifique des Etudes et Recherches Islamiques
ISSM	Institut Supérieur de Specialisation Médicale
PPM	Parti du Peuple Mauritaniens
SADR	Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization

General Introduction

Contrary to what is often believed, most of the world's population is bilingual or multilingual. For example, in the United States, 46.9 million people speak a language other than English in their home. In Canada, too, two languages, French and English, go side by side. The same fact applies to Finland where English is widely used along the two other official languages, Finnish and Swedish. Moreover, post-colonial states, those in the way of development, are more exposed to this sort of situations.

Generally speaking, bilingualism is a sociolinguistic phenomenon defined as the ability to use two languages. However, defining bilingualism can be problematic since there is variation in *proficiency*. Most scholars have defined it differently and their answers to the question of where bilingualism starts vary from one to another. As far as the first group of linguists is concerned, Bloomfield (1933), for example, views a bilingual person as someone who can be prefect and proficient in both languages, productively and receptively. On the other hand, some scholars still consider a person as being bilingual even without necessarily having a native-like control of the two languages in the verbal repertoire.

This research work addresses this sociolinguistic phenomenon in Mauritania. Bilingualism is the consequence of a long period of French domination in the area. French was brought through waves of colonization, while Arabic is the tongue of local dwellers. In fact, the two languages were found in a kind of complementary distribution, as each one was reserved to a particular domain: French for education and administration, and Arabic for religious purposes, literature, and daily language interaction.

The Mauritanian community is characterized by the succession of different linguistic waves, and more especially by French which led to bilingualism. Arabic

is the official language of the country as stipulated in the constitution but Mauritanian Arabic, called Hassaniya, is the most widespread variety used by the majority of the population alongside some African languages spoken by those Mauritanians who have African roots.

From its early history, Mauritania knew a certain social organization. It was a tribal society with traditional values. The most important fact that can be noted here is that the Arabo-Muslim civilization has greatly influenced the region and shaped its socio-cultural characteristics, including its linguistic system. The vast geographic area of Mauritania and the coming of a multitude of dialects with different waves of Arab migration from 'Yemen' helped a great deal in the stability of Arabic and the degradation of other languages which existed before, especially Berber varieties.

By the beginning of 1900's, the French establishment overthrew the linguistic scenery and the social structure at the same time. Many policies were taken by the colonizer to impose the French language in the daily lives of Mauritanians.

The confrontation of sixty years of two different languages in Mauritania permitted to create the linguistic association of French and Arabic. This association, in the Maghreb in general and in Mauritania in particular, is very interesting seeing that French is an indo-European language and Arabic a Semitic one; two different origins and completely divergent civilizations (Arabo-Muslim vs. Christiano-European). The civilizational heterogeneity was always present even during the colonial era, whereas the linguistic heterogeneity persists even after independence.

It seems that the very interesting problem of post colonial bilingualism is that it was transmitted by education and the mass-media (TV, newspapers) whereas

the one before independence was transmitted mostly by the social interaction of two different communities. Most Mauritanian researchers agree that this period of Mauritanian history witnessed tow kinds of bilingualism: a passive bilingualism which was only a means of communication between two different speech communities (the bilinguals excelled only in one language but with difficulty in pronunciation) and another one active which became a means of expression, modernity, culture and instruction in that foreign language (the new generation of bilinguals communicates in both languages whereas the bilinguals of the colonial era and because of cultural orientations used to speak only Arabic or French). Thus, the Mauritanian speech community is confronted to linguistic practices where two languages rely on each other, sometimes independently and sometimes in relation.

Indeed, the interaction and the interference of the two languages permitted to create a certain sociolinguistic tendency that the Mauritanian society did not know before the French colonization. In order to study such a linguistic behaviour, that is bilingualism, and attitudes towards each language, the present research work projects an interest in language use by the students of Nouakchott University, with the ultimate goal to answer what follows: is bilingualism in Mauritania a benefit or not? In other words, is it a blessing or a curse? To go deeply, let us pose the following questions:

- To what extent is bilingualism used by the students of Nouakchott University?

- What are the students' attitudes toward bilingualism?

- Considering French as a medium language between the two communities Arab-Berber and Black Africans, does their co-existence in the country enrich or limit bilingualism?

Proceeding to find appropriate answers, we put forward the following hypotheses:

- ✓ First, all students of Nouakchott reach university level as bilinguals as a consequence of the educational system in the country, but only a small number are real bilinguals because of the Arabization policy that eliminated the use of French in many institutional settings.

- ✓ The overall attitude towards French is positive for it is seen as a language of modernity and opening to the world, though some students fear to lose their cultural identity.

- ✓ The co-existence of Arabo-Berbers and Black Africans can only be beneficial for French use as this language seems at least to play the role of a linga-franca.

To check these proposed hypotheses, we feel it adequate to divide this research into three main chapters. In the first chapter, we try to give a literature review about bilingualism gathering as many definitions of this linguistic phenomenon as possible without forgetting to tackle the issues of diglossia, language use and language planning in order to show their relation to bilingualism.

In the second chapter we try to shed light on the linguistic situation in Mauritania, giving information about historical periods that have led to the linguistic profile of today's Mauritanians, and then we describe the characteristics of Hassaniya Arabic which is the dialect of the Arabs in the country.

We end this work with a third chapter trying to analyze the impact of bilingualism on education. We elucidate the methodology of data collection and the different ways and tools used for obtaining reliable data. The last part of the third chapter discuses and presents the data quantitatively and qualitatively to come up with the results that may answer the issues raised above. This chapter also presents a general conclusion of our research work.

1. Bilingualism as a linguistic phenomenon

1.1 Introduction

Most people agree that knowing another language is taking in hand a source of communication. Knowing many different languages also provides people with enormous possibilities in their contact and understanding of the people living in other parts of the world. This brings us to a very important issue namely bilingualism, which often described in broad terms as the ability to use two languages to communicate.

In this chapter, we will try to shed light on this sociolinguistic phenomenon and trace scholar s definitions on the issue from Bloomfield's (1933) definition of bilingualism as "native-like control of two languages" (p. 56) which lies at one of the continuum of definitions used to discuss bilingualism .To the other extreme side, presented by Mcnamara and Saunders. Saunders (1988) who defines a bilingual as a person who is "able to use two languages (for some or all of the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing" (p. 6). A myriad of additional definitions exist that adapt some aspects of these two or fall somewhere in between.

1.2 Bilingualism defined

A matter of some debate among linguists is the precise meaning of the term bilingualism itself. If we break the word into its constituents (bi from the Latin word for "two", lingual meaning "articulated with the tongue", and ism being the suffix that describes an action or process) we deduce that it means to speak two languages, which is indeed how the term is defined in the dictionary (Dictionary.com).

Many of the various definitions proposed are so diverse because they relate to the speaker's proficiency in two or more languages. Proficiency is difficult to

measure, as it is a continuum, ranging from absolutely no ability to complete fluency. The wide range of definitions encompasses the two extremes highlighted in the introduction above. These are famously provided by Bloomfield (1933), Mcnamara (1969) and Haugen (1953), and illustrated by Baetens Beardsmore (1982) and Romaine (1995).

Bloomfield (1933) states that a bilingual speaker has a "native-like control of two languages", and is so well spoken in his second language, that it would be impossible for listeners to tell him apart from a native speaker. Similar to this idea is the notion of ambilingualism, described by Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens (1970, in Baetens Beardsmore, 1982) in which a speaker's competence in both languages (and in all four modalities; speaking, listening, reading and writing) is "without any traces of one language in his use of the other" (though it is unclear what is meant by "traces" - possibly accent, vocabulary, word order or structure). This kind of speaker is sometimes referred to as a balanced bilingual, and is rare, whereas it has been said that Bloomfield's perfect bilingual probably does not even exist (Deuchar, and Quay, 2000). Matthews (1997) has modified Bloomfield's definition somewhat, into "an effectively equal control of two native languages."(p.122)

At the other extreme, McNamara (1969), proposed that somebody should be called bilingual if he has some second language skills in one of the four modalities (speaking, listening, writing and reading), in addition to his first language skills. McNamara's definition is widely acceptable as it discards the problem of "scale and aggregation". Whosoever has a reasonable command of a second language is bilingual. Therefore, in the Mauritanian context, a bilingual would be defined as someone having a good level of competency in both French and Arabic.

In complete contrast to Bloomfield, Haugen (1953) claims that bilingualism starts when a speaker can produce complete meaningful utterances in a language other than his native tongue. This notion is generally looked upon as being

inadequate as a definition, as many people can greet or thank one another in a foreign language (which are indeed "complete meaningful utterances") but would not be able to hold a conversation in that language (Baetens Beardsmore, 1986). Macnamara (1969) too allows for an overly broad definition by counting minimal skills in one of the four modalities mentioned (in Appel and Muysken, 1987).

Similarly, Diebold's (1964) definition also refers to minimal competence, for example being able to understand a foreign language, but not speak it, thus considered also a degree of bilingualism. This particular example can be described as passive or receptive bilingualism; Diebold calls it incipient bilingualism. But again, there is a drawback in that this definition is far too broad, and that almost anyone could be described as being incipient bilinguals if they know one or two words in another language (Romaine, 1995).

However, our experience as a native member of Nouakchott community and having had some relations with students of Nouakchott University, we can advance the idea that no one has reached the native like degree of equal control of Arabic/French as proposed by Bloomfield. On the other hand, all the Mauritanians can be considered bilinguals in the other attitude, because every Mauritanian can understand and use at least a view words in French.

Between Mcnamara and Bloomfield, Tosi (1984:73) defined bilingualism as "the individuals capacity to a second language while following the concepts and structure of that language rather than paraphrasing his or her mother tongue". Hamers and Blanc (2000) argue that all these definitions, which range from a native like competence in two languages to a minimal proficiency in a second language, raise a number of theoretical and methodological difficulties. In their view, on one side these definitions lack precision and operationalism because they do not specify what is meant by native-like competence, which varies considerably within a unilingual population, nor by minimal proficiency in a second language, nor by obeying the concepts and structures of that second language.

In this domain, (Hamers and Blanc (2000) put a very important theoretical questions like: can we exclude from the definitions of bilingual someone who possesses a very high competence in a second language without necessarily being perceived as a native speaker because of a foreign accent? Can a person who has followed one or two courses in a foreign language without being able to use it in communication situations or again someone who has studied Latin for six years legitimately be called bilingual? Unless we are dealing with two structurally different languages, how do we know whether a speaker is paraphrasing the structure of his mother tongue when speaking the other language?

Hamers and Blanc also claim that these definitions refer to a single dimension of bilinguality namely the level of proficiency in both languages and ignoring non-linguistic dimensions. For example, Paradis (1995) while suggesting that bilinguality should be defined on a multidimensional continuum reduces the latter to linguistic structure and language skill. (Appel and Muysken, 1987)

Not all definitions relate to linguistic proficiency or competence. Weinreich's (1953) popular definition is that bilingualism is the process of using two languages alternately. Mackey (1962) concurs, and adds that the term allows for the use of not only two languages, but of any number. This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as multilingualism or plurilingualism, but for this essay we will only use the term bilingualism to describe the situation in Nouakchott University.

On the other hand, some definitions are psychological; Hamers and Blanc (1990) refer to bilingualism as being a psychological state, whereby an individual has access to "more than one linguistic code" and is able to use them both to communicate. Other definitions are more sociological; Fabbro (1999) defines a bilingual as someone who, in natural circumstances, has learnt two languages from birth or early childhood.

More sociological definitions exist in different parts of the world. In an African country like Mauritania, the term bilingualism is normally used to describe mastery of European languages in addition to the use of their native African or Arabic tongues. In these cases, the ability to speak more than one local language is rarely considered by the speakers to be bilingualism, since those languages are seen to have subordinate positions. This is because so few of them have been codified and so do not have any official status (Leopold, 1947). It is worth pointing out that the term does not stretch to speaking more than one dialect; this is known as bidialectism (Appel and Muysken, 1987).

1.2.1 Child bilingual Acquisition

Bilingualism is influenced by many factors and has many manifestations. Hamers and Blanc (2000) question definitions of bilingualism that do not take its multiple dimensions into account. Since bilingualism is directly related to the context of acquisition, bilinguals are often additionally classified based on initial age of exposure and developed bilingual competencies. The initial age of exposure is one factor that heavily influences order of acquisition of languages. Simultaneous and sequential bilingualism are terms used to address the order in which children are exposed to languages. Generally simultaneous language acquisition refers to the process of learning two languages at one time while sequential language acquisition applies to situations in which a second language is introduced some time after initial exposure to the first.

More specific definitions of bilingualism, give exact information on the time and amount of exposure to each language required for a person to be classified into one of these categories. McConvell, Simpson and Wigglesworth (2005:41) state that sequential bilingualism occurs when the "child is exposed to one language in infancy and the second sometime later". While McConvell, Simpson et al. consider

simultaneous language acquisition a result of more or less equal exposure from birth, Grosjean and Frauenfelder (1997: 36) classifies simultaneous bilinguals as those "who acquire two languages before age three" and sequential bilinguals as "those who acquire the second language after three".

1.2.2 Types of Bilinguals

Bilinguals are also classified by the competencies they are able to develop in their respective languages. The terms receptive, passive, productive, and active are employed to describe bilingual competencies. Receptive or passive bilinguals can "understand (and possibly read) the minority language" while productive or active bilinguals can "talk and possibly write in both languages" (Döpke, 1992, p. 3). Passive bilinguals are still considered to be bilingual provided that they continue to be exposed to the minority language and have age appropriate passive skills (Döpke, 1992).

An additional set of terms used to describe bilingualism have to do with comparing a language user's perceived proficiency in both their languages. Balanced bilingualism refers to comparable skill level across languages whereas dominance occurs when a person is more proficient in one of the languages. In the same vein, Lambert (1978) also introduced the term-balanced bilingualism to describe individuals who are fully competent in both languages. In his opinion, it describes also those who are thought to have perfect control on both languages in all settings. Baetens beardsmore (1982) argues that balanced bilingualism is close to impossible to achieve, and is therefore rare. Even high-level conference interpreters tend to prefer one of their languages and will often specialize in interpreting into their dominant language, despite the fact that they are highly fluent in both languages.

Bialystok (2001) also limits the definition of bilingualism to its social-communicative dimension when he says that "bilingual persons or communities are those with an ability to meet the communicative demands of the self and the society in their normal functioning in two or more languages in their interaction with other speakers of any or all of these languages" (p:129)

Mackey (2004) points out that the concept of bilingualism has become increasingly broader. Hakuta (1987) also notes that Haugen previous definition of bilingualism incorporates a development perspective which brings the entire process of second language acquisition within the scope of the study of bilingualism. Hakuta believes the field should deal not only with the bilingual individual but also with the circumstance surrounding the creation of bilingualism and its maintenance and attrition.

Mackey (1962) concludes that in order to study bilingualism researchers and scholars are forced to consider it as something relative because the point at which the speaker of a second language becomes bilingual is either arbitrary or impossible to determine. He therefore considers bilingualism simply as the alternate use of two or more languages. He also suggests that there are four questions which a description of bilingualism must address: degree, function, alternation, and interference. The question of degree of bilingualism concerns proficiency, how does the bilingual know each of the languages? Function focuses on the uses a bilingual speaker has for the languages and the different roles they have in the individual's total repertoire. Alternation treats the extent to which the individual alternate between the languages. Interference has to do with the extent to which the individual manages to keep the languages separate or whether they are fused.

Mackey (2004) on the other hand, lists a number of factors such as sex, age, intelligence, memory, language attitude and motivation, which are likely to influence the bilingual aptitude. Other recent definitions insist on the specific

characteristics of the bilingual. For example, Grosjean (1982) defines a bilingual speaker as more than the sum of two monolinguals in the sense that the bilingual has also developed some unique language behavior. Equally for Leopold (1970:44) who defines bilingualism as "more than an addition of two monolingual competences, but an extreme from polylectality".

Perhaps the most individually demanding, and socially grounded definition of bilingualism was proposed by Andersson, (2004) who states that bilingualism consistes of "being taken for a native speaker by native speakers of both languages, with perhaps a small allowance for some amount of syntactic, lexical, and phonological interference from their dominant to their non-dominant language"(p:177).

Fishman (1972) goes further, arguing that bilinguals are rarely equally fluent in both languages in all topics. He argues that sociolinguistic forces demand that bilinguals organize their languages in functionally complementary spheres. For example, a German–French bilingual may be able to speak both languages fluently, but is likely to use German exclusively in certain situations or when discussing specific topics. He also emphasizes that it is this complementary nature of language functions that assures the continued existence of bilingualism, because any society that, produces bilinguals who use both languages, with equal competence in all contexts will stop being bilingual, as no society needs two languages to perform the same set of functions. In other words, balanced bilingualism necessarily entails the death of bilingualism.

1.3 Simultaneous and consecutive bilinguality

Since the beginning of the twentieth century scholars from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, such as psychologists, linguists, neurologists and educators have paid attention to the development of biliguality. In addition, parents in cross-language marriages were the first to study their own children, more or less systematically, and to report the progress of their child's bilingual language acquisition.

One of the earliest systematic records comes from Ronjat (1913) who described the progress of his son, Louis. Wanting his child to be bilingual, he sought the advice of Grammont, a linguist, shortly after his son was born, and thereafter decided to adopt a one person-one language approach with him. Ronjat's wife used only her native German and he used French with the boy. His was a large household, with a range of servants and relatives speaking either German or French. The commonly used language alternated at various times in Louis' early life according to the household, but by the age of 38 months he was able to ask about language as well as use and understand simple French and German (Ronjat, 1913).

Later, Leopold (1939) published four books of data about his daughter's bilingual language acquisition, this time English and German. He and his wife also adopted a one person-one language strategy with their child, and by age four Hildegard too could communicate in the two languages (Leopold, 1949). With both children, their mother's language was stronger, at least initially. Since then many scholars have recorded and reported the bilingual language development of their own children like Saunders, 1982, Taeschner, 1983, Fantini, 1985 etc .

On the other hand, DeHouwer (2006) argues that there are problems with all of these studies; because they deal with special children. They are the children of

linguists, or at least language-aware parents, and the parental relationships cannot be assumed to be unimportant in the development of a child's language. Although language samples are gathered in a natural context, this is rarely described. Parents have often adopted a special strategy to facilitate bilingual development, and there is rarely any measurement of child or parent language use. He added that most children do not have to learn to be bilingual but become so naturally. The most widespread route to bilingual language acquisition is also the most unnoticed; there is one language for the home and one language for the wider world or the formal situations as is the case in Mauritania.

Romaine (1995) reviewed types of bilingual acquisition reported in the literature. She describes six types of language background, and comments that the 'mixed languages' type is probably more common than it seems from the literature. In addition, Schmidt-Mackey (1971) has described critically a number of cases where differing approaches were used, adding and telling comments from her own experience. There were three languages in use when she was a child, first German and Hungarian and later Serbian. Although she learned all three successfully, she comments that the emotional elements involved cannot be easily quantified. Her parents used only German with her and did not realize that she had learned Hungarian until she was four years old. Hungarian was the language that they used with one another. It always seemed more appealing than German, and she felt excluded by their use of it when she was expected to use German.

Saunders (1988) observed that his children went through a three stage developmental sequence in becoming bilingual. While the notion of discrete stages (and allocation of ages) is contested and debated, the general developmental pattern follows. The first stage lasts until the child is approximately two years of age. During this time, the child does not differentiate between the two languages. Vocabulary, for example, is treated as part of one global language system. During the second stage, the child may still be mixing the two languages on occasions.

However, there will be increasing differentiation between the two languages. For example, the vocabulary will be separated; the child will know what language to speak to which person, and what language to speak in which situations. Saunders (1988) also suggests that during this second stage, the child sometimes says both words for the same thing.

In addition, it is important to mention here an initial distinction between simultaneous and sequential childhood bilingualism. Simultaneous childhood bilingualism on one hand refers to a child acquiring two languages at the same time early in life. For example, where one parent speaks one language to the child, and the other parent speaks a different language, the child may learn both languages simultaneously. Furthermore the studies of the acquisition of simultaneous bilingualism in childhood make two other key points. First, Swain and lapkin (1991) found that the simultaneous acquisition of two languages did not differ in development order or process from the acquisition of one language. Children appear to learn two languages as if they were learning one. Second, and related, it seems possible to conclude that bilingualism can be the first language. This includes the idea that there may be a single language system underlying both the languages of the bilingual child.

On the other hand, sequential acquisition of bilingualism refers to the situation where a child acquires a first language, and later becomes proficient in the second language. McLaughlin (1978) recommends that the age of three is used as an arbitrary demarcation line between simultaneous and sequential acquisition of bilingualism.

Speaking about the term sequential acquisition of bilingualism lead us to mention the field of second language acquisition. Such acquisition may be through formal or informal means; informally through street, nursery school and community, or formally through school, adult classes and language courses. One

factor, which needs to be taken into consideration, is the status of the minority language in the family. In a situation where one of the parents speaks a minority language and the other speaks the language of the outside community, it may be quite challenging to ensure that the child receives adequate input from the minority language to enable the child to become bilingual in both languages.

Valdes and Figueroa (2001) examine the parental strategies used with a child acquiring Catalan and English in a Catalan-speaking situation in order to identify the types of input strategies that were used which enhanced the child's ability to speak both languages. They argue that in a situation in which the minority language is spoken by one parent, the strategy of using code mixing by the speaker of the more dominant language may illustrate an attempt by this parent to promote the use of the minority language.

They also show that a change in strategy by the father (the speaker of the minority language) when the child turned three was successful in developing and extending the child's communicative competence in this language. Their findings also are in agreement with those of Goodz (1989), who found that fathers tended to have higher expectations of their children's linguistic abilities in their interactions with their children once the children had acquired a level of language competence, which allowed this.

A further consideration may relate to the location in which the languages are used. Quay (1998) provides a detailed outline of the input a child growing up bilingually receives from her parents, where both of them speak both languages. She discusses the different strategies they adopt. Initially, the mother speaks English to the child when alone with her, but Spanish when the father, who always speaks Spanish to the child, is present. However, when the child is one year old, the mother changes strategies, speaking Spanish to the child at home all the time,

except when monolingual English-speaking visitors are present, when English is spoken. The child also attends a crèche where only English is spoken.

Quay (1998) also reports that the child would speak Spanish at home and on the journey to the crèche, but would switch to English while talking to her mother upon entering the crèche gate. Upon leaving, the child spoke English until she got into the car, whereupon she spoke Spanish. This phenomenon, where language is associated with specific situations, is not unusual. Quay argues that it is important for parents to be flexible in their language use with their children to ensure that children being raised bilingually grow up with appropriate awareness of appropriate bilingual behaviour in different linguistic contexts.

1.4 Societal bilingualism vs. Individual bilingualism

Bilingual individuals do not exist as separate islands. On the other hand, people who speak two languages or more usually exist in groups, communities and sometimes in nations. Bilingualism at the individual level is just half of the history. The other essential half is to analyze how the groups of speakers of language behave and change. Such an examination concentrates in particular on the movement and the change of a language through decades. This also requires examining the situation of the policy and power in which minority languages are located (McMahon, 1994).

By itself, bilingualism is neither a disease nor a virtue, and it is never the direct cause of language loss. It is merely a means taken by communities to change their languages because they no longer see them as useful. In the first stage of regression, the minority language community is persuaded that learning the language of the majority will enrich its culture, ensure a better economic

development, open the community to contemporary internationalism, and enable it to avoid self-isolation (Pavlenko, 2006).

The problem is that social bilingualism is usually exclusively assumed by those for whom it is necessity; on the contrary, it could be useless for others in the society except for reasons of snobbism. The type of bilingualism that prevails in language extinction corresponds neither to individual bilingualism nor to institutional bilingualism but to social bilingualism generalized to the entire community; one can talk about ethnic bilingualism. (Pavlenko, 2006).

On the other hand, individual bilingualism is an isolated phenomenon, which does not question the dominant functions of the mother tongue in the social life; an individual practicing an instrumental bilingualism for limited and well defined functions does not run any risk of losing his native language. Institutional bilingualism enables each one of the groups in presence to practice monolingualism, "letting the burden of bilingualism to the organisms under the control of the state. However, if bilingualism favors the second language in most of the social roles strategically important, the bilingual individual puts his language in danger. The non use of his mother tongue will lead to an atrophy of the linguistic ability and loss of cultural identity" (Pavlenko, 2006:102).

Linguistic mutation is imminent of this kind of bilingualism spreads to a whole community. The most important characteristics of social bilingualism is its evolution. It evolves in a unique direction with more and more people, for more and more functions, still the moment when all the community uses the second language for all their everyday life communicative needs. Then, the mother tongue does not subsist but at a residual state and becomes heavily impregnated with the dominant language.

Bilingualism in individuals implies some degree of knowledge of two or more languages. Reliable information about the proficiency or even about the number of people who speak a language is not easily gathered because of differing conceptions about language. People in various cultures have different ideas about who speaks their language. Even though most people can identify their first or home language, it is not always the best known. An adult might be knowledgeable about the language used in school, while maintaining an emotional attachment with the first language or even language learned later, but which he or she indentifies culturally (Alvarez et al, 1992).

According to Ould Bah (1997) social bilingualism develops starting from a series of contacts of language inside and between countries and communities. One finds it in border zones between the states, because of the constant exchange by visits, trades, wars; or because of the geographical dialect continuum, which was stopped by political borders. An example is the southern Mauritanian continuum of dialect, which crosses through the national borders of Mauritania, Senegal and Mali. These varieties are more or less mutually understandable; a chain of mutual intelligibility binds the rural dialects of these languages. Speakers on each of the political borders have no problems of understanding each other. Moreover many of these people are bilingual since they speak the official national language as well as the local dialect. (Ould bah (1997)

Another very important extent considered language as a salient dimension of ethnicity and ethnic identity. Language in this case plays an important role in intergroup relations when languages and cultures are in contact, not only as a symbol but also as an instrument for upholding or promoting the group's ethnic identities. In this domain a number of social scientists have investigated the role of language which therefore varies according to importance as a symbol of group identity and as a function of the power relation holding between the different ethno linguistic groups (Hamer and Blanc, 2000).

On the other hand, and according to Baker (2006) political events may divide people speaking the same language or bring together people speaking different languages. The first situation obtains in many African and Asian countries previously under colonial role, where the colonial power drew arbitrary frontiers regardless of ethno linguistic realities. Annexations and invasions, migration, and deportations also bring people and group from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds together. An example of this is found in the south of where people of Wolof speak Senegalese and Bambara in the southeast speak like Malians because of border connections.

Hamers and Blanc (2000) also argue that economic factors can bring speakers of different language into contact; religion too can be a reason for different linguistic groups who share the same faith to live together, whether temporarily (pilgrimages) or permanently (Indian subcontinent). Otherwise, different religious communities may split up a country along linguistic lines. We think here that these lines exist in Mauritania in places of *Soufi* believers from Ennebakiya 65 Km in the south of Nouakchott to Kewlekh in the east of Senegal

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1.5 Language attitude and use

In the life history of a language, attitude may be crucial. In language growth or decay, restoration or destruction, attitude may be central. The status and importance of a language in society and within an individual derives in a major way from adopted or learnt attitudes. The success of language policy is partly predicated on attitudes surrounding that language.

According to Baker (1992), the term attitude is a valuable concept within the study of bilingualism. In his opinion, a survey of attitude towards language can shed light on community's beliefs, preferences, and desires and the status value and

importance of a language can be measured by looking at attitudes towards that language.

De Groot and Kroll (1997) introduced their study of language attitude of Chicano and Anglo adolescents in Chicago. The Chicano students had learned Spanish at home, and the Anglo student in high school foreign language classes. Both groups had to rate the personalities of 16 speakers on a tape. Four speakers used English in a home context, four Spanish in home context, four English in a school context, and four Spanish in a school context. The researchers did not use the matched-guise technique. Each speaker was recorded in his mother tongue, with the passages as close to standard or normal as possible. In general, they found that English was rated higher than Spanish, but Spanish was more favorably judged in the home context than in the school context. According De Groot and Kroll(1997) these results show that listeners take the appropriateness of the language variety for a particular situation into account in their judgments.

On the other hand, Bentahila (1983) studied the attitudes among Arabic-French bilinguals in Morocco. Three languages involved: Classical Arabic, Moroccan-Arabic and French. From the answers to the questionnaire, Bentahila concludes that classical Arabic was judged as the richest and most beautiful of the three languages. And French was considered the most modern and useful for studies. Bentahila (1983) furthermore conducted a matched-guise experiment in which three speakers participated two of them spoke high Moroccan French (which is close to the native speaker of French) and one French with a strong Moroccan accent in addition to Arabic. The first two were rated much higher than the third one.

Furthermore, in this domain, Baker (1992) states that there are two components of language attitude; instrumental attitude and integrative attitude. An instrumental attitude to a language is mostly self-oriented instrumental attitudes of

people towards a language can be both positive and negative because of the desire to gain achievement, status, personal success or basic security and survival. On the other hand, an integrative attitude to a language is mostly social and interpersonal in orientation. It is the desire of people to be like members of the other language community.

Holms (1992) expresses that there are three levels of attitudes towards a social or ethnic groups. The first level is that of attitudes towards social or ethnic groups. Second, the attitude towards the language of that group. The third is attitude towards individual speakers of that language. He adds also that people generally do not hold opinions about languages in a vacuum. They develop attitudes towards language, which reflect their views about those who speak the language, and the contents and functions with which they are associated.

Holmes also points out that the underlying assumption is that, in a society, social or ethnic groups have certain attitudes towards each other relating to their differing positions. These attitudes affect attitudes towards cultural institutions or patterns which characterizing these groups such as language.

It is important to mention here that Fishman (1972) was the first who formed the sociolinguistic notion of domain. He stressed that different settings characteristically call for the use of different languages in bilingual and multilingual societies. In Fishman's opinion, a domain is a concrete setting like home, street, classroom …ect.

Language use has been analyzed from different perspectives. First, the sociological approach which provides a way to subcategorize people's behavior of language use. Second the social-psychological approach, which tries also to offer internal reasons to explain why people make a certain language choice. An

anthropological approach looks for external factors to predict people's language use (Fishman, 1972).

From a social perspective, Fishman (1965) also gave "domain analysis of language use". He proposes that one language may be more appropriate than another in certain domains and usually it is the standard or prestigious language. This language used in high domains while the vernaculars are selected in low domains. Following Fishman's model, Ibn Elemine (1997) finds that in Mauritania, Hassaniya is favored in intimate domains such as the family and daily life speech, while Standard Arabic or MSA is chosen in formal situations and domains such as education, mosque …etc.

Returning to language attitude, Trudgill (1974) points out that the dynamic of language attitude can be attributed to two main players: the user and his audience. He notes that clearly when he says:

> "…..he will learn these things not so much from what the other man says as from how he says it ….for whenever we speak we cannot avoid giving our listeners clues about our origins and the sort of people we are. Our accent and our speech generally show what part of the country we come from and what background we have, we may even give some indications of certain of our ideas and attitudes and all this, information can be used by people we are speaking with to help them formulate an opinion about us (Trudgill, 1974, p 14).

1.6 Language shift and maintenance

Language shift, language loss, language attrition, language death, language restoration and language loyalty are all used to explain events which are at times referred to as language maintenance and shift (Choi, 2003). In addition, this is what make the phenomena do not have clearly defined borders. However, books and articles on the topic usually deal with why some languages survive when in contact with a dominant language over time, and why others do not (Choi, 2003).

In this vein, Gal, (1979) argues that the central feature of the study of language maintenance and shift is that which studies either the gradual replacement of one language with another in a contact situation, or with the resistance that some languages show to being replaced by another. Gibbons (1987) on the other hand tries to give an explanation of the phenomenon when he states:

"Language maintenance is a situation in which a language maintains its vitality, even under pressure. It implies, therefore, that the degree of resistance is strong enough to contain any pressure that may be coming from the dominant language. In a situation of language maintenance, the domain of language L1 remains largely the same and transmission of the language to the children is active and as perfect as possible. Moreover, the number of speakers remains relatively stable and maintains a strong allegiance to their language. Language maintenance usually applies to relatively monolingual situations. However, it may take place in stable diglossic situations, in which the function of L1 and L2 are well defined and remain unchanged". (Gibbons, 1987 p: 179)

Paulston (1992) states that language maintenance can be seen a social source by ethnic groups in "competition for access to goods and survive to a nation" and language maintenance is not a natural phenomenon but a deliberate chosen strategy for group survival. Paulston (1992) also argues that the agency of language shift is bilingualism, which often goes hand in hand with exogamy, where the parents speak the mother tongue with the grandparents and the dominant language with children. He also claims that language shift often begins with women and this is observable in choice of code, and their choice of marriage pattern, and consequently in their choice of language to raise their children.

On the other hand, Bhabha (1994) argues that the linguistic outcomes of prolonged contact of ethnic groups within a 'modern nation state' are language maintenance, bilingualism or language shift. The general role for group in prolonged contact within a nation state is for the minority group to shift to the language of the dominant group whether for a short period of time or over many generations. He also argues that if the shift does not take place there will always be two reasons for that: a lack of incentive and a lack of access to the dominant language.

Many theories, models and methods have been developed to answer the very big question of why some languages are replaced by others in contact situations, and why others are maintained. Giles, Taylor and Bourhis, (1973) introduced a concept of ethno-linguistic vitality. In their approach, they propose three variables, which combine to permit an ethno-linguistic minority to survive as a distinctive group. These three variables are status, demographic and institutional support.

Arsenian (1937) mentioned that Toyfel (1974) gives an answer to the preceding questions in his 'intergroup relation theory, this theory, which entails a description of a chain, expressed as social categorization, social identity, social comparison and psychological distinctiveness. He also suggests that individuals are

motivated in their shifts to seek a positive social identity if they are dissatisfied with their present identity.

Most studies of language shift have looked at the communities' transition to the new language. The classic pattern is that a community that was once monolingual becomes transitionally bilingual as a stage on the way to the eventual extinction of its original language. Thus, language shift involves bilingualism as a stage on the way to monolingualism in a new language (Romaine, 1995).

Later Haugen (1953) introduces an approach of 'language ecology'. This approach gives an ecological perspective to language maintenance and shift, namely factors that describe the interactions between languages and environment. Haugen explained his approach as follow:

> The struggle between dominated and dominant groups for the right to survive includes what I have called 'the ecology of language' by this I mean the preservation of language is part of human ecology, which in turn is a brand of the larger disciplines of sociology and political science. (Haugen, 1953. p 163)

Further, Landry and Allard (1992) develop the concept of anthrolinguistic vitality by Giles (mentioned above). In their theory they incorporate a social network and defined additive bilingualism as a condition, which favors the development of the mother tongue, while at the same time permitting the learning and use of a second language.

They also define subtractive bilingualism as a condition that favors the development of a second language to the detriment of the mother tongue (Edwards, 1993). This model of additive and subtractive bilingual development provides into

the status of language maintenance and shift in bilingual situations. They added (Allard and Landry) that bilingualism is the precursor to language shift in prolonged situations, but in Paulston (1992) point of view this distinction, which they made between types of bilingualism, means that bilingualism is not necessarily an indicator of language shift. Additive bilingualism would therefore favor language maintenance and subtractive bilingualism would be symptomatic of language shift Paulston (1992).

Furthermore, Stossel (2002) introduces his social network theory, which defines the social environment that may have an effect on individual's attitude and behaviour. He makes the point that the social network theory is very important in language maintenance and shift because of the strong influence that social networks have on language usage and culture. Stossel (2002) emphasizes that language shift or maintenance should not be seen as black or white alternatives. In addition, and since language use is largely contingent on the social environment and also closely linked to the individual's attitude, one should keep in mind that it can change depending on changes in individual's lives, their social environment and their attitudes.

The relationship between dialect and standard among minority groups may be an important factor in language shift. Bettoni (1985) found that younger generations of Italian- Australians have tended to shift towards Standard Italian. Such differences are also important in educational policy. Usually it is the standard varieties of minority languages, which are offered to children in school. When the extant of the difference between the varieties spoken at home and school standard is substantial children may experience considerable difficulties.

Clyne (1996) also argues that sometimes, there is a "sudden about-face movement" in what seems to be an irretrievable shift and the language experiences that Fishman has referred to as an ethnic revival. Originally, "the native language

serves a communicative function for the older generation but that assumes largely a symbolic one for the second generation". Clyne (1996) also says there is an anecdotal evidence that some second generation Australians are reverting to their ethnic languages in order to pass them on to their children.

1.7 Code-switching, Code-mixing, and Borrowing

In monolingual societies, people may think that code-switching and code-mixing are very unnatural. However, it is inevitable to notice that people usually switch and mix their languages in bilingual and/or multilingual societies. Also as with any aspect of language contact phenomena, the thorny issue of terminological confusion plagues research on code-switching code mixing and borrowing. Not all researchers use the same terms in the same way, nor do they agree on the territory covered by terms such as code-switching, code-mixing and borrowing.

1.7.1 Code-switching

Code-switching and code-mixing are widespread phenomena in bilingual communities where speakers use their native tongue (L1) and their second language (L2) in different domains. However, it is not always the case where each distinct language is exclusively used in one particular domain. Instead, what tends to happen is that a mixture of the two languages in question is used.

Clyne (2003) notes that when bilinguals are made aware of their mixed speech, they blame a "lapse of attention" for their "poor" linguistic performance and promise improvement by the elimination of language mixing and switching. However, Yatim (1988) state that code-switching is an effective communication mode available to proficient bilingual speakers for interactions with other individuals who share both languages.

Clyne (2003) also argues that code switching is a change by a speaker (or writer) from one language or language variety to another one. It can also take place in a conversation when one speaker uses one language and the other speaker answers in a different language. Here, the switching is performed and carried out by the other interlocutor. Speakers may also start speaking one language and then change to another one in the middle of their speech, or sometimes even in the middle of a sentence.

In fact, some people have difficulty distinguishing between code switching and code-mixing. "Code-mixing transfers elements of all linguistic levels and units ranging from a lexica item to a sentence". Therefore, that it is not always easy to distinguish code-switching from code-mixing (Grosjean, 1982:77). Code-switching on the other hand is defined as "the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent. Intersentential alternations occur when the switch is made across sentence boundaries" (Dewaele, (2007:104). Deprez (1999) defines it as "the use of more than one language by communicants in the execution of a speech act."

According to Bhatia and Ritchie (2004), the vast majority of bilinguals themselves hold a negative view of code-switched speech. They consider language switching to be a sign of "laziness", an "inadvertent" speech act, an "impurity," and instance of linguistic decadence and a potential to their own linguistic performance. However, Zentella (1997) claims that code switching is more common during informal interpersonal interactions, including those that take place between family members in natural contexts.

In this vein, Hassaniya speakers in Mauritania are thus facing kinds of multilingual situations: four native languages spoken in the country, a basically bilingual educational system and the long-standing use of Arabic and French, and the situation of diglossia between Arabic and Hassaniya. Multilingualism usually

entails such phenomena as code switching and code mixing which could be considered early stages of attrition or decline of Hassaniya.

In addition, some bilinguals remark that they usually code-switch and code-mix when they are tired, lazy, or angry (Grosjean, 1982). However, Gutierrez-Crawford (1991) claims that instances of code-switching behavior should not be interpreted as lack of language skill. Children who are bilingual may code-switch within and between utterances depending on multiple factors such as pragmatic, sociolinguistic, priming effects, etc., and not necessarily because of relative lack of proficiency across the two languages or because of parental use of code-switching.

According to Grosjean (1982), code-switching is often used as a communicative strategy to convey linguistic and social information. He also states that code-switching not only fills a momentary linguistic need, it is also a very useful communication resource. Auer (1998) also finds that code-switching serves important purposes in the ongoing negotiation of footing in bilingual interaction. In addition, Green and Price (2001) state that code-switching is not random or meaningless. It has a role, a function, facets and characteristics. It is a "linguistic tool and a sign of the participants' awareness of alternative communicative conventions". That is, in terms of the researchers who have positive points of view about code-switching and code-mixing, the fundamental reason why bilinguals switch and mix their languages is not because they lack language skills but because they try to make their utterance more easily understandable and meaningful.

Fishman (1976) also finds that the choice of language among bilingual speakers is determined by factors such as participants, situation, or topic, i.e. factors which are outside the speaker. "In certain circumstances the speakers will speak one language, and if the circumstances change, it may lead them to switch into the other languages". In addition, Auer (1998) states that one of the reasons

why people code-switch is because of macro sociolinguistic paradigm. It focuses on the influence on language use exerted by the general sociolinguistic context.

From another perspective, in Wei's (2000) point of view, sociolinguistic and socio-pragmatic studies of code-switching have taken an 'ideological' turn. Concepts such as 'power, 'authority', prestige', and 'gender' are all invoked in explaining why and how bilinguals switch from one language to another. As many researchers state, code-switching and codemixing are quite influenced by societal factors.

Furthermore, Grosjean (1982) states that in bilingual communities, it is very common for speakers to code-switch and code-mix. With regard to the reasons of code-switching and code-mixing, bilinguals usually explain that the reason why they code-switch and code-mix is that they lack facility in one language when talking about a particular topic. They report that they switch when they cannot find an appropriate word or expression or when the language being used does not have the items or appropriate translations for the vocabulary needed (Grosjean,1982).

1.7.2 Code mixing

Pfaff (1979) employs the term "mixing" as a neutral cover term for both code-mixing and borrowing while Baetens Beardsmore (1982:122) rejects the use of the term code-mixing "since it appears to be the least favored designation and the most unclear for referring to any form of non-monoglot norm based speech patterns." Yet others use the term "code-mixing" to refer to other related phenomena such as borrowing interference, transfer, or switching Mahootian (1993).

Muysken (2000) defines code-mixing as all cases where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence. In terms of the definition from Bhatia and Ritchie (2004), code-mixing refers to the mixing of various linguistic units (morphemes, words, modifiers, phrases, clauses and sentences) primarily from two participating grammatical systems within a sentence. More specifically, code-mixing is intra-sentential and is constrained by grammatical principles. It may also be motivated by social-psychological factors.

Wardhough (2006:78) defines code mixing as a "mixing of two codes (i.e., languages) usually without a change of topic. This is common in bilingual or multilingual communities and is often a mark of solidarity, e.g. between bilingual friends or colleagues in an informal situation". Code mixing can involve various levels of language, e.g. phonology, morphology, grammatical structures or lexical items.

1.7.3 Borrowing

In language contact situations, borrowing processes, which consist of the adoption by one language of linguistic elements from another language, are very common. Borrowing involves both cases of direct borrowing of a word, and the adaptation of a word into the phonetic phonological and grammatical system of the other language. According to Campbell and Sais (1995), lexical borrowing is the process by which one-language takes words from another language and makes them part of its own vocabulary. Likewise, Thomason and Kaufman (1988:122) affirm that borrowing is "the incorporation of foreign features into a group's native language by speakers of that language."

Borrowing, on the other hand, is simply taking a word or phrase from one language and using it in another language. An example of borrowing is the English

word 'coup' which comes from French. Borrowings are also called 'loan words.' In Arabic, the Lebanese dialect, which often borrows French words and phrases, is considered the most borrowing dialect of contemporary Arabic. A borrowed unit can be pronounced according to the sound system of the original language or the host language. (Davies 1991).

In Poplack's (1989) point of view, on the other hand, bilingual speakers tend to be a little ashamed of using borrowed words, feeling it marks an inadequacy in their expressive repertoire, and in this vein, Ould Bah (1985) illustrated that some Mauritanian political leaders, in early age of colonization tried to make it illegal to use French words and phrases as part of formal speech. However, it is extremely common now, and can enrich a conversation when the speaker can best express an idea in this way.

Poplack (1988), in her study of the language of adult bilinguals, found that borrowing could be identified as a phenomenon separate from code switching in communities where two languages were in contact. She found that much of the borrowing comprised words for new objects or new ideas, what has been called 'cultural borrowing'.

Adult borrowing and code switching were the topics of Myers-Scotton (2006), research in parts of Africa. She differentiates the two by frequency of occurrence (borrowings are more common), and the degree to which the word or phrase has become part of the matrix language. Unlike Poplack, she thinks that there is a continuum from borrowings to code-switches, rather than distinct categories (Myers-Scotton, 2006).

1.8 Bilingualism and diglossia

The term bilingualism is typically used to describe the two languages of an individual. When the focus changes to two languages in society, the term often used is diglossia (Ferguson, 1959). While the term diglossia has in the last twenty years become broadened and more refined, it was originally a Greek word for two languages. In practice, a language community is unlikely to use both languages for the same purpose. A language community is more likely to use one language in certain situations and for certain functions, the other language in different circumstances and for different functions. For example, a language community may use its heritage, low language in the home, and in social activity but the high language, in education and when experiencing the mass media.

Among the communities that are considered diglossic is the Arabic community. The High variety in Arabic is called Al-Fusha which is the language of the Quraan (Muslims' Holy book) and the medium in which Arabs' literary heritage is mostly written. The High variety is only acquired through formal education. It is, thus, not considered the mother tongue of Arabs.

On the other hand, Alammiya (or the Hassaniya in the Mauritanian case) is the language of daily communication. It is the variety acquired naturally from early childhood since it is the spoken dialect of parents, caretakers, and the community at large. In this vein, Maamouri (1998) argues that the High variety in the Arab communities, and especially in Mauritania is not a mother tongue of any Mauritanian rather it is acquired through formal education, preschoolers within *Elmahedra* (Quranic schools) which most children went on in childhood.

It should be noted also that Modern Standard Arabic, the higher register, is often considered more prestigious, while the lower version may be considered

ungrammatical (nonprofessional and uneducated people think that the low variety is ungrammatical as opposed to the MSA). In his original article about diglossia, Ferguson (1959) described how the use of the incorrect register might lead to social ridicule. Such ridicule may certainly occur in any language with standard and dialectal varieties of speech. Ferguson (1959) distinguishes, however, between diglossic languages and languages that have standard and dialectal varieties.

Ferguson also claims that diglossic languages embody a higher register that is not regularly used "as a medium of ordinary conversation, and any attempt to do so is felt to be … pedantic and artificial" (Ferguson, 1959:99). Thus, in a diglossic language the use of the more prestigious higher register is reserved for restricted contexts. In addition to the existence of separate speech registers, Ferguson (1959) also emphasized the role of a sizeable body of literature and restricted literacy "to a small elite" in diglossic speech communities

1.8.1 Aspects of diglossia in Mauritania

After the concept of 'diglossia' was first elaborated by Ferguson (1959), it became widely used in sociolinguistic literature and became further extended and theorized. Its applications include both monolingual settings where two distinct varieties of the same language are standardized and bilingual settings where the H- and L-code are two different languages.

The relationship between Arabic and Hassaniya in Mauritania meets broadly the requirements of the rubrics that characterize Fergusonian diglossia as described above. Arabic is actually the superposed variety (the H variety) standardized and with a sizable body of literacy tradition. Within the Bidhan community, it fulfills such formal functions as religious sermons and official speeches. In addition, this variety is not required at home, but rather learnt in school through formal methods

and techniques. Overlapping forms are also observed in such fields as lexicon and phonology,as described by Ferguson in his famous article (Ould Mahamed Baba,1998)

On the other hand, Hassaniya, as a native variety, is chiefly appropriate for conversations with friends and family, and in typical contexts such as the marketplace, playgrounds, and everyday life matters. This variety is naturally and inevitably acquired within the home environment. Standardization remains feeble in spite of the French-Hassaniya dictionary performed by the French linguist Taine-Cheikh in 1988. Normative and descriptive studies are still very few or even rare and have been mainly achieved by outsiders (Ould Mahaned Baba,1998)

Nonetheless, some inconsistencies with Ferguson' s definition of diglossia seem to exist. They concern especially the prestige and the literary heritage of Hassaniya. Ould Mohamed Baba (1998) found in his study of the prestige and the literary heritage of Hassaniya that these two rubrics do not correspond in the Bidhan community to the cases described in Ferguson's defining languages. The case of Hassaniya was found as a true original case. He succeeded in detecting the real pride and even the glory of Hassaniya in the target community. Even in comparison with Arabic, the local variety is never despised or depreciated. It seems that in this case, the esteem of the H variety and the L variety are not mutually exclusive. Similarly, the study showed that the Hassaniya literary heritage is held in no less esteem than the Arabic literary heritage. As we shall see in the next chapter, moreover they are felt to be complementary.

Considering the linguistic distance between French (indo European family) and the Hassaniya (Hamito-Semetic family) and their functional complementarities in the Bidhan community, one can assume that there is a clear case of extended diglossia. However, this should not be confused with a bilingual or even a multilingual situation if we count Arabic. Juker (2000) explains that diglossia is a

matter of sociologists and sociolinguistics and refers to the distribution of more than one language or variety, to serve different communicational tasks in a society. Multilingualism is a matter of psychologists and psycholinguists and refers to an individual 's ability to use more than one language or language variety

The role of French, language of the colonizer, as an official language *de jure* until 1991 and *de facto* until new is predominant in furthering the diglossic situation in the Bidhan community. In fact, from the colonization of the country in the late 19th century until the national constitution of 1991, French achieved a variety of statuses but has always been associated with formality. It has been the language of administration, instruction, and communication with the others. Even though Arabic has been introduced in administration, instruction, and in the media, French is still the most formal language of communication in these areas. However, French is never used in intimate or homely contexts (at least in the Bidhan community), except to denote the formality of the speech or the discussion.

1.8.2 Diglossia vs. Bilingualism

In Baker's (2006) opinion, the concept of diglossia can be usefully examined alongside bilingualism. He argued that bilingualism is a subject for psychologists and linguists. On the other hand, diglossia is a concept for sociologists and sociolinguists to study. Fishman (1965) combines the terms bilingualism and diglossia to portray four language situations where bilingualism and diglossia may exist with or without each other (Baker, 2006).

The first situation appear when a language community containing both individual bilingualism and diglossia. In such a community, almost everyone will be able to use both the high language (or variety) and the low language (or variety). The high language is used for one set of functions, the low variety for a separate set

of functions. We can cite here Mauritania as the example where almost all inhabitants speak Hassaniya and Standard Arabic. Hassaniya is the Low variety MSA (or Modern Standard Arabic) is the High language.

The second situation outlined by Fishman (1972) is diglossia without bilingualism. In such a context there will be two languages within a particular geographical area. One group of inhabitants will speak one language, another group a different language. One example may be Mauritania to the extent of different language varieties (Hassaniya, Wolof, poular) which are located in different areas of this country.

The third situation is bilingualism without diglossia. In this situation, most people will be bilingual and will not restrict one language to a specific set of purposes. Either language may be used for almost any function. Fishman (1972, 1980) regards such communities as unstable and in a state of change. Where bilingualism exists without diglossia, the expectation may be that one language will, in the future, become more powerful and have more purposes. The other language may decrease in its functions and decay in status and usage. (Baker, 2006)

The fourth situation is where there is neither bilingualism nor diglossia. One example is where a linguistically diverse society has been forcibly changed to a relatively monolingual society. In Cuba and the Dominican Republic, the native languages have been exterminated. A different example would be a small speech community using its minority language for all functions and insisting on having no relationship with the neighboring majority language. (Baker, 2006)

On the other hand, there are cases in which societies have high varieties in conjunction with a single 'L' or so-called triglossia. Romaine (1995) gave Tunisia as an example for this case, where classical and Tunisian Arabic are in diglossic distribution but also French is used. This also means that there are three varieties in

a functional distribution. Fasold (1984:37) referred to triglossia as "boarded diglossia" which would "allow any formal varies in use in a speech community to be the high variety".

Platt (1977) had also extended the notion of diglossia when he uses the term ' polyglossia' to refer to cases like Singapore and Malaysia , where several codes exist in a particular arrangement according to domain. Fishman (1980) argues that diglossia with and without bilingualism tends to provide a relatively stable, enduring language arrangement. Yet such stability may be increasingly rare. With increasing ease of travel and communication, increased social and vocational mobility, a more global economy and more urbanization, there tends to be more contact between language communities.

In the case of Mauritania although, Arabic is the official language of the country, it is thought to be spoken natively by any community in Mauritania as anywhere else in the Arab world; and despite the claims made by some Hassaniya speakers that there is no difference between their dialect and Arabic, these varieties remain unquestionably different (Taine-Cheikh, 1979). In order to be able to speak Standard Arabic, children of the Hassaniya speech community have to be taught that standard variety, while the acquisition of Hassaniya is natural and effortless. It is true that they use both languages for different purposes, but still Hassaniya is their native language. It is the vehicle of their culture whose destiny depends upon this language.

Finally, in the extremely complex linguistic situation of Mauritania (Taine-cheikh, 1979), there might be a threat upon Hassaniya. Ould Mohamed Baba (1998) asserts that Hassaniya was endangered four years ago. Some speakers today think that there are some hints of attrition among Hassaniya speakers such as code switching and code mixing. Others think that because of diglossia, Hassaniya will remain safe and that there is no serious threat upon it. Since no   efforts of

maintenance are made to preserve this language while it is excluded from the educational system, more effort are made to promote MSA and French , and since some speakers feel that the language is disappearing especially among the youth, one wonders if there is any real threat of attrition of this language and to what extent. What are the effects of code switching and diglossia upon Hassaniya and ultimately upon the Bidhan culture in Mauritania? What could possibly be the future of Hassaniya?

1.9 Language planning

There is no country, which has not, at a time or another, been involved in language planning activities. Mauritania, like all the African countries that suffered colonization, has engaged in language planning since its independence from France in 1960. Language planning has been defined as the deliberate interference in language in order to solve communication problems. Haugen (1953, p. 137) explains that " by language planning I understand the activity of preparing a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogeneous speech community".

Various terms such as 'language engineering' had previously been used to refer more or less to the same activity (Karam 1974). Language planning as an academic field has a comparatively recent history associated with decolonization and the language problems of newly independent states (Ferguson 1959). According to Kaplan and Baldauf (1997), the knowledge of language planning as a phenomenon is a constituent part of human beings' ways of meaning making, thus it is old as recorded human history. However, there is a general consensus among scholars that the early version of language planning and policy was born within sociolinguistics in the 1960s and 1970s, and was dominated by positivist paradigms. Joseph (1987) points out that language planning, as an academic field is

a product of the sociolinguistic attention to language standardization in the 1950s and 1960s.

1.9.1 Language planning in Mauritania

The history of the Islamic republic of Mauritania has made it a multicultural and multilingual country. Four major speech communities exist side by side in this west African country: Hassaniya, Pulaar, Wolof, and Soninke. Hassaniya is a colloquial dialect of Arabic, which belongs to the Semitic branch of the afro-Asiatic family (Allen, 1989; Malherbe, 2001; Leclerc, 2000). The other languages belong to the Nigro-Kordofanian family; Soninke belongs to the Mande branch, Pulaar and Wolof belong to the west Atlantic branch (Sounkalo, 1995).

The colonization of the country in the twentieth century by France has also brought its lot of complexity to an already complex linguistic situation. The colonial policy was a policy of deliberate cultural and linguistic oppression. Cultural assimilation through the universal use of French has aimed first at eliminating standard Arabic in all the communities of Mauritania. This was the start of an everlasting conflict between French and Arabic in Mauritania. The colonizer considered Pulaar, Wolof and Soninke as primitive languages because they were not written; as Taine-Cheikh (1979) explains, it was "théorisation raciste sur les langues noires comme langues primitives qui ne faisaient que justifier scientifiquement le francais comme langue de civilization". As for Hassaniya, the objective was to push it toward the Sanhaja language in order to cut it from standard Arabic and to cut the Bidhan community from the rest of the Arab world (Taine-Cheikh, 1979).

The obvious result of this situation is that the four national languages, alongside with Arabic and French were in contact for a long time. This interaction might affect each one of these languages at various levels in addition to the inevitable changes through time. However, the policy makers were so concerned

with the competition between Arabic and French that they did not pay attention to the other native languages until 1979 when the institute of national languages was created. The task of this institute was to standardize Pulaar, Wolof, and Soninke in order to be taught ultimately in school. This praiseworthy effort to preserve the native languages of the country did not, unfortunately concern Hassaniya. Following this trend, a department of linguistics and national languages was created in the Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences in the University of Nouakchott in 2000, still without integrating Hassaniya.

On the other hand, and in contrast with other Arabic speaking countries, like Algeria for example, where MSA as the official language co-exists with a great number of Arabic varieties, in Mauritania, the so-called variety has got a name Hassaniya which indicates all the Arabic varieties spoken in the country. Such name has probably given some prestigious to Hassaniya.

1.9.2 Types of language planning

Some scholars such as Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) maintain that the two terms describe two distinct aspects of language change process. The researchers define 'language policy' as "a body of ideas, laws, regulation, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in the society, group or system"(Wright, 2004:237). Language planning, on the other hand, is "an activity that is usually undertaken by governments with the aim to 'promote some systematic linguistic change in some community of speakers". (Wright, 2004:237)

According to Spolsky (2004), the term 'language planning' denotes two senses: First, it describes 'the customary consensual judgments and practices of a speech community with regards to the appropriateness of a large number of significant choices among all the kinds of variants allowed in speech or writing'.

Secondly, the term 'language planning' points to 'a specific policy adopted and explicitly stated for a defined circumstance and place.

Language planning "is not intended to be theory driven, but rather responsive to real world interdisciplinary solutions of immediate practical problems" (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997 p: 193). Rubin (1971) states that good planning includes steps such as extensive fact–finding, the consideration of alternative plans of action, decision–making, and the implementation of decisions in specific ways. Rubin (1971:16) also characterized language planning as "an activity whereby goals are established, means are selected, and the outcomes predicted in a systematic and explicit manner".

Over the years, there have been a number of attempts to define the activities, which make up the language planning process and to provide a descriptive model of those processes. Haugen (1983) has incorporated much of this thinking into an overall model of the language planning process to which 'internationalisation' can be added. The model indicates that the activities which make up the language planning process can be viewed from either a societal or a language focus.

The societal focus is called 'status planning' and consists of those decisions a society must make about language selection and the implementation to choose and disseminate the language or languages selected. The language focus is called 'corpus planning' and consists of linguistic decisions, which need to be made to codify and elaborate a language or languages. These two form the basis for an overview of all the activities, which make up the language planning process. The model can also be examined in terms of form or policy planning, with its emphasis on basic language and policy decisions and their implementation, or on function or language cultivation, with its emphasis on language teaching and extended language development and use (Rubin and Jernudd, 1971).

At the eve of independence of Mauritania, in November 28th 1960, the authorities chose the officialization. Soon after that, in 1961, article 3 of the law N 068065 of national constitution designated French and Arabic as joint official languages. In fact, French was the only language used in practice (Diagana, 1998; Sounkalo, 1995; Taine-Cheikh, 1994) the recognition of Arabic was merely symbolic, even though it is , in principle, the language of the Islamic culture of all the communities of Mauritania. The knowledge of standard Arabic, even inside the Bidhan community, was the apanage of a small minority (Taine-Cheikh, 1994).

However, one aspect of language status planning in Mauritania is noteworthy with regard to the various policies as well as the various people interested in the issue. Hassaniya is never mentioned despite its being the native language of the whole Bidhan community and therefore one of the national languages of Mauritania.

Kloss (1969) was the first who introduce the terms status and corpus planning in the literature of language policy and planning. Status planning is intended to address the functions of language(s) in society and it typically refers to the assigning of languages to official domains of language use such as those of the government and education (Ferguson 1959). Status planning is rarely assigned to language experts, but rather it is viewed as the job of politicians. The output of status planning is laws, clauses in constitutions and regulations prescribing the official standing of languages, and their use in social domains of public administration (Lo Bianco 2004:152). Kale (1990) suggests five selectional criteria for using a social variety for official purposes: political neutrality, dominance, prestige, a great tradition, and a real affinity.

Corpus planning, on the other hand, is intended to change the code or the form of the selected language (Ferguson 1959). Corpus activities are usually undertaken by languages experts resulting in the production of grammars,

dictionaries, literacy manuals, and writing style and pronunciation guides. However, like status planning, corpus planning is also driven by political considerations extending beyond the languge itself (Ferguson 1959).

Haugen (1983) proposes a four–way matrix of language planning processes yielding four processes: selection of norm, codification, elaboration of function, and implementation. Selection and implementation are viewed as status planning activities, whereas codification and elaboration are seen as corpus planning processes. Although Ferguson's (1968) typology of language development (i.e., graphisation, modernization, and standardization) corresponds roughly to the functions of corpus planning activities (Hornberger 2006), modernization may be interpreted to partake in status planning and corpus planning (i.e., modernization partly includes Haugen's selection at the status planning level).

Drawing mainly on Nahir's (1984) work, Hornberger (1990) listed the following sociopolitical goals or functions of status and corpus planning activities: officialisation, nationalization, status standardization, vernacularisation, revival, spread, maintenance, inter-lingual communication, purification, reform, corpus standardization, lexical modernization, terminology unification, stylistic simplification, auxiliary code standardization (e.g., unifying the rules of transliteration), and graphisation.

Wiley (1996) makes reference to two additional types of language planning besides corpus and status planning. They are language acquisition planning, and language in education planning, the latter of which he characterizes as "the primary form of language acquisition planning." The notion of language acquisition planning was introduced by Cooper (1989) and is said to involve "decisions concerning the teaching and use of language." (Cooper 1989:301) The rationale for proposing such a category is the limitation of the other two major types to changes in the structure, function, or level of recognition of a given language, without consideration of its possible spread to new speakers through consciously thought-

out methods and strategies of dissemination. Deliberate efforts to spread a language to new speakers have coincided with such historical events as military conquest and promotion of religion

Although corpus planning and status planning are conceptually distinct activities; in practice, they are often inextricably intertwined (Williams 1992). A decision, for example, to begin offering primary school instruction in a particular language for the first time, might necessitate translating textbooks into that language, and even creating a writing system. A project to designate language X as the national language could create the demand for new vocabulary to accommodate the various issues and topics that might be addressed in it in its new function.

Modern linguists, on the other hand, during most of the twentieth century have taken the position that their task is to describe what speakers actually do rather than to try to prescribe what they ought to do. This movement has certainly been exemplified in the development of transformational generative theory in North America and to the current movement in lexicography to derive from massive computerised text corpuses the lexicon and meaning of actual users of the language (May, 2001).

Language planners are caught in a dilemma between these two views. On the one hand, language planners tend to come out of linguistic (and educationalist) programmes and training and consequently are strong believers in the essentially descriptive functions of linguistics; on the other hand, language planning contains a kernel of prescriptivism by definition (Chumbow, 1987).

To put the distinction in another way, language planning is essentially descriptive in its data gathering activities, but once the language planner (or government bureaucrat) moves beyond data gathering into recommendations, policy determination and policy implementation, s/he can no longer just describe. The activity becomes prescriptive. This distinction may create a 'problem' for

language planners and explain their reluctance to involve themselves in the policy-determination/policy-implementation phases of the planning cycle. Once the descriptive tasks have been accomplished, language planners seem to be content to withdraw and leave articulation and implementation to bureaucrats, thereby avoiding soiling their hands in prescriptive activities (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997).

It is, consequently, necessary to temper the social scientists' predilection to consider themselves as disinterested and objective observers. At some point, the language planner becomes an involved participant. It is for this reason, perhaps, that the paradigmatic constraints of autonomous linguistics cannot apply in language policy and planning research the ultimate applied linguistics (Rubin and Jernudd 1971).

2. The linguistic situation in Mauritania

2.1 Introduction

Mauritania officially known as the Islamic Republic of Mauritania is a West African country comprised between the 15th and the 27th degree of north latitude and the 5th and 7th degree of west longitude. It occupies a territory of about 1.100.000km2. Largely opened to the Atlantic Ocean in the west, it is separated from Senegal, in the southwest, by the inferior bank of the Senegal River. The rest of its frontier is purely conventional; as it is implied in its rectilinear lay out: Mali is situated at the southeast and the east, Algeria at the northeast, and Western Sahara in the Northeast on about 1561klm of this vast country (Arnoud, 1979).

The name 'Mauritania', once used as the name of the Roman colonies of North Africa (Mauretania), was reintroduced by the colonial administration to cut this western part of the Saharo-Sahelian zone of its Arabic roots. This area was called in Arabic literature *bilad Shinghitt* 'country of "Shinghitt" , *trab Albidhan* 'land of the Whites' (Taine Cheikh 1990), and *Bilàd Assayba* 'country of anarchy'.

Populated of almost 2.500.000 inhabitants in 2000, Mauritania has a density of 2, 43 inhabitants to the km ² with, however, considerable regional disparities going from 7, 39 in Wilaya of South-east and less in Saharan Wilaya (3,8) with more than 19,37 in certain Wilaya of the South. Hyphen between the Black Africa and White Africa, Mauritania played a big role in the propagation of Islam in Black Africa. It is today a privileged place of cohabitation complementary to Arabic and Négro-African (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization UNESCO, 2000).

This chapter deals with the history of Mauritania and the complex linguistic situation through time, which is characterized by the existence of a number of languages and languages varieties in addition to the standard form of Arabic, the official language of the country.

2.2 Historical background

The area of Sahel had witnessed the influence of immigration from North and South early in the third century A.D. The first immigrants were the Berbers from the North, who migrated into what is now Mauritania in the third and fourth centuries and later in the seventh and eighth centuries. The local populations either became vassals in service to the Berbers or migrated farther in the south. In the ninth century, three Berber groups--the Lemtuna, Messufa, and Ghdala—formed a confederation in order to better control the easternmost trans- Saharan trade route. The Sanhadja Confederation, as it came to be called, monopolized trade between the ancient empire of Ghana and the city of Sijilmasa. The historically important towns of Koumbi Saleh, Aoudaghast, Oualâta, Tîchît, and Ouadane flourished during this epoch (Ould Cheikh, 1985).

The beginning of the eleventh century witnessed two major events concerning Mauritanian history; the first was the breakup of the Sanhadja Confederation and the second was the establishment of Almoravid Empire 90 Km in the east of Nouakchott city now. By 1090 this new Empire of Almoravids extended from Spain to Senegal. Within forty years, however, the fervor and zeal of the original Almoravid reformers waned, and, at the same time, their enemies to the north and south grew stronger (Ould Sheikhna, 2009).

It is very important to mention here that the conversion of the Sanhaja Berbers to Islam was an overall change in thought and literature. It led them to new beliefs and behavioral conceptions; furthermore, the teachings and concepts that

came with it bought elements of a new civilization language: the Arabic language. From that time, the Arabic language entered all the tents and houses, and a new increase in Arabization started.

However, this Arabization is not probably without connection with the fact that Sanhaja Berbers had already been deeply Islamized by Almoravids in the 11th century. The important cultural Arabization they had underwent made them the true representatives of the Arab culture and language (Ould Bah, 1987, Taine-Cheikh, 1979). Although the tribe Lemtuna, which is counted among the Sanhaja Berber tribes, is well known for its Arab origins (descendent of the tribe Himyar of Yemen), this inherited relationship was regarded as secondary since Arabs and Berbers were all Muslims (Ould Bah, 1987).

Over the next six centuries, Mauritania witnessed the domination of the black Sudanic kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai which eventually expanded into what had been Berber strongholds and constituted the second wave of immigration. A third wave, again from the north, saw various Yemeni Arab groups infiltrating southward, pushing the Berbers and Africans before them. By the late seventeenth century, one Yemeni group, the Bani Hassan, came to dominate all of what is now Mauritania. As the Berbers moved South, they forced the blacks toward the Senegal River Basin (Ould Cheikh, 1985).

Mauritania's social structure in the late twentieth century dated from the late seventeenth century, when the Bani Hassan defeated a Berber force seeking to expel them. The nomadic Arab warrior groups subsequently dominated the Berbers, many of whom became clerics serving the Arabs. At the bottom of the social pyramid were the black slaves. All three groups spoke one language, Hassaniya Arabic, and became known as Maures. Meanwhile, free blacks, culturally related to Africans in the South, settled in the Senegal River Basin (Ould Sheikhna, 2009).

In order to purchase Arabic gum, French traders arrived to Saint Louis in what is now known as Senegal and that was the first contact between the Europeans and Mauritania. In the mid-ninetieth century French forces occupied the Trarza and Brakna regions in Southern Mauritania. At the start of the twentieth century, French forces under Xavier Cappolani moved back into Mauritania and through blind force and co-optation pacified strong Arab chiefs. But in contrast to its colonial administration elsewhere in West Africa, the French administered Mauritania indirectly, relying on existing Arab- dominated institutions. This "laissez-faire" attitude persisted until the 1940s. Following World War II, at a time when other French colonies were agitating for independence or at least substantial reform, there was only minimal political activity in Mauritania. France nonetheless implemented changes that corresponded to reforms demanded and accorded elsewhere in francophone West Africa (Vernet, 1979).

From the strategic perspective of pacifying the region, colonization, remained superficial for several decades. Its impact was especially weak on the nomadic world, which only experienced indirect administration (enlistment in the gums, particular groups of military nomads, taxes imposed on the tribes, etc.). During that time, the sedentary black Africans of the earlier colonized valley were already subject to conscription and scheduled taxes (Vernet, 1979).

At early age of colonization the Moors offered a particularly tenacious resistance to the French education system, and as irony most aristocratic people did not hesitate to send the children of their slaves or their dependents to school instead of their own children. As the backwardness of Hassaniya speakers increased, the colonial authorities played the same rule as it did with Algeria when it agreed to open special schools, known as *Medersas*, for the sons from good Moorish families, in which Arabic was given an important place. These schools were abolished in the 1940s, but as compensation a few hours of Arabic were introduced in all schools attended by Hassaniya speakers. This measure tended, however, to be

withheld from the black Africans, under the pretext of making a distinction between the Arabic language as a 'language of culture' (reserved for speakers of Arabic) and as a 'language of religion' (excluded from the French state school system) (Taine Cheikh, 1987).

During the first decades of independence, Mauritania remained deeply divided. Southern (non-Maure) blacks resented Maure domination of the political process, which led, among other things, to the disproportionate representation of Maures in the bureaucracy and officer corps of the armed forces, and the imposition of Hassaniya Arabic as the language of instruction in all secondary schools.

To obtain Tiris al Gharbiyya Mauritania allied with Morocco against the Polisario (Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic SADR) in 1975. But by 1978, after several surprise attacks by the Polisario forces against Nouakchott and the iron ore mines at Zouîrât, it had become apparent that Mauritania's military was no match even for the smaller guerrilla forces. Nonetheless, the government continued its costly involvement, in part to stave off a possible invasion by Moroccan troops should Mauritania curtail its effort and in part to satisfy the Maures who saw the annexation of Tiris al Gharbiyya as the first step toward a rejuvenated Greater Mauritania. Mauritania's blacks in particular opposed the war on several counts. First, it siphoned off scarce resources that might otherwise have supported greater agricultural development in the south; second, it paved the way for military officers, most of whom were Maures, to insinuate themselves into the civilian government; and, finally, the majority of the enlisted men were black, although most officers were Maure (Ould Cheikh, 1985).

As a result of the big costs of the war and the subsequent political disagreement on this war, a group of military officers staged a coup in July 1978 that brought Colonel Mustapha Ould Salek to power as prime minister. Salek proved unable to extricate Mauritania from the conflict, and in April 1979 Colonel Ahmed Ould Bouceif and Colonel Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidalla seized power.

Shortly thereafter, Bouceif was killed in airplane crash, and Haidalla became Prime Minister (Ould Sheikhna, 2009).

The Military Committee for National Salvation (Comité Militaire de Salut National--CMSN), ruled the country and Haidalla arranged a cease-fire with the Polisario to remain neutral in the Western Sahara conflict, although his government later accorded diplomatic recognition to the SADR.

As opposed to this new policy toward SADR Colonel Maaouiya Ould Sid Ahmed Ould Taya succeeded in December 1984 to make a coup with some of his friends. Taya government was as anxious to institute the forms of democracy as it was to deflect responsibility for its inability to implement necessary economic and political changes and to defuse ethnic conflict (Ould Sheikhna, 2009).

Sociolinguisticlly speaking, Mauritania now has six major ethnic groups: Maure, Toucouleur, Fulbe, Soninké, Wolof, and Bambara. The Maures included the white Arab-Berber descendants of the original Maghribi immigrants and blacks called Harratin (sing., Hartani), former slaves of white Maures who had assimilated to Maure culture. The other ethnic groups consisted of black Africans, who lived in the south along the Senegal River or in cities. Given the large number of black Maures, the significant cultural distinction in Mauritania was not white versus black but rather Maure (white and black) versus black. But even black Africans had divergent responses, often class linked, to Maure hegemony (Taine-Cheikh, 1987).

In all ethnic groups (including the Soninke and the Wolof), the learned men had at their disposal a unified corpus of reference, based on the triad of Malikism, Asharism, and Sufi brotherhood, and applied largely similar methods to transmit knowledge. These methods made a strong demand on memory and used all possible memorization techniques: repetitions and recitations (supported by rhythmic movement of the body), poetry (even about abstract topics such as grammar), and copying of texts. Writing was at the center of learning, but transmission took place

from the master's voice to the student's ear. The performance was less an oralization, corresponding to a real command of Classical Arabic as a language of oral communication, than an auralization, meaning the recitation of literary Arabic (Taine-Cheikh 1998; Ould Cheikh 1985). Over the years, however, teaching has diversified and deepened thanks to a more frequent recourse to the mother tongue in order to explain the meaning of the text. Altogether, the level of Arabo Islamic culture was significant, especially but not exclusively in the traditional schools (Mahedra) of the desert (Taine-Cheik, 1987).

In early April 1989, the borders between Mauritania and Senegal witnessed racial events on a minor border dispute involving Senegalese farmers and Mauritanian herders. The rioting in Senegal, in which hundreds of small neighbourhood shops belonging to Mauritanian retailers were also looted followed a period of inflation, rising unemployment, and strikes, all of which provoked unhappiness in the society. The violence in Mauritania appeared to be one more chapter in the longstanding conflict between Maures and black Africans, many of whom farmed in the valuable irrigated lands along the Senegal River. To suppress the violence, several countries, including Algeria, Morocco, arranged an airlift to send home nationals from the two countries back across their individual borders (Ould Cheikh, 1985).

2.2.1 Early History

Many scholars agree that the early history of the west Saharan is unknown. There are some written financial statement by medieval Arab traders and explorers but the major sources of pre-European history relayed on oral history, legends, and archaeological evidence. These sources indicate that during the millennia preceding the Christian era, the Sahara was a more livable area than it is today and supported a prosperous culture. In the area that is now Mauritania, the Bafour, a proto-Berber people, whose descendants may be the coastal Imraguen fishermen, were hunters, pastoralists, and fishermen. Valley cultivators, who may have been black ancestors

of the riverine Toucouleur and Wolof peoples, lived alongside the Bafour. Climatic changes and perhaps overgrazing and over cultivation as well, led to a gradual desiccation of the Sahara and the southward movement of these peoples (Taine-Cheik, 1987).

This southern migration became more intensive in the third and fourth centuries A.D, by the arrival of Berber groups from the north who were searching for pasturage or fleeing political disorder and war. The wide-ranging activities of these unstable Berber warriors were made possible by the introduction of the camel to the Sahara in this period. This first wave of Berber invaders subjugated and made vassals of those Bafour who did not flee south. Other Berber groups followed in the seventh and eighth centuries, themselves fleeing in large numbers before the Arab conquerors of the Maghrib (Taine-Cheik, 1987, Ould Bah, 1979).

Lemtuna one of the Berber groups arriving in Mauritania in the eighth century. had attained political dominance in the Adrar and Hodh regions. Lemtuna later with two other important Berber groups, Messufa and Ghdala, set up the Sanhadja Confederation as mentioned before. From their capital, Aoudaghast, the Lemtuna controlled this loose confederation and the western routes of the Saharan caravan trade that had begun to grow after the introduction of the camel. At its height, from the eighth to the end of the tenth century, Sanhadja was a decentralized polity based on two distinct groups: the nomadic and very independent Berber groups, who maintained their traditional religions and the Muslim, urban Berber merchants, who conducted the caravan trade (Taine-Cheik, 1987).

After the decline of Awdaghust four major Mauritanian caravan cities of the 2nd millennium (Wadan, Shinguitti, Tishitt, and Walata) were founded around the 12th and 13th centuries. At that time, the Islamic religion had already reached an important breakthrough in the region, paving the way for a certain adaptation to the Arabic language. The only Arabic-speaking communities, though, still seem to

have been made up by small groups of traders coming from the Maghreb. In all cities with a Berber majority, whose destiny was unquestionably linked to the road taken by the trans-Saharan trade, the Azer language a variety of Soninke as spoken by Zenaga speakers played a key role as lingua franca, despite the weakening and finally the disappearance of the Ghana Empire (Kane, 1997).

Although dominated by the Sanhadja merchants, the caravan trade had its northern terminus in the Maghribi commercial city of Sijilmasa and its southern terminus in Koumbi Saleh, capital of the Ghana Empire. Later, the southern trade route ended in Timbuktu, capital of the Mali Empire. Gold, ivory, and slaves were carried north in return for salt (ancient salt mines near Kediet Ijill in northern Mauritania are still being worked), copper, cloth, and other luxury goods (Kane, 1997).

Soon, after the breakup of the Sanhadja Confederation and in 1039, a chief of the Ghdala, Yahya ibn Ibrahim, returned from a pilgrimage to Mecca bringing with him a Sanhadja teacher of the Qur'an, Abdallah ibn Yassin, to teach them Islam. This teacher was rejected at first by the Ghdala clan and after the death of Ibn Ibrahim, Ibn Yassin and some of his Sanhadja followers retired to an isolated place where they built a fortified religious center, a 'ribat', which attracted many Sanhadja. In 1042 al Murabitun (men of the ribat), as Ibn Yassin's followers came to be called, launched a jihad, or holy war, against the nonbelievers and the heretics among the Sanhadja, beginning what later became known as the Almoravid movement. The initial aim of the Almoravids was "to establish a political community in which the ethical and juridical principles of Islam would be strictly applied" (Leriche, 1946 p. 34).

The leadership of the movement in the south passed to Abu Bakr ibn Unas, prince of Adrar after the death of Ibn Yassin in 1059, and to Yusuf ibn Tashfin in the north. Under Ibn Tashfin, the Berbers captured Morocco and founded Marrakech as their capital in 1062. By 1082 all of the western Maghrib (Algeria

now) was under Almoravid domination. In 1086 the Andalusian amirates, under attack from the Spanish Christian king Alfonso and the Christian reconquest of Spain, called on Ibn Tashfin and his Berber warriors to cross the Strait of Gibraltar and come to their rescue. The Almoravids defeated the Spanish Christians and, by 1090, imposed Almoravid rule and the Maliki school of Islamic law in Muslim Spain (Leriche, 1946).

On the other hand, in Mauritania, Abu Bakr led the Almoravids in a war against Ghana (1062-76), finishing by the full down of Koumbi Saleh in 1076. This event marked the end of the dominance of the Ghana Empire. But after the death of Abu Bakr in 1087 and Ibn Tashfin in 1106, traditional rivalries among the Sanhadja and a new Muslim reformist conquest led by the Zenata Almohads (1133-63) destroyed the Almoravid Empire (Leriche, 1946).

During Almoravid Empire, Mauritania witnessed the unity which was established between Morocco and Mauritania. This unity continued to have some political importance in the 1980s, as it formed part of the basis for Morocco's claims to Mauritania. But the greatest contribution of the Sanhadja and the Almoravids was the Islamization of the western Maghrib. This process would remain a dominant factor in the history of the area for the next several centuries (Leriche, 1946).

Influences on the maghrib did not confine on Almoravids movement otherwise the black Sudanic kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai played an important role in Mauritania's history for about 700 years--from the eighth to the fifteenth century. Ghana, the first of the great West African Sudanic kingdoms, included in its territory all of southeastern Mauritania extending to Tagant. Ghana reached its peak in the ninth and tenth centuries with the extension of its rule over the Sanhadja Berbers. This large and centralized kingdom controlled the southern terminus of the trans-Saharan trade in gold, ivory, and salt (Ould Cheikh, 1996).

In the beginning of the eighth century, Mauritania experienced slow but constant arrivals of Arabs from the north. The growing Arab presence pushed the Berbers, who chose not to mix with other groups, to move farther south into Mauritania, forcing out the black inhabitants. By the sixteenth century, most blacks had been pushed to the Senegal River. Those remaining in the north became slaves cultivating the oases (Ould Ahmedou, 1997).

Several groups of Yemeni Arabs who had been living the north of Africa turned south to Mauritania after the weakness of Almoravid Empire. They set in northern Mauritania and attacked the caravan trade, causing routes to shift east, which in turn led to the gradual decline of Mauritania's trading towns. One particular Yemeni group, Banou Hassan, continued to migrate southward until, by the end of the seventeenth century, they dominated the entire country. The last relations between Berbers and Arab was the Mauritanian Thirty Years' War (1644-74), or Sharr Bubba war, which led by Nasir ad Din, a Lemtuna imam. This Sanhadja war of liberation was, however, unsuccessful; the Berbers were forced to abandon the sword and became vassals to the warrior Arab groups (Ould Ahmedou, 1997).

Benou Hassan came to Mauritania speaking a variety of Arabic, which soon gained the name of Hassaniya in reference to its speakers. The immigrant Arab community and the native Sanhaja community mixed with each other in regard to all aspects of social life. Since Standard Arabic played the formal role in both communities, it continued to play it in the new mixed Islamic community. However a conflict started between Hassaniya and the Sanhaja language for the informal role. For various reasons such as the esteem in which the two communities held standard Arabic as the language of the Qur'an, Islam's holy book. The use of the Sanhaja language started vanishing gradually. Although Sanhaja is not used in the Bidhan community anymore, except by about 400 speakers in the Trarza region (Cohen, 1963).

The name Hassaniya (or *klam Hassan* 'the language of Hassan'), assigned to the spoken Arabic of Mauritania, clearly suggests that this dialect is a legacy from the Hassan tribes. In view of what is known about Arabization in the Saharo-Sahelian zone, this identification is not surprising in itself. Because all Arabic-speaking groups that came to settle in this area claim to be of the same origin, it is not too far-fetched to think that the fundamental characteristics of the Mauritanian dialect were already present in the 15th century. This is all the more plausible since even today for Hassaniya speakers mutual comprehension seems to be easiest with the Bedouin in the whole Arabic world, not only from the Maghreb but also from the Middle East (especially Jordanians). Besides, the Hassaniya language shows a remarkable homogeneity from east to west and from north to south (and even beyond the Mauritanian borders) (Cohen, 1963).

On the other hand, the Hassaniya language has retained many characteristics from the dialect once spoken by the Benou Hassan, this does not mean that it has gone through the centuries without changes. Even without mentioning the most recent evolutions, the numerous borrowings from local dialects, especially Zenaga, show the lexical enrichment produced by the contact with the Berber substrate language.

2.2.2 Characteristics of Hassaniya Arabic

One major characteristic and perhaps fundamental asset, of Hassaniya or *klam Elbidhan* is that it is a social realty rather than an ethnic one (Cohen, 1963). Although *klam Elbidhan* literary means 'the speech of the whites', Hassaniya does not belong to a given ethnicity but merely to all those who speak it. This idea is found in the proverb '*ebeydhan min tidinit wel mannou*' , meaning more Bidhan than the *tidinit* (musical instrument like the violin) of *wul manu* (a famous musician and poet) ' , which is used to qualify someone who speaks Hassaniya

clearly and fluently or who has assimilated the Bidhan culture. It is equally found in the expression 'wudhnu beydha' , literary means 'his ear is white', said of someone who understands the Bidhan language (Hassaniya) the Bidhan music, and the Bidhan culture. This spirit of tolerance, open mindedness, and rejection of racism and ethnicity as a basic notion is particularly important in a multiethnic and multicultural country like Mauritania (Taine-Cheikh, 1990).

The regression of the Sanhaja language which mentioned earlier did not, however, take place without leaving some visible impacts on Hassaniya. Even though the majority of the lexicon is from Arabic origin, usually names of places and technical vocabulary, especially for breeding cows, are from Berber origin. The Berber lexemes often begin with the prefix a- (for the masculine singular) such as *aghjel*, i.e.' little donkey', and t- (for masculine feminine) such as *tidinit*, i.e. 'guitar'. These lexemes can also be recognized through the presence of phonemes like /dž/, /tj/, /z/, and /n'/ that do not exist in Hassaniya as such, but they are maintained in the borrowed words from Berber. We can cite examples such as /tjout / 'meat of bad quality' /etnewder/ 'to crumble ', /azali/ 'a small rock', /benjoug/ proper name (Cohen, 1963).

These general rules of identification do not, however, exclude the Arabization of Berber words such as /γžel/ as a variant of /aγžjel/ in some regions, nor the' Berbenization ' of some words of Arabic origin, such as /ndwer / ('to look for a rare thing') where the root DWR 'to be rare' is encountered. Grammatically the sole Berber characteristic in words felt as borrowings from Berber –either of Berber origin or "Berbenized" – do not take the definite article; /γžjel/ 'a little donkey' is thus opposed /al γžijel / 'the little donkey', whereas / aγžjel / signifies both 'a little donkey' and ' the little donkey' (Cohen, 1963).

Despite the unquestionable Arab character of Hassaniya, there are a certain number of differences between the two languages. In comparison to other sedentary

dialects in the Maghreb, Hassaniya appears as conservative language, close to the tongue of nomads in general. One example is, in phonology, the maintenance of the three dentals /θ/ /eð/ and /eðe/ the two latter do not exist outside nomad tongues, concurrently with the dad which is not found except in sedentary tongues. Two other characteristics of Hassaniya's consonantal system are noteworthy:

- The existence of /g/ and /q/ as in Maghrebian language, however, /q/ is rare: it is usually found in religious, legal, or literacy language, such as /qadi/ 'judge in Islam' . The *qāf* is generally represented by the phoneme /g/, an essential trait of nomad tongues by opposition to sedentary tongues (Cohen, 1965; Taine-Cheikh, 1979).

- The phonological realization r' and r like in other Maghrebian dialects such as in /ižerr/ "he drags " and /ižer/ "it chews over again" , whereas in standard Arabic these tow realizations are just conditioned by the context (Taine-Cheikh, 1979).

Nonetheless, what distinctly differentiates Hassaniya from Arabic is the evolution of the vowel system. On the one hand, because of the overthrow of some short vowels in opened syllables, such as in Hassaniya /kta:b/ and classical /kita:b/ for 'book' and Hassaniya /ktəb/ and classical /kataba/ for 'to write', some syllables like CCv(C) or CvCC – inexistent in classical Arabic- are frequent in Hassaniya. On the other hand, there is a reduction in the classical tertiary system /a/ , /u/, and /i/. these two realization do give just a limit meaningful contrast as in /welek/ "your son you man and /welek/ 'your son you women'(Cohen, 1963.; Taine-Cheikh, 1979).

This little stroll inside Hassaniya might have shown the dialect as languages as always seen: communication instrument; it might also have made the language itself talk to us and tell us its history and parts of the history of its speakers. What it

does not say, however, is the role played by Hassaniya in the Bidhan society and its functional relationship with Arabic. Dialect and Classical Arabic occupied clearly deferent spheres in the traditional society. Classical Arabic is first of all the language of *Al Qur'an* and thus, naturally the language of all sciences because they are tightly linked to Islam and literary Arabic; it was the language of theology, law, grammar, logic, and prosody to mention just a few. The Bidhan Zwaya's reputation went further than the Bidhan society and the country itself (Cohen, 1963).

However, this intense intellectual activity has concerned only the Zwaya, i.e. marabous. The other class of the society, who usually are illiterate, cannot be considered, according to Taine-Cheikh (1979) as Arabized in literacy Arabic. The literate elite seems to have wished to preserve classical Arabic, the model which has been set by Ibn Malik in the 13th century, from any dialectical influence and have jealously maintained it as the sole written language. This a-temporality of the Bidhan culture is particularly visible in the production of poetry. The success of 'leghna' or Hassaniya poetry, which imposed itself finally over eshy3r (Arabic poetry) is probably due to its larger audience and its great flexibility for expressing the sensitivity properly Bidhan (Taine-Cheikh, 1979).

2.3 European occupation and its effects

In his book about Mauritania *Mauritania witnesses and events* Ould Sheikhna (2009) illustrated that the first European penetration in Mauritania was with Portuguese. They began their African explorations in the fifteenth century. In their intention for exploration they were lured by legends of vast wealth in interior kingdoms, they established a trading fort at Arguin, southeast of Cap Blanc (present-day Ras Nouadhibou), in 1455. The king of Portugal also maintained a commercial agent at Ouadane in the Adrar in an attempt to redirect gold traveling north by caravan. Having only slight success in their quest for gold, the Portuguese

quickly adapted to dealing in slaves in the mid fifteenth century (Ould Sheikhna, 2009).

The co-operation between Portuguese and Spanish in 1580 made the Spaniards become dominant along the coast. In 1638, however, they were replaced by the Dutch, who were the first to begin exploiting the Arabic gum trade. Produced by the acacia trees of Trarza and Brakna and used in textile pattern printing, this Arabic gum was considered superior to that previously obtained in Arabia. By 1678 the French replaced the Dutch and founded the French Company of the Senegal River (Compagnie Française du Sénégal) which trading the gum for more than fifty years (Ould Sheikhna, 2009).

In 1825 the new Amir of Trarza, Muhammad al Habib, sought to reassert his sovereignty over the French-protected Oualo Kingdom to the south of the Senegal River by marrying the heiress to the kingdom. The French authorities viewed this action as a hostile threat. Although, the Maures were able to lay siege to Saint Louis, a large French expeditionary force defeated the *amir*'s forces. The French concluded that to secure the continuing profitability of the gum Arabic trade, they had to forcibly occupy the northern bank of the Senegal River (Ould Sheikhna, 2009).

In 1840 a French ordinance had established Senegal as a permanent French possession with a government whose authority extended over all settlements then effectively under French control, including those in Mauritania. By undertaking the governance of these Mauritanian settlements, French rulers directly challenged Maure claims of sovereignty. Under orders from the new government of Louis Napoleon the French ended the *coutume*, (a payment which was given to the emirates in order to protect the gum trade) and decided to protect the sedentary populations of the southern bank from Maure attacks. After that the French colonel Faidherbe turned his attention to the amirates of Trarza and Brakna that had united against him. The Maures attacked Saint Louis in 1855 and almost succeeded in

reclaiming the settlement, but they were defeated a year later, in north of the Senegal River. The treaties ending the war extended a French protectorate over Trarza and Brakna, replaced the *coutume* with a 3 percent annual rebate on the value of Arabic gum delivered, and recognized French sovereignty over the northern bank of the Senegal River (Sewart, 1989).

The French colonial policy at this time would be characterized by the warning given by the Colonial Ministry to the governor of Senegal in the late 1870s, "Let us not hear from you." With France's virtual abandonment of Senegal, the relative calm created in the Chemama and southern Mauritania through Faidherbe's efforts came to an end. In virtual control of the colonial administration, the commercial companies of Saint Louis sold arms to the Maures, while at the same time outfitting French punitive missions. Scientific expeditions into Mauritania became increasingly subject to attack, and their European leaders were killed or held for payment. The obvious weakness of the French and their distraction with events elsewhere in the region emboldened the Amirs to demand and secure the reinstatement of the *coutume* (Sewart, 1989).

Xavier Coppolani was one of the founding fathers of "peaceful penetration" plan in 1901. The basic idea of the plan is an administrative organization of areas under Maure suzerainty. Coppolani in his plan set up a policy not only to divide, weaken, and pacify the Maures but also to protect them. Although he served in Mauritania for only four years (1901-05), the French called Coppolani the father of the French colony of Mauritania, and the Maures knew him as the "Pacific Conqueror" of the territory (Sewart, 1989).

During this period, there were three marabouts of great influence in Mauritania: Shaykh Sidiya Baba, whose authority was strongest in Trarza, Brakna, and Tagant; Shaykh Saad Buh, whose importance extended to Tagant and Senegal; and Shaykh Ma al Aynin, who exerted leadership in Adrar and the north, as well as in Spanish Sahara and southern Morocco. By enlisting the support of Shaykh

Sidiya and Shaykh Saad Bouh against the depredations of the warrior clans Coppolani was able to exploit the fundamental conflicts in Maure society. His task was made difficult by opposition from the administration in Senegal, which saw no value in the wastelands north of the Senegal River, and by the Saint Louis commercial companies, to whom pacification meant the end of the lucrative arms trade. Nevertheless, by 1904 Coppolani had peacefully subdued Trarza, Brakna, and Tagant and had established French military posts across the central region of southern Mauritania (Ould Ahmedou, 1997).

In 1908 the Colonel Gouraud, who had defeated a resistance movement in the French Sudan (present day Mali), took command of French forces as the government commissioner of the new Civil Territory of Mauritania (created in 1904), captured Atar, and received the submission of all the Adrar peoples the following year (Ould Ahmedou, 1997). By 1912 all resistance in Adrar and southern Mauritania had been put down. As a result of the conquest of Adrar, the fighting ability of the French was established, and the ascendancy of the French-supported marabouts over the warrior clans within Maure society was assured.

During this colonial period, Mauritania's social structure had come to reflect the impact of French administrative preferences. Individuals, families, and dominant clans attempted to use the colonial presence to maintain or improve their privileged status. Among the Maures, for example, the *Zawaya* tribes at first used their control of religious education to dominate economically and politically. This was accomplished at the expense of the *Hassani*, who had made the transition from warriors, raiders, and tribute collectors to pastoralists, traders, and low-level civil servants. However, the French generally employed Wolof and Toucouleur, rather than Maures, as low-level civil servants. By 1960 black Africans were the majority of the colonial administration's civil servants and played a much larger role in the modern employment sector than did either the *Hassani* or the *Zawaya* (Taine-Cheikh, 1994).

The main characteristics of the French colonial policy during colonization and after were the search for international prestige and the cultural assimilation of indigenous populations. France's efforts to build a colonial empire may be considered a reaction to British imperial successes: colonies were a necessary burden the French took on to maintain their international stature. These efforts were always assistant to the considerations of continental politics. As a result, little attention was paid to the political, social, and economic development of the overseas territories.

Mauritania was not far from this role. The colonization of the country in the twentieth century by France has also brought its lot of complexity to an already complex linguistic situation. The colonial policy was a policy of deliberate cultural and linguistic oppression. Cultural assimilation through the universal use of French has aimed first at eliminating standard Arabic in all the communities of Mauritania. This was the start of an everlasting conflict between French and Arabic in Mauritania. The colonizer considers Pulaar and Soninke as primitive languages because they were not written (Taine-Cheikh, 1979). As for the case of Hassaniya, the objective was to push it toward the Sanhaja language in order to cut it from standard Arabic and to cut the Bidhan community from the rest of the Arab world.

It is not something new that the policy of assimilation had its origins in the French Revolution, when the Convention in 1794 declared that all people living in the colonies were French citizens and enjoyed all republican rights. Under Napoleon and the Consulate (1799-1804), the law was soon repealed. In 1848, at the outset of the Second Republic, citizenship rights were again extended, and representation in the National Assembly was provided for the four communes of Senegal (Saint Louis, Dakar, Rufisque, and Gorée). Although these rights were retained by the Senegalese, they did not apply to Mauritania or other French territories in West Africa. Elsewhere in West Africa, although assimilation was the theoretical basis of administration, a policy evolved that shared elements of British colonial practice. For example, Africans were subjects of France, not citizens, and

had no political rights or rights of representation. The centralized and direct administration embodied in the doctrine of assimilation was maintained, however, and a functional collaboration between French rulers and assimilated indigenous elite developed (Sewart, 1989).

2.4 Administration under the colonial period

In 1904 France recognized Mauritania as an entity separate from Senegal and organized it as a French territory under a delegate general in Saint Louis. With the success of the first pacification attempts, the status of Mauritania was upgraded to that of a civil territory administered by a commissioner of government (first Coppolani, later Gouraud). Although formally separate from French West Africa (Afrique Occidentale Française-AOF), which had been created in 1895, Mauritania was closely tied to its administrative structure and had its annual budget appended to that of the AOF. On December 4, 1920, by a decree of the Colonial Ministry in Paris, Mauritania was officially included in the AOF with the six other French West African territories-Senegal, the French Sudan, Guinea, Ivory Coast (present-day Côte d'Ivoire), Dahomey (present-day Benin), and Niger (DIA, 1977).

Despite the fact that Mauritania's administrative structure conformed generally with that of the rest of the AOF territories. There were some very important differences. The role for example of the traditional Maure chiefs in the administration was the most significant difference and has probably had the greatest continuing impact. As mentioned before, from the time of Coppolani, the administration had relied heavily on the marabouts for support and administration. In respect of the support given by Shaykh Sidiya of Trarza, also the French placed the school of Islamic studies at Boutilimit. "Traditional administrators of Islamic justice, the *qadis*, were put on the French payroll without supervision, and administrative appointments of chiefs were subject to the approval of the traditional *jamaa*"(Taine-Cheikh, 1994: 64).

In 1946 Mauritania was presented in the French senate by a single senator after cooperation electoral with Senegal. After that the French constitution separated Mauritania from Senegal politically, giving it a deputy to the French National Assembly. At the same time, the bicameral General Council, which was reorganized into the unicameral Territorial Assembly in 1952, was established in Mauritania. Nonetheless, political activity in Mauritania was minimal. The territory's first party, the 'Mauritanian Entente', was headed by Horma Ould Babana, who served as the first Mauritanian deputy to the French National Assembly (DIA, 1977).

It is important to mention here that in spite of the colonization's policies concerning the dominance of French culture through the French language in the administration, Arabic language and Hassaniya Arabic remained the only languages used by the majority of Mauritanians in their daily life and the Mauritanian society continued until that time, to be closed in front of the French culture.

2.5 The Situation after Independence

Because of the crisis in 1958 France knew a turning point in politics; the creation of the fifth republic and the constitution of 1958. This constitution was adopted by the people of Mauritania in a referendum in September 1958; this new constitution provided for a French Community whose members would be independent republics. But status as an autonomous member of the French Community quickly lost its appeal as Mauritania witnessed the wave of nationalism sweeping the African continent. As soon as the Islamic Republic of Mauritania was proclaimed in October 1958, the Territorial Assembly changed its name to the Constituent Assembly and immediately initiated work to draft a national constitution; the document was unanimously adopted by the Constituent Assembly

in March 1959 in place of the French constitution, and in November 28, 1960, Mauritania declared its independence (Hames, 1978).

Independence was formally recognized on November 28 1960 through the establishment of a Western-inspired modern state. This state was governed by mechanisms of political control foreign to traditional Bidhan culture, and included the provision of a constitution, elections, political parties and public functions (Hames, 1978). In 1961 Moktar Ould Daddah was elected as the first president of the new state. He affirmed Mauritania's position on the international scene by joining the UN very soon after. He promoted the opening of a major iron ore mine in the north of the country as well as fishing agreements with other major nation's fishing fleets, which have to date underpinned the economy of the country.

In accordance with the new government's objective of acquiring support from blacks, Daddah included two blacks in his cabinet. Also, the National Assembly, headed by a black, comprised ten blacks and twenty Maures. As a final development in the emergence of a dominant single party, Daddah, the party's secretary general, further concentrated power in his hands. The PPM proclaimed Mauritania a one-party state in 1964, and the National Assembly passed a constitutional amendment in 1965 that institutionalized the PPM as the single legal party in the state. Organized opposition was henceforth restricted to channels within the party (KA, 1983).

From the first days of its foundation the new republic faced the obstacle of national unity and the issue of the official language. Every community was afraid of the dominance of the other. These fears were higher in the black community because they opposed the idea of one party ruling the country. Soon these were exacerbated by the 1966 decision to make the study of Hassaniya Arabic compulsory in secondary schools and the decision in 1968 to make Hassaniya Arabic, like French, an official language. Differences over linguistic and racial issues subsequently caused strikes and demonstrations by students and trade

unionists in 1968, 1969, and 1971; all demonstrations were harshly repressed by the government, which in 1966 had banned discussion of racial problems. Other tensions existed among black Maures, who were still considered members of a slave class even though slavery had been outlawed under the French and by the Mauritanian Constitution (Taine-Cheikh, 1994).

In October, 1979, in its report N°40, the Comite Militaire de Salut National CMSN i,e.(military committee for national salute) decided to make provision of the officialization of the national languages in the framework of an educational system where all the national languages will be taught (Diagana, 1997; Sounkalo, 1995).

In 1991, the order N° 6 of the national constitution stipulates that Arabic is the sole official language, and that the national languages are Arabic Hassaniya, Bulaar, Soninke and Wolof (Diagana, 1997; Sounkalo, 1995). Thus French lost its official status, however it continued to enjoy an official status de facto. The national languages have not been officialzed yet. Arabic on the contrary, has reached the utmost status it can enjoy as an official and national language.

However, one aspect of language status planning in Mauritania is noteworthy with regard to the various policies as well as the various people interested in this issue. Hassaniya is never mentioned despite its being the native language of the whole Bidhan community and therefore, one of the national languages of Mauritania (BA, 1978).

The position of those who speak on behalf of the Bidhan community and who assume that Hassaniya and Arabic are the same language can be understood as a way of assuring their ancestry and as a replay to the French policy, which consisted of pushing the community towards the Sanhaja culture. It is also a natural tendency in the whole Arab world to reject their native form of Arabic in favor of

the standard form of Arabic, due to diglossia. However, it is not a reason to exclude this language from the set of national languages of Mauritania since it is in fact uncounted in practice as a native language of the country, despite the case of diglossia it is involved in (BA, 1978).

The position of those who speak on behalf of the other national languages of the country can be understood as a way of asserting French as a sole neutral language to be used in the country. This identification of Arabic and Hassaniya as the same language seems to be rather a good way to denounce advantages to the Bidhan community. It could also be a way to indentify the linguistic conflict to an ethnic conflict rather than a simple and normal competition due to linguistic diversity (BA, 1978).

This different linguistic installation created with independence a linguistic and political situation potentially explosive, resting on the virtual confrontation of two competing groups: Négro-Mauritanians of Négro-African native tongue, whose elites francized and opened with "modernity" had been placed from their knowledge of French to much of positions of responsibility of the administration; Moors of language Hassaniya whose traditional elites Bidanes were marginalized: Hassanes - warlike tribes - had seen their political and military domination strongly started by the colonizer; Zwayas - maraboutic tribes - had lost part of their prestige of Koranic well-read men with the emergence of the modern school and the decline of their mahadras. Competition between these two groups, resting on a double feeling of revenge crystallized since independence on the question of the languages and teaching (Chartrand, 1977).

All these factors made the linguistic situation in Mauritania more complex. After independence, the rise of nationalistic movement from both communities (the Arabo-Berber and negro-African), the claim made by Morocco to annex the territories of Mauritania and the desire to cut umbilical cord with the colonizer have

had major impacts on the language policy of the country and plant the seeds of conflict between the two main communities especially when the issue of Arabization was tackled.

2.6 Arabization

The word *taariib* or Arabization is defined as "the growing of cultural influence on a non-Arab area that gradually changes into one that speaks Arabic and incorporates Arab culture". (Ould Zein, 1981:64) The spread of the Arabic language and the Islamic culture achieved by Muslims in the 7th century extended the use of Arabic language in the lands that they conquered.

Mauritania is one of those countries which witnessed Arabization from its early days, with the coming of Benou Hassan in the 17TH century. From that time on, the issue of Arabization was always present in the linguistic picture and characterized many of the internal policies especially toward the ethnic problems in the country.

As illustrated above, the Mauritanian linguistic situation is characterized by the coexistence of two communities: the community of Maures, with the language Hassaniya, which traces through time to the populations of Arabo-Berber origin (Bedhans) and of the formerly dependant black populations (Harratines). The second community, négro-African, undervalued at the pre-colonial time, this community in itself divided into several groups, Haalpulaaren (of language Pulaar) Soninkés (of language soninké), Wolofs (of language Wolof) live especially along the Right Bank of the Senegal river, the most fertile part of the country (Ould Zein, 1981).

In this coexistence of two communities, the problem of the languages played and continues to play a central role: schematically, the linguistic situation

seems to clash according to a diagram that one could find in Morocco and in Algeria: four languages or series of languages of unequal statuses: the vernacular languages are represented respectively by the Hassaniya, and the Négro-African languages (Poular, Soninké, Wolof) also spoken in the nearby countries, Senegal, Mali. Primarily oral, these vernacular languages are in competition especially in the written field with the two prestige languages which are classical Arabic and French (Ould Zein, 1981).

Since independence Arabic, French, Poular, Soninke and the Wolof witnessed various linguistic policies in Mauritania. Arabic first passed from the statues of national language to the double statues of national language and official language, i.e. language of the operation of the state, and language of schooling and the media. The Hassaniya was never evoked in any text of the Constitution, in the sense that it is regarded as completely compared to Arabic, national language and official (Ould Zein, 1981). The Poular, Soninke and the Wolof reached the statues of national languages by decision of the Military committee of National in 1979 and in article VI of the Constitution of 1991. Bambara also which is spoken by a minority, does not have any official statues (there would be no ethnic claims of its speakers).

2.6.1 Historical events that led to Arabization

Because of the existence of a structured and prestigious site network of religious teaching (mahadras) and especially of military and spiritual resistance to the penetration of European ideas, the colonial power followed only one policy of very limited and uneven Francization. This policy was limited primarily to the fields of school and administration and touched only fractions of population who are very educated (Ould Youra, 1997). It was also by differently treating the populations Négro-Mauritanians and Moors. For the first, more receptive with

schooling, the practiced policy was rather close to that carried out in the other colonies of A.O.F and especially of Senegal (from which Mauritania raised a long time in the curricular area).

The first two decades history of the young Islamic Republic of Mauritania proclaimed in 1958 is characterized by the resumption of the control of the capacity by the white Maurs. This political evolution especially has as a corollary on the linguistic level a process of Arabisation which goes accelerating, significant in the educational reforms which constitute "the motive fluid of the linguistic policy of the P.P.M. party (Ould Youra, 1997).

The Constitutions of March 22nd, 1959 and of March 20th, 1961 stipulating that the national language is Arabic and that the official language is French (article 3 of the Constitution of 1961), the reform of 1959 met in harmony constitutional texts and education system by granting a place slightly more important to Arabic: taught until that time at a rate of six hours per week on a 30 hours total weekly, it occupied in that time 10 hours weekly with the preparatory course and 8 hours with the elementary and average course, against respectively 23 and 25 hours of French per week. This refitting of the schedules of primary school education giving a larger place to Arabic aimed according to Chartrand, (1977:67) at "bringing the school closer to the social environment and cultural which surrounds it" and "to answer the cultural aspirations of the majority of the population". This "readjustment" was however assorted' a possibility of exemption of the Arabic courses delivered by the Arabic inspector to the children whose parents made the formal request of it.

The structures of the lesson in primary and secondary education remained however copied on those of France according to Botti and Vezinet (1963), the only difference being the place granted to the Arabic language with the second degree, taught "jointly with English", 4 hours per week.

The development of Arabic in the education system desired by the government is accompanied according to Ould Youra (1997: 100) by an increasing interest by the Maures for the modern school, whereas that of the Négro-Mauritanians does not weaken: the rate of schooling in primary education passes very quickly to 8% in 1962. However the reform of 1959 caused only dissatisfied ones: the Maures wanted to go further in the way of the Arabisation and the Négro-Mauritanians did not want to learn Arabic which did not constitute their native tongue.

In 1964, the government (where Bedhans play a dominating part) decides to introduce the Arabic marks into the calculation of the general average for the passage in higher class and adopted in January 1966 a decree on enforcement of a law returning the obligation of Arabic in the secondary school. The reaction of the Négro-Mauritanians was quite quick , the pupils of the black ethnos groups - supported by black senior officials writers of famous "proclamation of 19" started a strike movement in the colleges of Nouakchott and Rosso which degenerates into violent racial conflicts opposing Maures.

At the time of the 2nd Ordinary congress of the P.P.M. held in Aïoun from June 24th to 26th 1966 the members decided to promote a new cultural policy based on Arabic-French bilingualism. President Mokhtar Ould Daddah in his intervention of july 18th 1966 proclaims that "bilingualism seems the only instrument of a realization of the new national culture [...] bilingualism placing little by little on an equal footing French and Arabic is a fundamental option which concerns every Mauritanian citizen. [.] A program of the studies is in preparation. It will take in account realities of the modern world, while safeguarding the traditional values of the Moslem culture". (Ould Abdi, 1990 p:29).

The translation of this new orientation was the setting-up in 1967 of an educational reform characterized by the development of Arabization: At the level of secondary education, the schedule of Arabic is increased to 9 hours in sixth and fifth, 5 hours in fourth and third and to 4 for the classes of the second cycle, French continuing to occupy the remainder of the weekly timetable fixed at 30 hours (Ould Abdi, 1990).

Moreover, in accordance with the wishes of the 3rd Ordinary congress of the P.P.M. held from January 23rd to 27th 1968 in Nouakchott, article 3 of the Constitution is revised on March 4th, 1968 to make of Arabic, already declared "national language", an official language of the country jointly with French.

The second reform of the education system in Mauritania appears a failure in that it develops ethnic oppositions: Negro-African regards Arabic as a language of oppression and assimilation threatening with more or less long run their own cultural identity. Moreover, one realized that the pupils who entered in sixth controlled none of the two languages. From where this joke allotted to a senior official of the Minister of education Main road of the time: "the bilingual is that who knows neither French nor Arabic!" (Ould Abdi, 1990).

In a climate of exacerbated nationalism which sees the bonds with the old colonial power strongly worsening (1972: revision of the cooperation agreements with France; June 1973: creation of a national currency, the ouguiya; November 1974: nationalization of Miferma, the large development company of the iron ore of Mauritania), the leading authorities of the country decide to follow a policy of Arabisation even more intensive. The bilingualism founded by the reform of 1967 is perceived more only "as a provisional stage of Arabization "(Ould Abdi, 1990).

Following the recommendations of the extraordinary congress of the P.P.M. held on July 9th in Nouakchott which defines the requirement of cultural

independence as the 'priority of the priorities', implemented in October 1973 an educational reform "which must lead to the adequacy of our school system with our specific realities and a true cultural independence thanks to the rehabilitation of the Arabic language and the Islamic culture" (Chartrand, 1977:49)

This reform which, according to DIAGNE, (1984,31), "clearly fits in a conflict report/ratio Arabic language = cultural authenticity versus French language = cultural alienation" aims in-depth to Arabise the educational system and the whole community of Mauritanians: "The Arabisation of all our system of education is from now on committed in an irreversible way and its progression which will reconcile the desirable one and the possible one, inescapable" declares President Ould Daddah in 1974. The document resulting from the extraordinary congress recommends the introduction of a unilinguism in fact: "Arabic will have [...] as soon as possible to be founded as the single official language [...] It is completely natural that in an independent State whose Arabic is the only national language and official, that teaching is given in the Arabic language. That would result in the introduction of an educational system where all the primary education would be Arabised, foreign language instruction intervening only in the secondary".*

The reform brings back first the structure of the 7 years degree to 6 years, with the first two years entirely Arabized. French intervenes in third year at a rate of 10 hours per week on a total of 30; in 4th and 5th years its teaching represents 15 hours weekly then 20 hours in 6th year. The second degree, also brought back six years organized in two three years cycles each one, comprises two branches: Arabic and the other bilingual one. On the Arabic side, called to become medium-term the single structure of secondary education, the entire lesson is done in Arabic and French has the statute of first obligatory foreign language. On the bilingual side, French is object of study and vehicle of scientific matters as well as matters like history, geography or philosophy which had at the beginning, according to the official recommendations, been taught in Arabic (DIAGNE, 1984).

Arabized experimental classes were seen in some colleges and an Arab college was created in Nouakchott too. The baccalaureate was organised that year in Mauritania instead of Dakar. The national school of Administration becomes bilingual and of the Arabic sections are instituted at the National University as well as translation services in certain ministries. Improvement and Arabic introductory courses are offered to the civil servants who do not know or do not have a command of the language. The reform of 1973 however does not take account of all the wishes of the Congress of the P.P.M. of 1971 since the rehabilitation of the négro-African languages to which this one calls for the first time does not concretize (DIAGNE, 1984).

The policy of intensive Arabisation is accompanied by a policy of massive recruitment of teachers whose majority came from   Mahadras and of traditional teaching: "Of the hundreds of teachers and professors descending from mahadra were thus recruited on contest and sent to the classes between 1973 and 1978". Consequently, the system of the "free candidates and free auditors were going to give access to the classes of more than 6.000 pupils coming from traditional teaching" (Fortier, 1997. p.109)

The development effort of the "modern" education system in parallel has increased since 1979. The country counts 422 elementary schools, 18 secondary schools, a Teacher training school Teachers (training of the Masters of fundamental teaching), a National university (training of the Masters of the secondary), a National school of Administration (administrative management training).

It is important to mention here that, the reform of 1973 did not stand for a long time. In 1975 the war of the Western Sahara plunged the country in serious difficulties which led to the seizure of power by the soldiers of the coup d'etat of July 10th, 1978. The new leaders (the Military committee for National salute

C.M.S.N.) under the push of the Arabo-Berber nationalist movement's tendency Nasserist and Baathist declared in December 1980 that Arabic is the only official language of the country (Diagne, 1984).

In 1979 C.M.S.N decided moreover to set up a fourth reform of the education system which, after a 6 year transitional period, was to be applied in 1985. This reform rested on the following principles: "Officialization of the national languages, transcription of national languages (Poular, Soninké, Wolof) in Latin characters, creation of an institute of transcription and development of the national languages, and the teaching of national languages which, in the long term, must give the same outlets as the other national language, Arabic" (Arnaud, 1981,339).

In addition, Arabic was supposed to become in 1985 "language of union": every Mauritanian being supposed to have to speak two national languages (of which obviously Arabic); French "language of opening" would be taught only in the second degree as a second language, the first degree being reserved to teaching in national languages. In material impossibility to apply this reform immediately, the authorities founded on a purely provisional basis on the school level a double course:

- the Maures children were obliged to choose the first degree the "Arabic branch" which entirely Arabized since French occupies an adequate portion there: it occupies e.g. in the primary education only 2 hours out of 30 per week.

- the children of négro-African, for their part have the choice between the Arabic branch and another known as "bilingual « where, after a first completely Arabized year, they could follow, on the express request of their parents, a French teaching of 2nd at the 6th year at a rate of 25 hours per week over 30 hours, 5 remaining hours being devoted to Arabic" (Ould Ebah, 1998).

The solution adopted for the transitional period satisfied in theory the two components of the Mauritanian population. The bursting of fundamental teaching, on the model of the secondary, in two options, Arabic for the Hassanophones and bilingual for the Négro-Mauritanians (since in practice those who choose this option massively) at the same time makes it possible to spare holding them of the Arabization, credits at the Moors, while reassuring the anxious Négro-Mauritanians of this Arabization with excess. However, enthusiasm expressed the first years for teaching in négro-African languages a certain disenchantment succeeds: the Négro-Mauritanians have more and more the feeling to be led in a ghetto by holding of the Arabization, teaching in national languages seeming to lead on no future prospect. Certain intellectuals of Négro-Mauritanians perceive the introduction of the African languages into the school course like an operation, "the paid price by holding of the Arabization so that French (and in the calm one) is definitively eliminated as a language from teaching" (Samassa, 1996, p.70).

In spring 1999 and in prospect for the following re-entry, the government decided to proceed to a fifth reform of the education system. The reasons advanced to justify this reform are the following:

- Particularly expensive cost of teaching made up of several branches and requiring for its implementation a very high number of population and resources.

- Persistence on the performances of pupils, particularly significant weakness in the scientific disciplines and the insufficient control of the languages.

- Inadequacy of the trainings which given, taking into consideration requirement of socio-economic development of the country.

The reform tries to cure these insufficiencies by unifying the education system by the removal of the two existing branches, Arabic and bilingual. In parallel, the duration of the secondary cycle is increased to 7 years by the one year addition to the first level (Samassa, 1996).

The teaching of French as a subject matter begins as of the second year from the primary education at a rate of six hours per week In addition, the teaching of English is introduced in the first year of the first secondary cycle and initiation with physical sciences and data processing begin in French in the third and the fourth year from the first secondary cycle. Finally the national languages, the Poular, Soninke and the Wolof, profit for their promotion from the creation from a specific department within the University of Nouakchott (Ould Ebah, 1998).

This reform which wanted to be balanced and realistic however met the adhesion neither of holding of the integral Arabisation nor of the Négro-Mauritanians extremists. The first reproach for imposing a "Francization of the education system" and for marking "a return to cultural oppression "; and the second, "this apparent unification is done again with the detriment of Négro-African; indeed, teaching of six matters defined as "cultural matters" (Philosophy, language, history, geography, civics, moral and religious, right, etc) exempted in Arabic remains imposed on Négro-African" (Ould Ebah, 1998, p.34)

2.7 Today's situation of French

French is spoken as a native tongue in France, in Wallonia (Belgium), in French-speaking Switzerland, in Luxembourg, in Quebec, in the United States of America (Louisiana and Maine). It is an official language or co-official in 32 mainly African countries. (Bonte, 1988) The French-speaking States gather in the International Organization of Francophones (OIF). This organization includes 70 States and Governments (56 members and 14 observers).

The official language of Mauritania is Arabic but the working language is primarily French especially in the written form. It would have been one second official language if the Constitution stipulated it since it is adopted for the drafting of the official texts (which are translated thereafter into Arabic), for teaching and sometimes for the communication with managed. The headings of the official letters and all the correspondence are in French; on the number plates of the vehicles also appears a numbering system in French. This use of French, which no legal text comes to regulate, is the result of a practice resulting from the period when French was the single official language of the country from 1961 to 1968 and second official language (with Arabic) between 1968 and 1980 (Ooul Cheikh, 1996).

In Mauritania thus, French has occupied since the colonial time a choice place as well on the school level as well as on the administrative level. Indeed, French is taught from the elementary school to the University. The last reform of teaching (1999) assigns to it the role of vector of the scientific disciplines.

On the level of the administration, many Government departments, in particular those with economic or technical vocation (Ministry for Finances, Economic affairs, Energy, Industry, etc), remain bastions for French: the administrative forms, the correspondences, the studies are usually written in French (Ooul Cheikh, 1996).

In addition, French is very present on the media scene: private newspapers (the *Kalame, the Platform, the Daily newspaper of Nouakchott, Awakening-Hebdo*), the governmental newspaper Horizons, newspapers of information the Radio and on television. In the same way, French is used in certain situations of communication like common language between the various Mauritanians communities and between Mauritanians and the adjoining countries (Ooul Cheikh, 1996).

2.8 The status of Arabic

Generally speaking, the linguistic relationship between the written standard and spoken Arabic is impressionistic at best flexible and changeable in Kay's terms (1972). The diglossic situation in the Arab countries is going to differ from country to country in terms of the relative linguistic distance which exists between *fusha* and the linguistic features of the specific Arabic dialect with which it is in contact. This situation is also dynamic and changing because of the dynamic nature of the dialects themselves. It is changing at two levels: first, at the level of any given colloquial Arabic, and secondly at the level of the whole range of Arabic dialects. The *fusha* and the sum of all the colloquial forms in use in the Arab region represent the 'Arabic continuum' known under the ambiguous term commonly referred to as the Arabic language (Moatassime, 1992)

Most of the Mauritanians value *fusha* and highly respect it because of its sacred nature. They consider it the language of the Quran and the Quran references itself as "*lisanoun arabiyoun moubin*" i.e. an eloquent Arabic tongue, in an Nahl , v. 103) also in (*Eshouara*, v. 195), *alahqaf*, v. 12). On the other hand the *hadith* (the prophet Mohamed's saying) says "……love Arabs for three reasons: because I am Arab, and the Quran is Arab, and the language of the dwellers in paradise is Arabic."

The superiority that Mauritanians bestow to their heritage language leads to a general denial of the existence of a home language, in this case Hassaniya Arabic and other African dialects. Mauritanians consider in fact what is spoken at home, and elsewhere in common daily activities are merely incorrect language which is only acceptable because it deals with lower functions and topics.

There is a prevailing feeling among Mauritanians that standard Arabic or *fusha* is imbued with a natural superiority. This prestige valuation of *fusha* is explained by Mauritanians as relating to such qualities as beauty, logic, and high degree of expressiveness. *fusha* "carries in its own etymology the myth about its eloquence forms and high degree of correctness. Moreover, Mauritanian despise the spoken colloquial forms and even deny that they use them because they consider them as degraded and corrupt forms of the language"(Maamouri, 1998; p: 107)

The cultural perception of Arabic in Mauritania plays a dominant role in linguistic behavior of Mauritanians who seem to easily gloss out variation diversity for the desire or even ideology of validating and preserving the cultural and historical uniqueness of their prestigious variety. Maamouri (1998, p. 38) concludes that *fusha* truly represents for them " what Gallagher calls ' an intellectual attic filled with ancestral treasure' the common ideologically acceptable and politically correct attitude with regards to the place of colloquials in Arabic diglossia is total non-acceptance of colloquial Arabic forms in formal situations.

The zero-tolerance and high sensitivity of Mauritanians to linguistic diversity seen as a symbolic reflection of political disunity has been and is still marking position in pan-Arab politics. It has turned any consideration given to Arabic Hassaniya and to the problem of dialectal variation into a serious political taboo.

Almost all the Arab constitutions (including Mauritania) indicate that 'al-arabiya' is the official language in each Arab country. This use of the term is highly ambiguous and reflects the existence of a certain 'cultural blindness' which seems to be imposed by the weight of the Arabic-Islamic heritage. The vagueness of the language officialization and the unclear definition of the legal status of the term used may not prove to be determined after all. It may lead to the "individual choice of each Arab country to adapt its language officialization and its status

planning policy and measures to the specific requirement of its own diglossic situation" (Moatassime, 1992:65)

The frequent cultural and social practice which exists in the Arab world shows the existence of a normative linguistic filter which transposes all colloquial forms into equivalent forms in the formal standard. This filtered transposition happens unconsciously whenever one is asked to write down any colloquial form. It shows that Arabs associate writing with a higher level of formality which is only supposed to be in the *fusha*. This situation however is not particular to Arabic and seems to indicate that people in general feel that the oral language has a lower level of cultural content (Bishop, 1998; Maamouri, 1998) than the written form.

On the other hand, Mauritanians even the educated ones, find it difficult and unnatural to use *fusha* spontaneously without referring to a prepared text which is then partially or entirely read. Thus, religious sermons for instance, are either read or recited in a mixture of classical Arabic and modern *fusha*. However, the oral intervention of colloquial Arabic is becoming more and more frequent in these situations for purposes of better communication. El-Hassan (1977) described a typical intralingual code-switching situation (switching from one language to another within the Arabic diglossic continuum) which took place in one of Nouakchott mosques. A 'sheikh'(Muslim religious leader) interspersed his read *fusha* sermon with oral colloquial speech forms in which he paraphrased all the linguistically difficult segments of the message in order to make them 'linguistically closer' and easier to understand by all the less literate members of his audience. His sermon, thus, was a mixture discourse of *fusha* and Hassaniya Arabic (Maamouri, 1998).

2.9 Education and bilingualism issues

In a country like Mauritania with its complex linguistic situation as illustrated before, the issue of education was always and still is very problematic. Before the

coming of the French most Mauritanians were relaying on the traditional education or *Mahadra*. During colonization and after it Mauritania witnessed many educational policies which were considered as turning points in the history of this domain. Since then a major change in attitudes towards modern education has taken place, certainly helped by the pressures and socio-economic transformations connected to gradual sedentarization and the disappearance of traditional lifestyles.

Since independence, the educational system in Mauritania has undergone a series of reforms (1959, 1967, 1978, 1979 and 1999) focusing on the improvement of its adaptation to its environment.

According to Ould Sheikh (2004:46) the purpose of the 1959 and 1967 reforms was to "give Arabic a choice place in the education system inherited from colonization in an effort, according to its supporters, to develop bilingualism". Those reforms mainly affected basic education. On the other hand, the 1978 reform reduced the length of primary school from seven to six years and increased the share of Arabic on all levels (hours, subjects taught in Arabic, coefficient, etc.) in the education system.

Finally, the 1979 reform, which was the logical outcome of post-independence education policy, in other words Arabization, has split the system into two separate linguistic groups (Arabic and bilingual) and has been at the root of education growth throughout the system and on the secondary level, especially with regard to quantitative indicators.

For the period from 1995 – 2000, the educational priorities of the country were set out in the importance of basic education. As declared in 1995 in the course of the Prime Minister's address to Parliament: "The system of education will be assigned the twofold mission of achieving social integration and extending the acquisition of learning and know-how. We must work in the first place to speed up school enrolment and secondly to improve the content of our general scientific and

technical education so as to match international standards of quality*". (Ould Sheik, 2004: 38)

2.9.1 Qur'anic schools

Historically Mauritania had a broad but spread education system founding on religious and cultural education provided by Marabouts (those who are teaching in mahadra). It was largely through the hard work of these teachers that Islam was extended throughout West Africa. On the other hand and in a time where the past Islamic education was largely limited to the essential religious teaching, the children of white Maures often studied Arabic and simple calculation as well. Both boys and girls received habitual education, at first within the family and later in the local Quranic schools which made by the Marabouts (Jeddou, 1992).

Mahadra schools were established in the traveling communities and in developed villages. Because particularly well-known marabout teachers would be enclosed by families who wished their children to learn from these masters, a number of centers of more advanced Islamic learning developed around the camps of these marabouts. In these centers, students learned grammar, logic, and other subjects, as well as traditional religious subjects. Many of the centers developed great collections of manuscripts through the labour of those great marabouts (Ould Ahmedou 1997).

These traditional centers were sustained through the late colonial period. The Institute of Islamic Studies, founded in 1955 at Boutilimit, was the only Islamic institution of higher learning in West Africa. (it was founded first by the French as a way of introducing a new model of Islamic teaching). It gave important instruction in traditional Islamic subjects and teaching methods. After independence, it was moved to Nouakchott; a few months later the government announced it as university of higher Islamic research.

2.9.2 Modern education

With the coming of the French colonial administration, a system of public schools was built in Mauritania. The French schools were largely focusing on the urban communities in the Senegal River Valley. In 1957 the French built the secondary school in Rosso and also began training teachers. In part because public schools were concentrated in the south, black Africans entered these schools in large numbers. As a result, the overwhelming majority of public school teachers were black, and blacks came to lead the nation's secular intelligentsia (ARNAUD, 1993).

On the other hand, the French schools, located in nomadic areas, were not so attractive. The Maures in particular were unwilling to accept the public schools and preferred the Islamic teachings. Gradually, however, they began to send their children to public schools, as they saw that traditional religious training was not preparing their children for life in the twentieth century. The French also began to experiment the "mobile schools" after World War II, and in this way they brought public education for a larger number of nomads. In 1954 there were twelve so-called "tent" schools serving 241 students. At least some of these tent schools continued to function after independence (ARNAUD, 1993).

After independence, the government viewed secular education as one of the major methods to encourage national unity, as well as a necessary step toward the development of a modern economy. It still faced shortages of funds and insufficiently trained teaching staff. All these problems called for the opening of another teacher training school in Nouakchott in 1964.

At the beginning, attending school was not obligatory, and in 1964-65 only 19,100 primary-school students and 1,500 secondary-school students--about 14 percent of school-age children--were enrolled. By 1985 an expected 35 percent of primary-school-age children were enrolled in school, but only about 4 to 10 percent of eligible secondary-school-age children were enrolled. In both cases, boys heavily outnumbered girls. In 1982 the National College of Administration and the National College of Sciences opened in Nouakchott, and in 1983 nearly 1,000 students began instruction at the University of Nouakchott (fall, 1997).

The French system of primary and secondary schools continued until the late 1980s. In the early 1980s, teaching in Pulaar, Azayr (Soninké), and Wolof was introduced into the primary school curriculum, and Arabic was compulsory at all levels. The official policy of gradually replacing French with local languages and Arabic, adopted in the late 1970s, drew strong opposition from the Negro-Africans in Mauritania (the French speaking community) and was abandoned a decade after that (Soumare, 1984).

Today, in an atmosphere characterized by a politically unstable situation, "the education system is at the same time a tool for policy in the sense that it makes it possible to convey new values to the civil society, but also a place of struggles and conflicts for the various actors".(Ould Bah, 1987: 2)

3. Fieldwork: The Impact of Bilingualism on Education

3.1 Introduction

      Sociolinguistic research is based on field work and interpretation of results obtained from informants. This chapter is aimed at presenting this design and its procedure. It first starts by describing the educational situation in Mauritania and it highlights the impact of bilingualism on this system through time. After that, we will deal with methodology of this research and the instruments used in collecting data. Then we conclude it by interpretation and analyses of data in order to examine the validity of the whole research hypotheses.

3.2 The impact of bilingualism on education

      Bilingual education is a broad term that refers to the presence of two languages in instructional settings. The term is, however, "a simple label for a complex phenomenon" (Cazden and Snow, 1980 : 9) that depends upon many variables, including the native language of the students, the language of instruction, and the linguistic goal of the program, to determine which type of bilingual education is used. In Mauritania before the 1999 reform, there were two separate systems of education:

- The Arabic branch in which Arabic was the main language of studies.
- The Bilingual branch where the courses of study were taught mainly in French, while Arabic is only taught as a subject for 2 hours a week.

      In each branch only a few hours were spent in the other language and the rest of the courses were taught in full Arabic or in full French. This system of education

lasted for twenty years from 1979 to 1989. The majority of Maures, especially in the countryside, used to follow the Arabic branch while the Poular, Soninke, and Wolof registered mainly in the Bilingual Branch.

The existence of these two systems of education was the main source of friction between the different communities of the nation, as they used to grow apart one from the others. In addition, despite the efforts of the government in investing a great part of its budget in public schools, the education standards were falling drastically year by year. Many reports of 1998 show that only 30% of the students passed baccalaureate examination. In this situation, wealthy families were obliged to send their children to private schools where a different system was applied to avoid low education standards.

According to Ould Abdi (1990) the Mauritanian government decided to remedy this situation, on April 1999, by reforming the old educational system. The new reform establishes, for all citizens of Mauritania, one single and efficient system of education. Its main objective is to help them acquire the necessary tools to face the new challenges of the third millennium with due respect to their cultural and religious standards. To achieve this goal, the reformers departed from full Arabization in primary school and introduced French in the second year of primary school and English in the first year of high school. Besides, the scientific subjects like mathematics, natural sciences and computer sciences are all taught in French for all the schooling period. In addition, more efforts are exerted to promote the local languages through the establishment of a research department at the university level.

So the 1999 reforms have brought the following changes in the education system:

- In Primary School All classes at the first year are taught in Arabic. French is introduced at the beginning of the second year.

- The establishment of one single system of education for all Mauritanians
- Creation of professional training centers in each region according to its economic vocation
- Addition of one more year in the first cycle of secondary schools. Students will now spend 7 years at Secondary school before passing the Baccalaureate
- English is introduced in the first year of the secondary school
- Scientific courses like Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Computing taught only in French for all.
- Computer Sciences are taught in the fourth year of Secondary School.

3.3 Education Profile

As stated in the general introduction this research focuses on Nouakchott University but we will give here a bird's view on education profile in general in order to show that most students come to the university bilinguals as because of the educational system.

Before school age, almost all Mauritanians, regardless of sex or ethnic group, attend Koranic school from the age of 4 to 6 and gain at least rudimentary skills in reading and writing Arabic in addition to memorizing Koranic verses.

3.3.1 Primary school

Primary school covers 6 years from the age of six to twelve. All classes are taught in Arabic during the first year schooling and French is used to teach arithmetic, natural sciences, and French as a language at the beginning of the second year.

Pupils proceed to secondary education with an entrance examination organized throughout the country by the Ministry of Education. They take the examination in 7 subjects (4 in Arabic and 3 in French), to be awarded the

Certificat d'Etudes Primaires Elémentaires(Certificate of Primary Elementary Studies) (CEPE).

3.3.2 Secondary education

Secondary education is divided into two stages: the First Cycle called "College" (4 years) and the Second Cycle named "Lycée" (3 years). Secondary Education covers a total of 7 years. It was only 6 years before the 1999 reform.

College: English is introduced in the first year of College. Physics is taught in the 3rd year and Computer Science at the 4th year. Pupils pursue the scientific subjects like Math, Natural sciences, physics and Computer science in French and the literary ones like History and Geography, Religious Studies, and Civics in Arabic (Ould ABDI, 1990).

Pupils who obtain a satisfactory report from the College can enter the Lycée without taking the national examination at the completion of the four-year courses. Those who chose to take and pass the examination are awarded the "Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle" (BEPC).

The "Lycée" is three years long and pupils are directed, according to their capacity, to four specialized sections commonly called "Series":

- o Serie LO for "Lettres Originelles". A strong grasp in the Arabic language is required to succeed in this section as the main courses (Islamic Studies, Philosophy, Legislation, History and Geography) are taught in this language. Pupils who graduated from this section can pursue their studies to become "Qady", legislator in Islamic Laws, or professor in Islamic studies at the "Lycée" and "College"

- o Serie LM for "Lettres Modernes" This is the section for Modern Literature. Pupils should be bilingual (French and Arabic) to be sent to this section.

o <u>Serie D for "Sciences Naturelles"</u>. This is the scientific section of higher school. It puts the emphasis on math, physics and natural sciences that are all taught in French.

o <u>Serie C for "Mathematiques"</u>. It has the same curriculum as the "Serie D" with more hours spent in the teaching of math.

The final year of the Lycée is known as the "Classe Terminale" which is the year of preparation for the Baccalaureate examination.

3.3.3 Technical schools

After getting the "Diplome du Baccalauréat de l'Enseignement du Secondaire" (BAC), pupils wishing to pursue studies in the technical schools can take the entrance examination to join the "College Technique". This is the short cycle of technical studies leading to the "Brevet d'Enseignement Professionel" (BEP) after two years.

After the BEP, an additional two years at the "Lycée Technique" is required to obtain the "Brevet de Technicien". The holder of this diploma can join the "Centre Supérieur d'Enseignement Technique" (CSET) after an entrance examination to get the "Brevet de Technicien Supérieur" (BTS) which is considered as a university diploma.

3.3.4 Universities and institutions of higher education

Nouakchott University is divided into three "faculties": " Faculty of Arts and Humanities "," Faculty of Economics and Law "," Faculty of Science and Technology ". The BAC is required to register to one of these "Faculties". Students spend two years to finish the First Cycle of university studies by obtaining the

"Diplome du Premier Cycle d'Etudes Universitaires" (Undergraduate degree in University Studies) also called "DEUG". An additional two years at the Second Cycle offers the opportunity to obtain the diploma of "Maitrise" after writing and presenting before a jury a final dissertation called "Memoire" (Ould ABDI, 1990).

The trained Baccalaureate holders become teachers at Primary schools, Professors of "College" or "Lycée", administrators in public services, doctors in medicine or health specialists.

3.4   Research instruments

The methodology chosen in this work for collecting data is a questionnaire survey for its relative simplicity and obvious consuming of time and space. Also we followed the questionnaire by some questions to the students and teachers about their attitudes about the aspect of bilingualism in Nouakchott University. These questions were like

Which language do you use to explain to your students?

Which language do you employ more often?

What is your attitude about bilingualism?

In what language do you interact with your class mates?

Finally many participant observations or "note taking" of the situation in the university were taken in consideration especially in gathering places like cafeteria and restaurant and also in the campus where only male student live.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

In fact, the questionnaire is a widely used means of collecting data. This structured instrument translated hypotheses into questions and enables the

researcher to collect data in the field setting; the data themselves are more amenable to qualification than discursive data (Richterich and Chancerl, 1980). It is a written and 'one way' (non interactive) information instrument which has many advantages: First, a questionnaire is a cheaper form of inquiry than interviewing. It also allows wider sampling and asks everybody the same questions. Besides, it provides anonymity.

Moreover the questionnaire gives more time to think about the answers and may prove easier to analyze. However, it can also have some drawbacks. In general, the questionnaire presents difficulties in making questions clear and unambiguous. It also lacks flexibility and is often completed in a rush. In addition, the questionnaire may be affected by low response rates as it may allow the possibility of collusion between respondents.

The construction of a valid and reliable questionnaire which tells what one wants to know is difficult and time-consuming. It is important to be very clear about the objectives of the study. Likewise, it is particularly important that the researchers do not reveal their own attitudes through leading questions. The questions should not be complex and confusing, nor should they ask more than one thing at a time.

The questionnaire can consist entirely of closed questions, entirely of open questions, or a mixture of both closed and open questions. A combination of data sources seems to be useful in this research, thus, we have included three kind of questions (open, closed, and graded) in this questionnaire.

As far as the first set of questions is concerned one can say that such questions (open one) give the informant more freedom when expressing him/herself.

Example: how would you define bilingualism?

In this vein Richterich and Chancerl state:

> Open questions do not call in advance for ready-made answers and therefore allow the person questioned more freedom of expression (Richterich and Chancerl, 1980: 59)

As to the second series and the third (closed and graded questions), the informant is no longer free to suggest anything. Rather, he/she has to choose from many possibilities proposed:

Example: Which ones of these languages do you speak? (Circle the answer)

    Arabic   French   English   others

Or: - How do you look at a good bilingual person? (Normal, intelligent)

It is important to mention here that conducting and achieving this questionnaire is not an easy task for many reasons: first, this kind of activity requires much care and presence and I had the chance to go to Mauritania only once for two months. Also, the student's unwillingness to question generally forced us to do a great part of the work in classes with the help of some teachers. Another important obstacle is that, in the time when we were collecting data Nouakchott University were witnessing rational events concerning the Arabization and the status of French in the administration, so many students avoided speaking or answering questions related to this issue.

Indeed, it is generally assumed that the manner in which a question is put influences the answer that is why we preferred to pilot the questionnaire before its administration (this questionnaire was piloted with 30 students from the three faculties randomly and reviewing the data produced by the pilot questionnaire helped us to omit unnecessary questions and clarify ambiguous ones in order to obtain the needed information).

3.4.2 Methodology of the questionnaire

This questionnaire is aimed to shed light on the attitudes and motivations of Nouakchott University students about aspects of bilingualism. It is distributed in two ways: randomly and in classes to one hundred and ten students from the three faculties. We were always obliged to follow it by explanation to the aims and sometimes we were required to explain the concept in order to give the informant a clear picture about the work. In the case of classes there is good help of the teachers especially in the English department and the Arabic department. Surely, it was a heavy task because I had to work on three instruments; to distribute the questionnaire and ask questions to the teachers and students also I had to observe the way students spoke and teachers while lessons explanation and taking notes.

The questionnaire was submitted to the students of Nouakchott University as illustrated, for the academic year 2010/2011. In order to avoid misunderstanding, the questionnaire was guided by me and three friends (one of them is a girl). We explained every question carefully using Arabic and French besides English, and clarified every point allowing students to use whichever language they liked in order to answer the questions

The questionnaire consisted of thirteen (13) questions of different types: closed open and graded (see appendix).

Question one to three seeks personal information about the informant's gender, age, and year of study.

Question four locates the native language of the informants whether Hassaniya Arabic or Wolof or Soninke or others.

Question five the informant is required to indentify the language which he/she speaks.

Questions six and seven aim to measure bilingualism and its definition in the student's point of view.

Question eight and nine are designed to clear the attitudes of students toward a bilingual person and how they see bilinguality.

Question ten is intended to get from the students at least two reasons for bilingualism and the causes which make a person to be bilingual.

Questions eleven and twelve seek to indentify the level and usage of the second language.

Finally question thirteen: tries to exercise the hypotheses and asks the students about Nouakchott university whether it is a bilingual community or not. The questionnaire is available in Arabic, French and English.

3.5   Data collection and interpretation

As highlighted before, three sources of data were used in this study: a student questionnaire and some direct questions to the students and teachers and participant observations of students' attitudes toward bilingualism in Nouakchott University. The data collected from these sources are analyzed and followed, as much as possible by comments.

3.4.1 Students' attitude towards bilingualism

As clearly illustrated in the first chapter, the aspect of bilingualism is still a disagreement issue between scholars of sociolinguistics. Therefore, knowing the attitudes toward this phenomenon may benefit our study and clarify some of the causes behind using two languages. Hence, we see it important to show the attitudes of students of Nouakchott University about bilingualism. We point out that our questions are asked in a natural way in Arabic and French in order to prevent any social or psychological compulsion. We will give here some of the responses as samples, then we follow that by commentary and interpretation of the all the responses:

1. A third-year student says: من تعلم لغة قوم أمن شرهم

"He who has learned a language of a people will be safe of their evil"

Surely our informant referred to a saying of our prophet (peace be upon him) calling Muslims to learn the languages of other civilizations.

2. A fourth-year student answered:

بقدر ما ملك الطالب من لغات بقدر ما صار أكثر قدرة على التعاطي مع الآخر

"A students who learns other languages is more able to interact with others"

3. Another fourth-year student says:

للأسف اللغات الأجنبية الآن هي لغات العلم ويجب على الطالب تعلمها

"Unfortunately foreign languages now are the languages of science, so the student is required to learn them"

4. A third-year student says:

مشكلتنا هي الجري وراء الآخر ولغته، لدينا اللغة العربية لغة القرآن ولا نحتاج غيرها

"Our problem is that we are astonished by the others and their languages, we have the Arabic language, the language of the Holy book we don't need more"

5. A second-year student answered:

Avec la langue française je peux intervenir avec mon discours avec les autres.

"French language enables me to transmit my speech to the other"

6. A first-year student replied:

من خصائص الطالب الناجح أن يتقن لغتين على الأقل

"The evidence of the successful student is to know at least two languages"

7. Another first-year student replied:

Il faut qu'on apprenne beaucoup de langues car le monde est devenu comme une seul ville

"The world has become like one city and we have to learn many languages"

8. A forty-two year-old teacher answered:

أشرح لطلابي باللغة العربية وأحيانا أستخدم عبارات من الفرنسية

"I explain to my students in Arabic and sometimes I use a few French words"

9. Another thirty. Nine year-old teacher replied:

لا أتصور أنه يوجد اليوم من لا يعرف بعض العبارات من الفرنسية من العامة فبالأحرى الطلاب

"I don't believe that there is a layman in our society today who does not know at least a few words of French likewise the students"

Here, the teacher may refer to McNamara's (1967) view about bilingualism which considered all the Mauritanians as bilinguals in some context because most of them know expressions like *ça va, bonjour, taxi* …etc

10. A forty-five year-old teacher answered:

لا يمكن للطالب أن يحصل على الكثير من المعلومات إلا إذا كان يتقن لغتين على الأقل

"The student will not be able to obtain much information unless he masters at least two languages".

As it is clear from the above answers, some of our respondents look negatively to bilingualism, while the majority looks positively to this issue. Those who have negative points of view toward bilingualism believe that the fact of shifting from one language to another occurs because of a deficit in a language or, otherwise, a lack of mastery in both languages. On the other hand, most students think that mastering two languages or more is the only way to express yourself in a very good and civilized manner.

Other informants express the feeling that they do not have a personal reason for using another language since they live in a bilingual community where they are obliged to use the tow languages; therefore, they see this shift as a fundamental strategy to carry on a conversation and to facilitate speech.

Others say that they have learned and used French from birth because their parents use it frequently and fluently with them. They feel proud to master two languages simultaneously and the fact that they switch from one language to another makes them feel at ease when they start speaking.

There are, as we stated, few informants who have a negative attitude toward bilingualism. They said that they avoid using another language than Arabic especially when it comes to mix the two languages wrongly. They explain their points of view by saying that the holy Quran came down in Arabic since it is the most prestigious language over the world. They add that they have to preserve it from generation to generation.

3.5.2 Analysis of the questionnaire

It is worth noting that one may not obtain one perfect and agreed response from the questionnaire as different and even divergent accounts may be recorded as Weir and Roberts stated:

> "Different stakeholders are not at all likely to provide perfectly matching accounts: their interests, responsibilities and contact with the programme or project diverge and so a single agreed truth is unlikely to emerge. There should however be discernible trends or patterns in these accounts which the external evaluator can indentify". (Weir and Roberts, 1941:141)

In this vein, we have to mention from the outset that during the analysis of the questionnaire there were some confused informants who preferred to avoid answering certain questions for obscure personal reasons and even there were some contradictions while answering; maybe because of the rational events that the university witnessed during the distribution of the questionnaire or because of their little knowledge about the issue or also because of the way some questions have been given, for example, in the question "Do you consider yourself as bilingual?" 3,63pecent did not answer this question and in question how you would define bilingualism 8 out of 110 did not answer the question.

Question1: gender of respondent

Gender	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Male	62	56,36%
Female	48	43,63%
Total number	110	100%

Table 3.1. Informants' percentage by gender
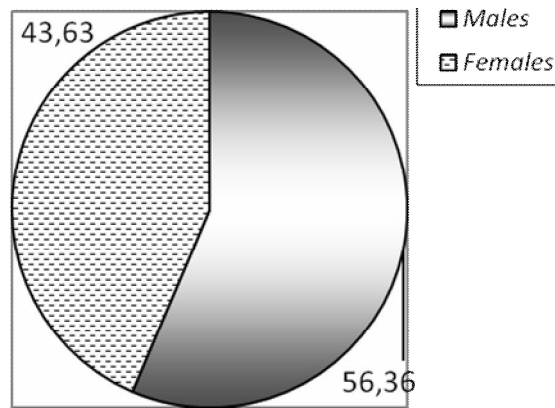
Fig. 3.1 Informants' percentage by gender

As we can see, the number of male informants is slightly higher than that of female students, (62 males for 48 females), a configuration that has allowed us to obtain quite balanced results as far as gender is concerned.

Here I want to note that the percentage of female as it is clear from the table is lower than male in Nouakchott university it is not because that the percentage of education is lower but because the university is located only in the city of Nouakchott and most families in other cities like Nouadhibou, Atar, Kiffa etc do not let their daughters complete their studies in the university because they would have to travel and be away from their families.

As to the informants' age, we have chosen to divide the population into three categories as shown in the following table:

Question 2: age:

Age	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
18 to 25	83	75.45 %
26 to 35	24	21.81 %
36 to 45	3	2.72%

Table 3.2 Age groups of informants

Obviously, the majority of students are young adolescents as shown in the tables above student's age. We have to mention here that 80% of the female

informants are aged between 18 and 22 which means that as far as age is concerned females are younger than male in Nouakchott University.

Informants' age categories
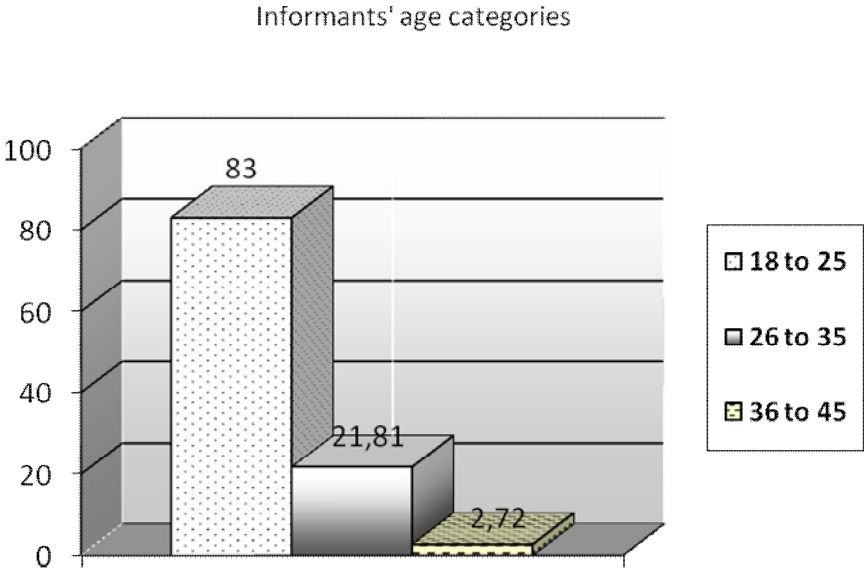
Fig. 3.2 Percentages of students by age

Question 3: year of study:

During our distribution of the questionnaire we focused on the final years third year and four year. We think that they are more able to answer the questions and have enough information about the issue. The results were the following:

Year of study	Male	Female
First year	8	6
Second year	13	9
Third year	21	19
Fourth year	20	14
Total number	62	48

Table 3.3 Number of informants by year of study

Informants' year of study
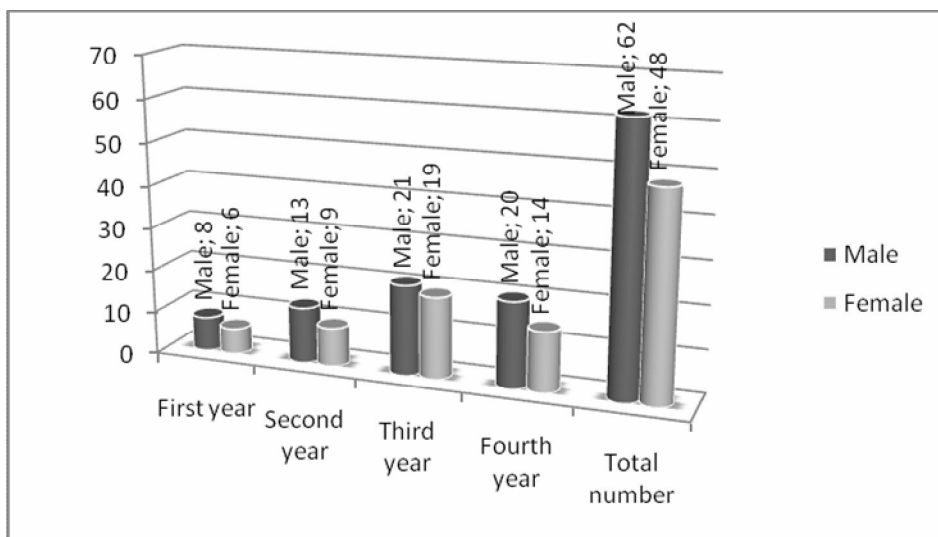
Fig. 3.3 Percentages of students by year of study

Question 4: what is your native language?

We pose this question bearing in mind the linguistic situation of the country which is characterized by the co-existence of two big communities and each community is divided also in little communities; for example the Moor are divided between *Elbidhan* "whites" and *Lehratin* "free slaves" but their native language is Hassaniya. On the other hand the African community is divided into Poular, Wolof and Soninke and each of these groups has its own native language (Puolar, Wolof and Soninke). After the collection of the data we obtained the following results:

Table 3.4 Students' native languages

Native language	Numbers of students	Relative frequency
Hassaniya	35	31,81%
Polar	09	8,18%
Wolof	15	13,63%
Soninké	07	6,36%
Total Number	66	59,98%
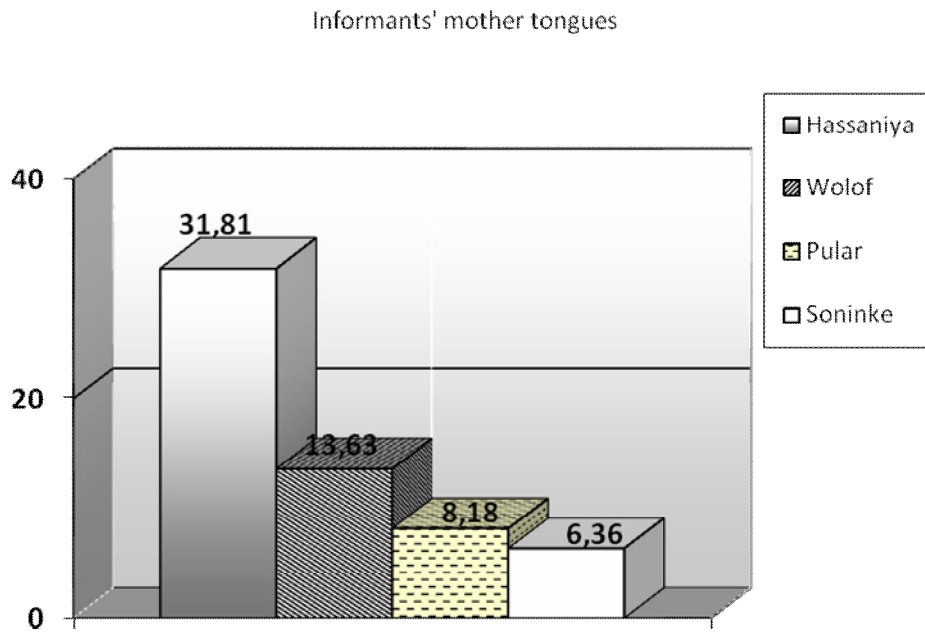
Fig 3. 4 Informants' mother tongue

As shown in the table and pie-chart out of the 110 informants 44 of the students answer wrongly the question 13 of them answered that Arabic is their mother tongue and 31 answered that French is their mother tongue. Here we think that probably the reason behind these answers is that most students do not know what exactly the mother tong means. Another reason is obtained from the direct question which we pose to some students especially in the black African community and as consequence of the bilingual educational system most of them think that French is their mother tongue.

Question 5: which of these languages do you speak? Arabic   French

Through this question we attempt to give a measurement of bilingualism in Nouakchott University and exercise one of our hypotheses that most students are bilinguals because of their educational system. The results are illustrated in the table and pie-chart follows:

Language spoken by students	Absolute Number	Relative Number
Arabic	31	28,18%
French	22	20%
Arabic and French	57	51,81%

Table 3.5 Languages spoken by students

As illustrated from this table 51% percent of the informants consider themselves bilinguals as they speak both Arabic and French. Out of the 31 who answered that they speak Arabic 9 answered that they speak Arabic and English also out of those 57 students 13 answered that they speak Arabic French and English. Furthermore, out of 57 respondents 37 are females and this can allow us to note that the phenomenon of bilingualism is widespread among ladies more than men in Nouakchott University.
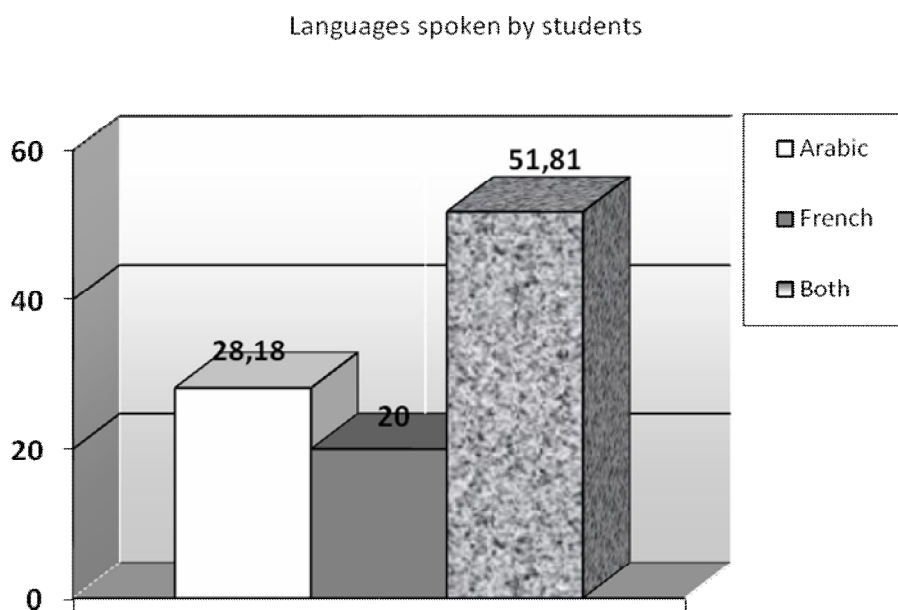

Fig 3. 5 Languages spoken by students

Question 6: do you consider yourself as bilingual?   Yes   No

Consider bilingual	Yes	No	Don't have answer
Male	47	11	4
Female	43	05	0
Total Number	90	16	4
Relative frequency	81,81%	14,54%	3,63%

Fig 3. 5 Students' consideration as to their bilingualism

We find it essential to ask students this question in order to see if they are aware of this sociolinguistic phenomenon and to supply us with their sociolinguistic position because the level of education here is not enough as a cue since there are many students who think that French is their mother tongue (especially black Africans) because of its continual use in their daily lives. Also, most African families work with the foreign companies and therefore know how to communicate in French without learning it in schools. As represented in figure 3.5 the majority of students 81percent consider themselves as bilinguals. This may directly reflect that the Mauritanian society is bilingual since the use of French is frequent in everyday speech. Those 14% who have answered "No" must be less aware of the concept or they think they should be competent in the second language in order to be bilingual.

In addition, there may exist informants who have answered yes just because they use many borrowed French words in Hassaniya and even in standard Arabic. In fact maybe they are right because the definition of bilingualism is still a disagreement issue between scholars, but logically it is up to specialists to analyze objectively their bilinguality because informant's answers may be subjective.

Out of 110 informants 4 students did not answer the question: they are three males and one female. We think that was just because of a lack of awareness about the concept of bilingualism or they feel that their level in French is very weak; that is, they think they are not bilinguals. As a matter of fact, their claims are true in the

sense of Bloomfield's (1933) definition of bilingualism which asserts the "native-like control of two languages".
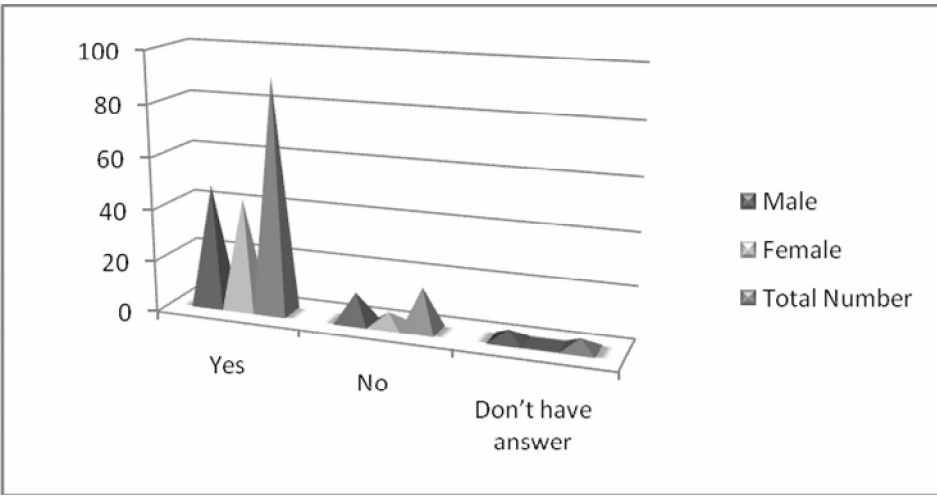
Fig 3. 6 Students' consideration as to their bilingualism

Question 7: How would you define bilingualism?

During our piloting of the questionnaire we felt that the students sometimes could not differentiate between bilingualism and such related concepts as code-switching, borrowing and code mixing. That is why; we put this question in order to test the awareness of informants about bilingualism. Unfortunately, our guesses about these ideas were false and the majority of students proved their awareness of the concepts as illustrated in the following tables:

Awareness of bilingualism	Aware of bilingualism	Lack of awareness	No answer
Number of students	98	4	8
Relative frequency	89,09%	3,63%	7,27%

Table 3.7 Informants' awareness of bilingualism

As shown above, 89 percent of the students show their awareness of the issue of bilingualism, 4 of them gave wrong answers like "bilingualism is to speak Arabic and Hassaniya", or "to have Arabic and French along with English". The other two respondents answered "I don't know". Out of 110 informants 8 did not answer the question and if we assume that they don't know the answer or they are not aware of bilingualism that does not change the idea because the majority express their awareness of the issue.

We noticed also during the analyzes that the majority of those who are aware of bilingualism are females which indicates that women use the second language in different circumstances more than men. That is what explains their awareness of bilingualism.
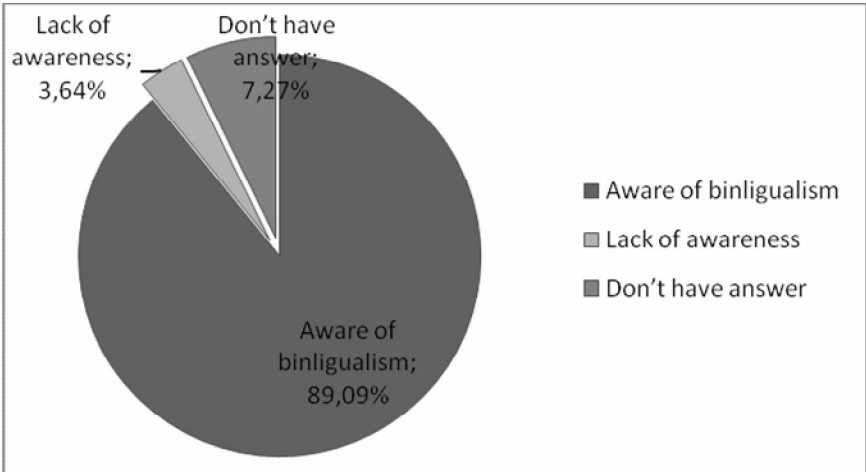
Table 3.7 Informants' awareness of bilingualism

Question 8: How do you look at a good bilingual person? Normal   Intelligent

In trying to investigate our hypotheses we see it very essential to know the attitudes of our informants about bilingual speakers. After collecting the informants' answers, we obtained the following results:

Attitude toward bilingual person	Normal	Intelligent
Numbers of students	99	11
Relative frequency	90%	10%

Table 3.8 Informants' attitude toward bilinguals

Informants' attitudes to bilinguals
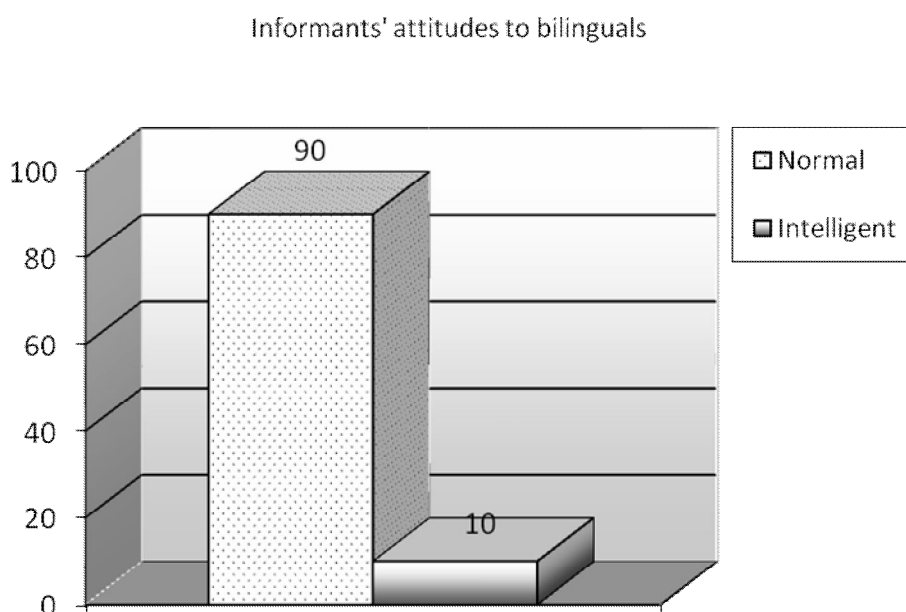
Fig. 3. 8 Informants' attitude toward bilinguals

As it is clear from the table and figure 100 percent of the students have positive attitude to bilingualism 10 percent of them think that a good bilingual person is an intelligent person. Here we think the bilingual behaviour represents a particular structure of the individual personality under the expressive and communicative aspects. We suppose that many factors characterize the bilingual attitude of Mauritanians. The age here represents an important criterion in the choice of the code to use and the sex is another essential parameter in the verbal behavior of bilingual Mauritanians as already shown; the use of French is a well-known behaviour among the female respondents.

When we consider Standard Arabic as a language of prestige and good education, French benefits from the same status and can go even beyond since bilingualism reflects a double education. We can say that almost all the Mauritanian elite are bilinguals and the instruction with French culture pushed the Mauritanians to acquire the French language by force of circumstances. The use of French became a symbol of good education and a sign of emancipation.

Question 9: Do you think it is good for students to be bilinguals?
Yes   No

This question is deeper than the question before; through it we want to know the attitudes of students toward being a bilingual student. It is important to remember that our aim behind this study is to shed light on the issue of bilingualism in Mauritania as whole and in Nouakchott University as a case study. We notice from our observation that some students have a contradictive point of view; they look at bilingual person in general positively but when it comes to being a bilingual student they have their views. After the analysis of the data, we obtained the following results:

	Positive	Negative	No answer
Male	45	8	9
Female	48	0	0
Total Number	93	8	9
Relative frequency	84,54%	7,27%	8,18%

Table 3.9 Importance given to being a bilingual

The observations and analyzes show that most students look positively to being bilingual but there are others who look negatively to this issue justifying their point of views by giving the following arguments:

- We don't need to know more than Arabic; it is the language of the Quran.

- We have to focus our efforts on side using another language will weaken our efforts.

- We will be great if we master the language of our ancestors.

- Our education is very weak; if we try to master another language, we will lose our own.

In my opinion, these reasons, which some students gave here, are considered as evidence for their misunderstanding of the issue of bilingualism and instead of saying that bilingualism will weaken our efforts we have to say that knowing another language will enrich our knowledge and give us opportunity to know the others, interact with them and even learn from them. Furthermore, our religion and the sayings of our prophet (peace be upon him) call us clearly to learn the languages of others and to take their experiences in our daily live.

Importance given to being a bilingual student
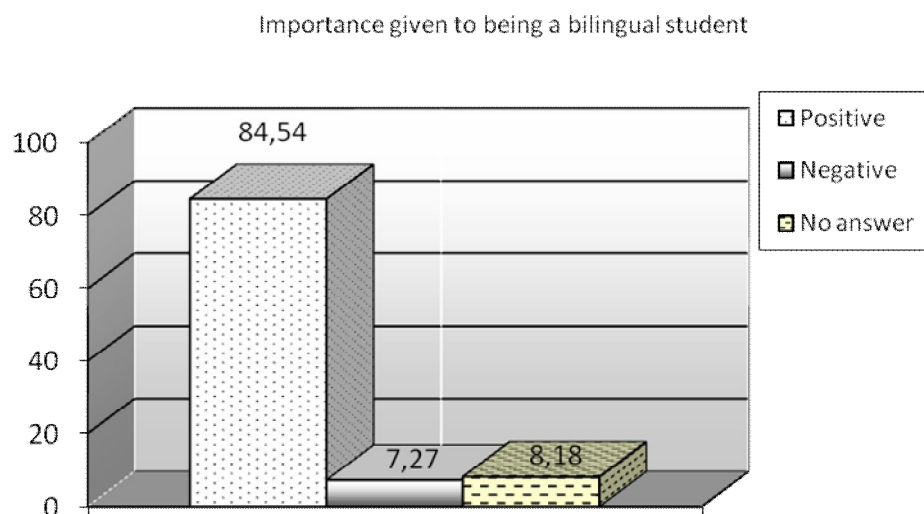
Fig. 3. 9 Importance given to being a bilingual student

The following results also show that the number of female informants who have positive attitude is higher than that of males. This confirms what we have seen about ladies knowing bilingualism because it is a habit for them to shift from a language to another.

Question 10: If you are a bilingual person what makes you use the second language? (At least two reasons)

We have asked our informants this question in order to show the circumstances in which students use their second language. We noticed that some students speak Hassaniya in informal situations and Standard Arabic in formal ones, unlike others (black African students) who usually use French even in informal circumstances. When we asked the reason behind this they informed us that there was no mutual intelligibility between their mother tongues, so they use French as a medium of communication. To sum up the reasons for which our respondents use their second language we give the following statements:

➢ One of the most important reasons for which students use a second language is to facilitate the speech and transmit the message to the hearer.

➢ We have noticed that speakers, both male or female, shift so often from their mother tongue to French when they are facing the opposite sex especially when they are strangers.

➢ Of course as a consequence of the educational system the use of the French language is more frequent in the black African community than in the Moore side.

➤ Age is also found to be significant, to a certain extent, especially in the young generation which witnessed the open world and the ease in information.

To make things easier, we prefer to put answers of our respondents in this table with the percentage for each answer:

	Examples
In order to be understood with my black brothers 21%	- I use French to transmit my ideas to my brothers who don't know Arabic - I don't know Hassaniya and my friends don't know Wolof so we speak French in order to be understood - J utilise le français pour mieux me faire comprendre (I use French to make myself better understood)
It s a habit 6%	- I use French as a habit - On a pris tendance à parler comme ca (we tend to speak like that)
To show that I a m modern and educated 20%	- I speak the second language to show my level of education - I speak my second language because it is a sign of modernity - I speak the second language to show my competence in French
To express my ideas in easy way 20%	- I use French to transmit my ideas easily - There are French expressions which have no equivalent in our mother tongue and I use French also fore discussion and clarification with the other side - Pour convaincre les autres facilement (to convince the others easily)

For social reason 30%	• I speak French with my friend when I want to exclude someone does not master French • I speak French only in the university at home I speak Hassaniya • I speak French with ladies because they like it
No answer 6%	

Question 11: How good do you rate your knowledge in your second language?

Weak   average   good   very good

We seek from this question to measure the level of knowledge which our informants have on their second language. As a matter of fact, the level of knowledge controls the usage of the second language. For example, those who master a second language do not find any difficulties to shift from one code to the other; they even always have a tendency to so. The table and figure illustrating the results obtained:

Level of bilingualism	Weak	Average	Good	Very good
Number of students	12	41	35	22
Relative frequency	10,90%	37,27%	31,81%	20%

Table 3. 10 Students' evaluation of their second language

Students' level in second language
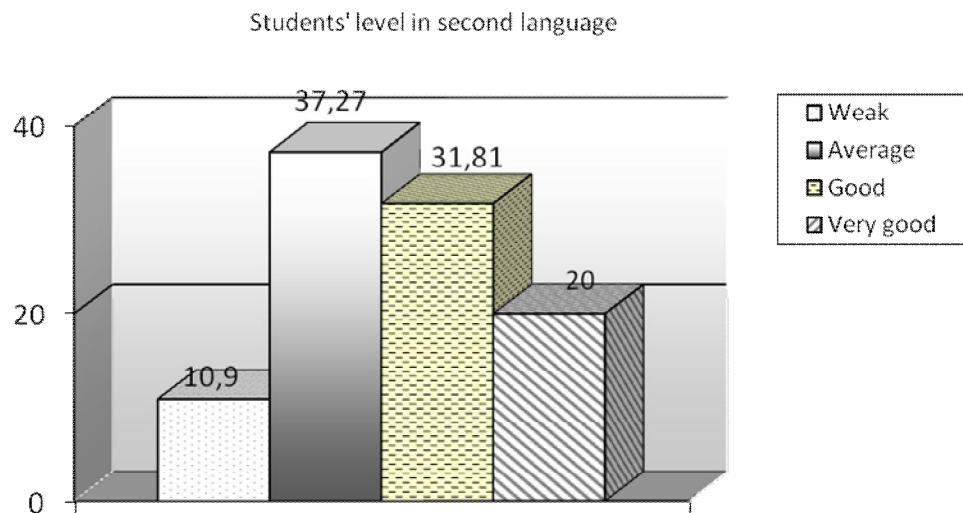
Fig. 3. 10 Students' level in second language

As it is clear from the results, the majority of students (37,27 %) have an average level in the second language. 35 out of 110 considered themselves good in the second language. These results indicate very well that most students are bilinguals and have a good level in the second language. 20 percent of the students measure themselves as very good in second language and this is normally true because all of them are black African students (18 boys and four girls) and those are educated in French from the primary school and most of them master the language before the level of university.

Question12: Do you consider Nouakchott University as including a bilingual community?   Yes   No

By this question we come to our main goal in the hypotheses which is to prove that Nouakchott University is a bilingual community. We suppose that the co-existence of the two communities (Maures and Black-African) is enough evidence of the existence of bilingualism in our society. We suppose also that the university can be good a sample of the Mauritanian society.

Bilingual community	Yes	No
Male	55	7
Female	43	05
Total number	98	12
Relative frequency	89,9%	10,90%

Table 3. 11 Nouakchott University, a bilingual community?

fig.3.11 Nouakchott University, a bilingual community?
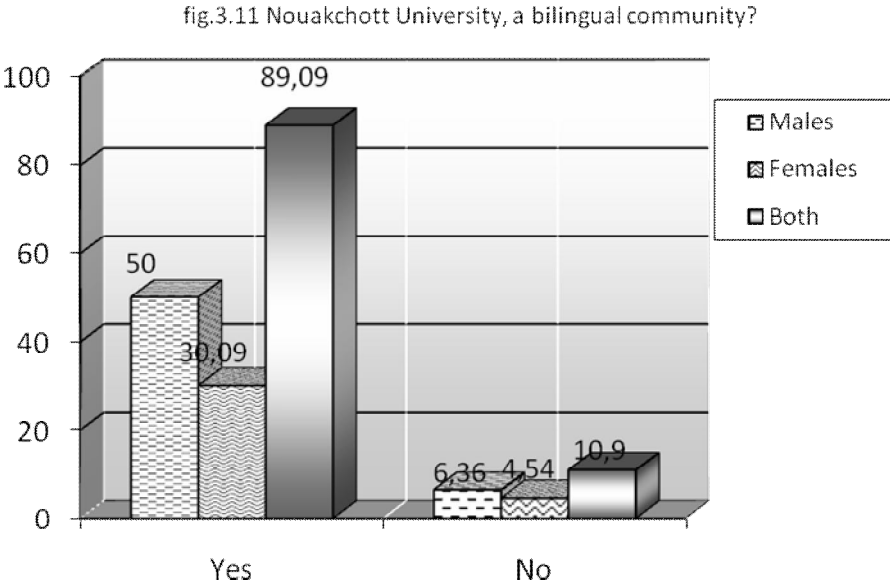
As shown in the table and graph, results support our guesses: Almost 90 % of the informants responded that Nouakchott University is considered as a bilingual community. 12 students out of 110 (7 male and 5 female) don't think it a bilingual community may be because they have lack of awareness about the issue of bilingualism as we mentioned in the previous interpretations.

Adding to the results, we gathered some remarks and observation insisting and supporting what the results have shown:

➢ During our supported observation or note taking in the university we noticed that most students try to master the French language just to take it as way to

break the ethnical obstacles and problems which appear from time to time between the two communities.

➢ All identifications in the university are written in Arabic and French (gates, doors and names of places).

➢ We observe also that the university papers (exam papers degrees) are all in a bilingual format. Also, all the activities held by the university are always in the two languages Arabic and French (meetings, seminaries).

➢ More than that all the students unions in Nouakchott University do their speeches, newspapers in the two language even the mosque committee published a preaching paper in Arabic and French.

Question 13: Do you feel comfortable when using more than one language?

Yes   No

In posing this question we want to know the level of usage of the second language of our respondents and their feelings while they use it. After the collection of the data we have come up with the following results:

	Yes	No
Number of students	104	6
Relative frequency	94,54%	5,45%

Table 3. 12 Comfortable when using more than one language?

5,45

94,54

□ Yes □ No
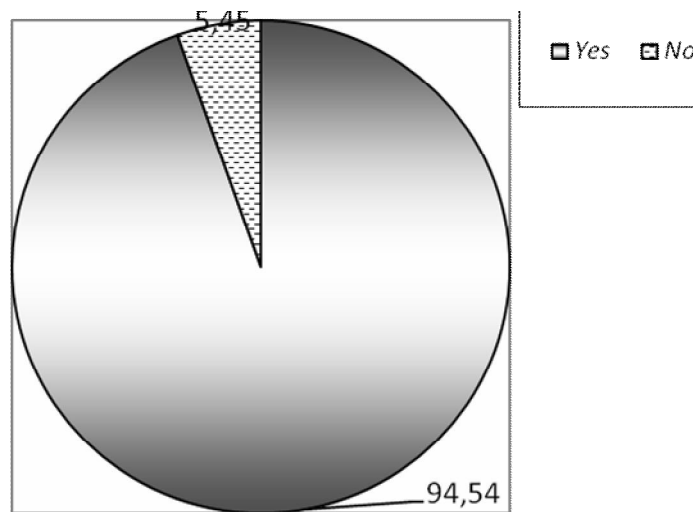
Fig. 3. 12 Students feeling comfortable when using more than one language

It is clear that the large majority of our informants 95,54% assert that they comfortable when using more than one language because the fact of mastering another language enables the speaker to express himself/herself easily in addition to be understood.

It is clear also from this last table and pie chart that very few students say they do not feel comfortable (6 out of 110) when they communicate in more than one language surely because they do not master this second language and, as a result, they avoid using it as much as possible. Those respondents use only borrowings in their daily life but when it comes to switch from one language to the other they are confused.

3.6   Qualitative interpretation of the results

As we mentioned in the methodology section, we hoped the number of informants would be high enough (more than the 110) in order give better description of the situation of bilingualism in Nouakchott University. However, we think that these informants can represent the educated class of Mauritanian citizens

as they are at the university level and the majority of them in their final years third year and fourth year (as illustrated in year of study section). The collected data reflect the phenomenon of bilingualism in the Mauritanian society and indicates a large use of the French language with Arabic. Even those students who answered that they used more Arabic and Hassaniya are not aware that even Hassaniya and Arabic are loaded with French words and expressions.

Code choice is greatly influenced by the context in which students may find themselves and the type of interlocutors. The informants draw our attention to the fact that they tend to insert more French words and expressions while addressing each other, and they modify their speech towards the use of more French words when interacting with their friend in the black African community.

We have also noticed during the observation that most Bidhan students use French as a neutral language to transmit their desires especially when they interact with their mates in the black African community.

More than this, the family milieu has also a great influence on the language choice of students. In fact some students answered that they communicate with members of their family using only French, their parents educated only in French hence they speak French more often. Others informed us that they speak French only in the university to interact with their friends while they speak Hassaniya, Wolof or Soninke in their homes.

On the other hand, some students informed us that they were educated only in Mahadhra (Quranic schools) and from there they took their Baccalaureate and they know only Standard Arabic (in addition to the mother tongue of course). We have also to state here that all the students have acquired French in a formal context, Bedhans and black Africans, which means that French is not their mother tongue as some students answered in the questionnaire.

In addition to this, we have noticed that the female informants tend to use French more frequently than Arabic, considering the former as a prestigious linguistic code. We have also discovered that a number of students are multilingual and the selection of the code in their opinion depends on the situation they are in and the speaker with whom they interact. This means that phenomenon of code-switching and code-mixing are not equally used by our students as part of their communication strategies.

General conclusion

Through this field-based research work, we have tried to shed light on some aspects of bilingualism in general and the way it occurs in the Mauritanian society in particular. We have considered the students of Nouakchott University as a sample illustrating mainly the attitudes of Mauritanians towards this phenomenon.

The difficulties encountered in relation to the questionnaire survey are mainly linked to the strong impact of the psychological constraints. These constraints were partly revealed through inhibitions, blockages, and attempts to deceive the questionnaire. In this respect, this issue could partly be studied according to the psycholinguistic methods and presumptions especially the aspects dealing with the attitudes of Mauritanians towards their language, towards Arabic, French, and towards such issues as standardization, officialization, diglossia and towards the future of the Arabic variety Hassaniya as well.

We can conclude by stating that over the historical time in this vast expanse of the Sahara desert, Arab, Berber, and Black African cultures have blended with each other. Today, Mauritania's peoples share elements of a common religion, Islam and its culture. The populations in this country are divided, however, along linguistic and cultural lines. Hassaniya, an Arabic dialect admixed with Berber, is spoken by approximately 70% of the population.

The remaining 30% of the population consists of Black Africans, non-Hassaniya speaking people, who occupy the northern bank of the Senegal River. The Wolof speakers, the Pulaar, the Tukulor and the Soninke are groups who practice fishing and floodplain recession agriculture in association with rain fed cultivation on the lower and middle valleys respectively. This variation in the

society itself introduces the fact of bilingualism at least to be the French language as a medium of communication.

We can state here that the first hypothesis is totally valid because, as it has been discussed, the majority of students reach the university level as bilinguals due to the educational system which makes French a compulsory language in primary schools. On the other hand, the arabization process and the national events which the country witnesses from time to time help some students to have at least some negative attitudes toward the French language and bilingualism.

Nevertheless, we can say that the education factor increases the activity of bilingualism and develops the phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing. Thus, the passivity which prevailed before independence helped the passage of French words into Mauritanian Hassaniya and displayed the intra-sentential code-switching limited to borrowing whereas, after independence, the educational policy made French as an instrument for education in which the urban context according to occupational or specific purposes is important, the sex variable in which the female stereotypes arise, and the interferences between the two languages in question display the strained relationship between Hassaniya Arabic and French. It is obvious that the inter-code switching then the use of French as such fulfills its role in the daily communicative process of the Mauritanian society.

Also, the arabization policy followed after independence, with the aim of removing French from its colonial status and considering it as a foreign language, was not totally applied, as French still continues to be persistent and very essential in many important domains, particularly in scientific fields and higher education.

From another perspective, we can conclude by stating that if we follow what has been proposed by McNamara (1967) in considering a bilingual as someone with a minimal proficiency in one of the four skills in the second language, we will then consider the majority of Mauritanians as bilinguals because most of them,

regardless of their educational level and their socio-cultural backgrounds, have a some competence in one of the four skills in French, or at least they know some French words and use them in everyday speech.

On the other hand, if we take into account Bloomfield's (1933) definition of a bilingual person as having a native-like proficiency in the two languages in the repertoire, we certainly find that a small number of Mauritanians are active bilinguals, whereas the vast majority are rather passive bilinguals in the sense that they understand French but cannot produce it.

During our investigation, we have found that the attitudes of Hassaniya speakers towards the future of their local variety are uncertain. They view it as evolving toward a pidgin mixing the two official languages of the country, Arabic and French. This attitude signals a deeper phenomenon. Hassaniya speakers, especially students, are aware of the situation of borrowing, mixing, and switching that is taking place in their language. It signals also a kind of fatality they perhaps feel is happening to Hassaniya, in the same way it happened to Sanhaja. The latter is perceived in Hassaniya speakers' subconscious, according to Ould Mohamed Baba (1998), as the old Hassaniya.

Viewed from another perspective, the prediction that Arabic will not supplant Hassaniya is an assertion of the strong roots of diglossia in the country and of its probable continuation in the future. Furthermore, the students' attitudes show the complexity of the issue of bilingualism in Mauritania. It is difficult to understand fully the motivations of Hassaniya speakers since the issue of language is highly sensitive. It involves Arabic, Sanhaja, Negro-African communities of Mauritania, French and colonization, and the whole history of the emergence of the distinctive Bidhan culture.

Code-switching, whether conscious or unconscious, is practiced by an overwhelming majority of Hassaniya speakers. This result is consistent with the prediction of the study. The direct questions and the questionnaire revealed that most people alternate codes because of habits, because they lack vocabulary, or because they seek prestige and/or modernism.

According to the results, we can also assume that a significant number of Mauritanians have a positive attitude towards bilingualism and code switching. This is not surprising if we take into consideration the linguistic situation of Mauritania as illustrated previously.

This project has revealed that the aspect of bilingualism in Nouakchott University and in Mauritania as a whole should be further examined using other social and linguistic parameters that may be effective. Other related issues like diglossia, code-switching, language planning would be interesting to investigate since researches on these issues in the Mauritanian context have only been conducted by foreigners.

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Appendix

من خلال هذه الورقة البحثية نحاول سبر آراء طلاب جامعة أنوا كشوط حول ظاهرة الثنائية اللغوية أو التحدث بلغتين , ودوافعها, الرجاء التفضل بالإجابة على الأسئلة التالية:

1. الجنس ....

2. العمر ....

3. سنة الدراسة

أولى   ثانية   ثالثة   رابعة

4. ماهي لغتك الأم ....

5. أي اللغات التالية تتحدث(ين) اجعل(ي) دائرة على الإجابة

العربية   الفرنسية   الإنجليزية   لغات أخرى

6. هل تعتقد(ين) أنك ثنائي(ة) اللغة

نعم   لا

7.ما هو تعريفك لثنائية اللغة

....
....
....
....
....

8. ماهي نظرتك لشخص ثنائي اللغة

عادي   ذكي   سيئ

9. هل تعتقد(ين) أنها إجابية بالنسبة للطلبة   نعم   لا

10. إذا كنت شخص ثنائي اللغة ما الذي يدفعك إلي إستخدام اللغة الثانية (اعط سببين على الأقل)

....
....
....
....
....

11. ماهو تقويمك لمعلوماتك في لغتك الثانية

جيد جدا   جيد   متوسط   ضعيف

12. هل تعتبر جامعة أنواكشوط في نظرك محيطا لثنائية اللغة

لا   نعم

13. هل تشعر بالراحة عندما تتحدث بأكثر من لغة واحدة

لا   نعم

شكرا جزيلا على تعاونكم

Dans ce document de recherche, je voudrais poser une question concernant les attitudes et les motivations des étudiants de l'Université de Nouakchott sur les

aspects du bilinguisme. Pouvez-vous répondre s'il vous plaît aux questions suivantes:

1. Genre …………………

2. Âge ………………..

3. Année d'étude

     Premier   deuxième   troisième   quatrième

4. Votre langue maternelle (s): …………………………………

5. Lesquels de ces langues parlez-vous? (Encerclez la bonne réponse)

     Arabe   Français   Anglais   autres

6. Vous considérez-vous comme bilingue?

     Oui   No

7. Comment définiriez-vous le bilinguisme?

     ……………………………………………………………………………………………………

     ……………………………………………………………………………………………………

     ……………………………………………………………………………………………………..

8. Comment considérez-vous une bonne personne bilingue?

     Normal   intelligent   pas bon

9. Pensez-vous qu'il est positif pour les étudiants?

     Oui   No

10. Si vous êtes une personne bilingue qu'est-ce qui vous motive a utiliser la deuxième langue? (Au moins deux

raisons)..…..........

....

....…....................

....

11. Comment évaluez-vous bien vos connaissances dans votre deuxième langue?

Faible   moyen   bon   très bon

12. Estimez-vous que l'Université de Nouakchott regroupe une communauté bilingue?

Oui   Non

13. Vous sentez-vous a l'aise lorsque vous utilisez plus d'une langue?

Oui   no

Merci

In this research paper, I would like to question the attitudes and motives of Nouakchott University students about aspects of bilingualism. Would you please answer the following questions:

1. Gender ………….

2. Age: ………………

3. Year of study ………….

4. Your native language(s): …………………….

5. Which ones of these languages do you speak? (Circle the answer)

    Arabic   French   English   others

6. Do you consider yourself as bilingual?

        Yes   No

7. How would you define bilingualism?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

8. How do you look at a good bilingual person? (normal, intelligent, …)

………………………………………………………………………………………………

9. Do you think it is positive for students?

        Yes   No

10. If you are a bilingual person what makes you use the second language? (At least two reasons)

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………………

11. How good do you rate your knowledge in your second language?

    Weak   average   good   very good

12. Do you consider Nouakchott University as including a bilingual community?

        Yes   No

13. Do you feel comfortable when using more than one language?

        Yes   No

الملخص:

إن ثنائية اللغة هي ظاهرة بالغة الأهمية وتندرج تحت مجال علم اللغة الاجتماعي باعتبارها واحدة من أكثر وأوضح النتائج للاتصال اللغوي. تلقى ثنائية اللغة كذلك قدرا كبيرا من الاهتمام من جانب اللغويين الاجتماعيين بسبب أنها سمة لمعظم البشر. وبالفعل، اليوم هناك خمسة أو ستة آلاف لغة في العالم ونحو مائة وأربعين بلدا مما يعني ببساطة أن الاستثناء يجب أن يكون أحادية اللغة لا ثنائيتها. موريتانيا ليست استثناء، ونحاول من خلال الدراسة أن نسلط الضوء على ثنائية اللغة في موريتانيا منطلقين من جامعة نواكشوط كنموذج يبين خصائص ودوافع هذه الظاهرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ثنائية اللغة، الدوافع، المواقف، الحسّانية، اللغات الإفريقية .

Summary:

Bilingualism is a salient and momentous linguistic phenomenon. It is studied under the field of sociolinguistics as one of the most obvious results of language contact. Bilingualism has received a great deal of attention from the part of sociolinguists, mainly because it has been the norm for most human beings. In fact, there are some five or six thousand languages in the world and about one hundred and forty countries which means simply that the exception should be monolingualism rather than bilingualism. Mauritania is no exception. Our main objective of this research is to shed light on the issue of bilingualism in Mauritania taking Nouakchott University as a sample illustrating the characteristics and main causes of this phenomenon.

Keywords: bilingualism, motivation, attitudes, Hassaniya, Black African languages

Résumé:

Le bilinguisme est un phénomène linguistique saillant et important. Il est étudié dans le domaine de la sociolinguistique comme l'un des résultats les plus évidents de contact de langues. Le bilinguisme a reçu beaucoup d'attention de la part des sociolinguistes, principalement parce qu'il est la norme pour la plupart des êtres humains. En fait, il ya quelque cinq ou six mille langues dans le monde et environ 140 pays, ce qui signifie simplement que l'exception doit être le monolinguisme plutôt que le bilinguisme. La Mauritanie n'est pas une exception. Notre objectif principal dans cette recherche est de faire la lumière sur la question du bilinguisme en Mauritanie en prenant l'Université de Nouakchott comme un échantillon illustrant les caractéristiques et les causes principales de ce phénomène.

Mots-clés: bilinguisme, motivation, attitudes, Hassaniya, langues Africaines