

**Language attitudes and motivation of the Tunisian youth: English language learning
after the 2011 Revolution**

Author: **Rania Salah**

Supervisor: **Dr. habil. Andrea Parapatics**

Reviewer: **prof. Ildikó Vančo**

Dear Professor, Ildikó,

I am writing to extend my deepest gratitude for the considerable time and effort you dedicated to reviewing my dissertation. It is with great appreciation that I express my sincere thanks for your invaluable contribution as my mock exam committee member and now as my second reviewer. I would like to express my profound gratitude for your meticulous evaluation of my Ph.D. dissertation. Your acknowledgment of the relevance and intellectual excitement surrounding the chosen topic is truly gratifying. Furthermore, I am delighted by your positive comments regarding the paper. I am truly humbled by your willingness to share your vast expertise with me. I am honored to have the opportunity to benefit from your knowledge.

Thank you once again for your time and commitment to my academic growth.

Now, addressing your insightful questions, I would like to provide detailed responses and address any concerns you may have raised. I have thoroughly considered your queries and believe that by incorporating your suggestions, the final outcome of my dissertation will be greatly improved.

Turning to your queries, I would like to start with the first comment.

In response to your inquiry regarding the challenges faced in determining the number of Berber speakers in Tunisia, I would like to highlight that this matter is often subject to controversy due to the absence of official statistics. Various estimates have been put forth, leading to discrepancies in the reported figures. While some statistics indicate that the number of Berber speakers exceeds 500,000, other estimates significantly reduce this number to approximately 200,000, representing 2% of the total population of 11.5 million Tunisians. In certain cases, the estimation reaches as high as 10% of the population.

It is important to note that my thesis did not focus specifically on the Berber language, which is why I did not delve into the details of why obtaining an exact number is challenging. I merely stated that it remains a controversial issue.

From my perspective, the issue can be attributed to political factors as the Tunisian government does not acknowledge the presence of the Amazigh (Berbers) population in the country.

The adoption of a new Constitution by the Parliament in 2014 has effectively marginalized the historical, cultural, and linguistic aspects of the Amazigh population in Tunisia. The constitutional text, in its introductory sections, emphasizes the sources of identity for Tunisians as "Arab and Muslim identity," affirming Tunisia's alignment with the "culture and civilization of the Arab and Muslim nation". Furthermore, it commits the state to prioritize strengthening the "Maghreb Union" as a step towards achieving Arab unity. Article 1 further reinforces "Tunisia is a free state, [...], Islam is its religion, Arabic its language" while Article 5 confirms that "the Tunisian Republic forms part of the Arab Maghreb".

Consequently, the Tunisian state's perspective essentially disregards the existence of the Amazigh community within the country. Discrimination extends beyond the issue of the exact number of Berber speakers and extends to practices such as the rejection of Amazigh first names during registration in municipal registry offices. Authorities adhere strictly to laws mandating the registration of only Arab first names. As a result, parents are deterred from giving their children Amazigh names out of fear of being stigmatized by the authorities and potentially being compelled to undergo lengthy and expensive legal procedures with an uncertain outcome.

Regrettably, the current government, much like its predecessor, continues to overlook the importance of the Berber language in language policies and planning. It remains prohibited from being used in schools, further perpetuating the marginalization of the Amazigh language and culture (Lounes, 2020).

There are no official statistics on their number in the country. Efforts are only being made by researchers and organizations to better understand and document the linguistic diversity within the Amazigh, but achieving comprehensive and official statistics remains a challenge (Ouanes, 2016).

Q1: In your opinion, are Berber language resources in Morocco and Algeria not accessible to Berbers residing in Tunisia?

From my perspective, the process of globalization has facilitated the accessibility of resources to individuals across different geographical locations, primarily due to the ease of access provided by the Internet. However, it is important to consider that Berber language resources in Morocco and Algeria may not be readily accessible to Berbers residing in Tunisia. This limitation can be attributed to various factors:

Firstly, geographic barriers may play a role, as Tunisia is physically separated from Morocco and Algeria, which can impact the direct availability and accessibility of Berber language resources. Secondly, the existence of different dialects and variations within the Berber language family can pose challenges. The specific dialects spoken in Morocco and Algeria may differ from those spoken in Tunisia, which may affect understanding and accessing resources. Furthermore, cultural and political factors come into play. Each country has its own cultural and political context regarding the recognition and promotion of Berber languages. While Morocco and Algeria have taken steps to officially recognize and support the use of Berber languages in various domains, Tunisia's recognition and support for Berber languages have been comparatively limited. Lastly, resource availability is a significant consideration. The accessibility of Berber language resources can vary depending on the region and community. While resources tailored specifically to Berbers may exist in Morocco and Algeria, their accessibility to Berbers in Tunisia could be limited due to language barriers, distribution networks, or a lack of a significant online presence.

In conclusion, although globalization and the internet have facilitated access to resources on a global scale, it is important to acknowledge the potential challenges in accessing Berber language resources for Berbers residing in Tunisia, particularly in relation to resources from Morocco and Algeria.

Q2: Does the concept of diglossia, as described in the author's opinion, solely pertain to the usage of language varieties in different contexts? Can the theory of diglossia, as exemplified by Fishman's influential study published as early as 1967, be applied to the usage of Arabic and French in Tunisia? Additionally, to what extent does this language situation primarily apply to written language use in Tunisia?

Yes, the concept of diglossia in Tunisia does primarily pertain to the usage of language varieties in different contexts. In Tunisia, the two main language varieties involved in diglossia are Standard Arabic (considered the high/prestige form/written communication) and Tunisian Arabic (considered the low/non-prestige form/oral communication).

Standard Arabic is typically used in formal and official domains, such as education, government, media, and religious settings. It is the variety taught in schools and used in written communication. Tunisian Arabic, on the other hand, is used in everyday conversation, informal settings, and in the media that cater to a wider audience.

This diglossic situation reflects a clear distinction in language use and functions. Standard Arabic is associated with formality, education, and official domains, while Tunisian Arabic is used for everyday communication and informal interactions. The diglossia in Tunisia is mainly characterized by this division of language varieties based on their social contexts and functions. It is important to note, however, that the concept of diglossia can have broader implications beyond just language variety usage. It may also involve factors such as language attitudes, identity, language planning, and the sociopolitical aspects of language in society (Dridi, 2020).

Yes, the theory of diglossia, as developed by Charles A. Ferguson and popularized by Joshua A. Fishman's influential study published in 1967, can be applied to the usage of Tunisian Arabic and French, as well as the diglossic relationship between Arabic and French in Tunisia.

In the context of Tunisia, Tunisian Arabic serves as the low/non-prestige form in the diglossic situation. French, on the other hand, holds a significant role in the high/prestige form, particularly in formal domains, higher education, government, business, and the media.

The diglossic relationship between Tunisian Arabic and French in Tunisia reflects the principles outlined in Fishman's diglossia theory. Tunisian Arabic is the variety used for informal interactions, while French is employed in formal contexts. This division of language functions is similar to the diglossic situations found in other language communities where distinct language varieties are used for specific purposes.

It is important to note that the diglossic relationship between Tunisian Arabic and French in Tunisia may not be as rigid as the diglossic relationship between Standard Arabic and Tunisian Arabic. The prestige and usage of French in Tunisia are influenced by historical and socio-cultural factors, including French colonial history and ongoing bilingualism in certain domains.

Overall, the diglossic language situation in Tunisia primarily applies to written language use, with Standard Arabic being the dominant variety for formal writing, while French maintains its significance in certain domains. Tunisian Arabic, though less prevalent in written communication, remains vital for only informal and spoken interactions.

Q3: Whether there exist, or in your opinion, a standardizing version of Tunisian Arabic?

When it comes to a standardized version of Tunisian Arabic, the situation is more complex. Unlike Standard Arabic, which has an established standardized form used in formal contexts, there is no universally accepted standardized version of Tunisian Arabic that is widely recognized and utilized.

While there have been efforts to develop a standardized form of Tunisian Arabic, including the creation of writing systems and dictionaries, or publications such as newspapers, books, and novels there is no single authoritative standard that is universally adopted. The regional variations within Tunisian Arabic make it challenging to establish a standardized version that satisfies all speakers across different regions.

Instead, Tunisian Arabic is primarily used in spoken form, adapting to the local dialectal variations in different areas of Tunisia. The dialect is used in everyday conversations, informal settings, and various media platforms, such as television, radio, and social media.

The absence of a widely recognized standardized version of Tunisian Arabic does not hinder mutual understanding among Tunisian speakers. Speakers from different regions can generally understand each other despite the regional variations. However, in more formal or official contexts where a standardized variety is required, speakers often switch to Standard Arabic, which serves as a common language for formal communication.

In summary, a standardized version of the dialect has not been universally established.

Q4: “The Arabic language still has a major role in the Tunisian language.” Does this imply that the Tunisian language is distinct from Arabic?

Yes, the role of Standard Arabic in the Tunisian language is significant. Standard Arabic, also known as Classical Arabic or Modern Standard Arabic, is the formal and official variety of Arabic used in Tunisia and other Arab countries for formal education, government, media, and official communications. It holds an important position in formal settings, such as written documents, official speeches, and religious discourse (Lilia, 2017).

Regarding the distinction between Tunisian Arabic and Standard Arabic, it is important to note that they are different but related varieties of the Arabic language. Tunisian Arabic, also known as Darija, is a regional dialect that has evolved from Classical Arabic over time, incorporating influences from other languages, such as Berber, French, and Italian.

While Tunisian Arabic shares many structural and lexical features with Standard Arabic, it has its own distinct characteristics, including variations in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. The regional variations within Tunisian Arabic also contribute to its uniqueness. Therefore, while Tunisian Arabic is part of the broader Arabic language family, it is considered a distinct variety with its own linguistic features and regional identity. Standard Arabic serves as a formal and standardized variety used alongside Tunisian Arabic in different domains, reflecting the diglossic language situation in Tunisia.

In summary, the Tunisian language, represented by Tunisian Arabic, has distinct features that differentiate it from Standard Arabic. The presence and usage of Standard Arabic in formal contexts do not negate the distinctiveness of Tunisian Arabic as a regional variation within the Arabic language continuum (Carthage, 2021).

Q5: Could you please provide a brief explanation of the Tunisification concept? I am particularly interested in understanding the statement on page 10 "The roots of Tunisification came from the number of civilizations that Tunisia has encountered in the past, each one of them has marked the country in such ways and due to each one of them Tunisification has been created and today it represents the language of Tunisia (TA)"?

The concept of "Tunisification" refers to the process through which Tunisia has absorbed and assimilated various influences and civilizations throughout its history, leading to the development of a unique cultural, linguistic, and national identity.

Tunisia has been influenced by numerous civilizations, including the Phoenicians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Arabs, Ottoman Turks, and French colonizers. Each of these civilizations has left its mark on Tunisia, shaping its language, culture, traditions, and societal norms.

The statement on page 10 suggests that each encounter with these civilizations has contributed to the formation and evolution of Tunisification. This concept refers to the blending and integration of different cultural and linguistic elements into a distinct Tunisian identity.

In the context of language, Tunisification can be seen as the linguistic transformation and development of Tunisian Arabic (TA). It implies that the various historical influences and interactions have shaped the unique features and vocabulary found in the Tunisian Arabic dialect. Tunisification represents the linguistic expression of Tunisia's historical encounters and cultural fusion.

Overall, Tunisification highlights the historical and cultural processes that have influenced Tunisia, leading to the emergence of a distinct Tunisian identity and the development of the Tunisian Arabic dialect as a manifestation of this cultural blending (Mezrioui, 2022).

C2+Q6: In this chapter, the author presents an explanation of the concept of attitude. However, one aspect that seems to be missing is an emphasis on the significance of social determinates in shaping attitudes. While introducing the concept of attitude, the author provides a concise definition, but it may be beneficial to further explore the role of social factors.

My question in this context is how the behaviourist conception of attitude, according to which attitude is a response to certain social situations, would be applicable to the results of this research?

Thank you for your feedback on my 3rd chapter of the literature review discussing the concept of attitude. I appreciate your insights, and I would like to respectfully address the comment you raised about the significance of social determinants in shaping attitudes.

I firmly believe that I have indeed addressed the role of social factors in shaping attitudes, and I would like to draw your attention to the definition I presented in the initial pages of the 3rd chapter, which serves as a foundation for the broader concept of attitude. In particular, on page 28 of my dissertation, I discuss the work of Holmes (2008) and Dweik (2015), both of whom emphasize the impact of social factors on individuals' attitudes towards languages.

As cited in my dissertation, Holmes (2008) argues that different languages or varieties are categorized by people as elegant, expressive, offensive, artistic, respectful, impolite, pleasing, or unpleasing. This categorization process is deeply influenced by social dynamics, as it reflects individuals' identities and the social groups to which they belong. Consequently, individuals cultivate either positive or negative attitudes towards languages based on how their respective social groups identify and evaluate them.

Furthermore, Dweik (2015) supports the notion that individuals develop either positive or negative attitudes towards languages based on their social groups' perceptions. When individuals possess a positive attitude towards a language, they are more inclined to find it attractive and use it extensively in their communication. Conversely, those with negative attitudes may exhibit resistance to using it.

By delving deeper into the subsequent subchapters, namely "Language attitudes towards Classical Arabic and Tunisian Arabic in Tunisia," "Language attitudes towards French in Tunisia", "Language attitudes towards English in Tunisia," and results/discussion chapters I aimed to underscore the significance of social factors in shaping attitudes, particularly within the Tunisian linguistic context. These sections further support my assertion that I have duly considered the role of social determinants in my exploration of attitudes.

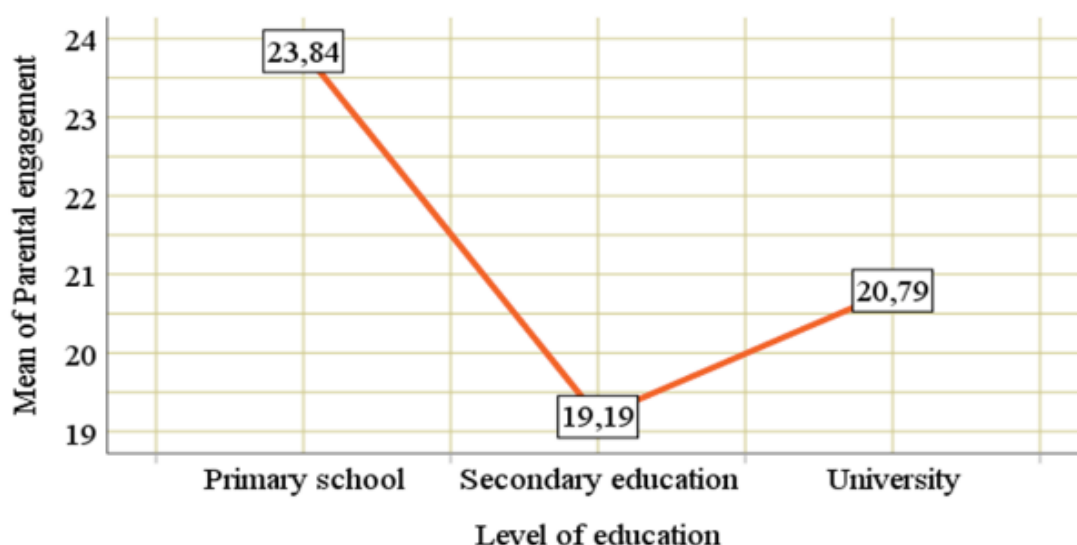
I hope this clarification addresses your concerns regarding the emphasis on social factors in shaping attitudes. However, I recognize your expertise in this field. Should you find the current explanation lacking, I am prepared to incorporate additional definitions and explanations to further enhance the depth and clarity of the discussion.

Turning to your question,

In the context of the behaviorist conception of attitude, which posits that attitude is a response to certain social situations, the focus is on understanding how individuals develop and express their attitudes based on their experiences and interactions in social contexts.

Based on my findings, it can be observed that students' attitudes are shaped as a learned response to particular social circumstances. In the case of Tunisian students, their attitudes are influenced by the connections they establish between specific stimuli, such as their parents' engagement motivation, and their emotional, cognitive, and behavioral reactions to those stimuli. For instance, primary school pupils who consistently encounter positive experiences, driven by their parents' motivation, in a particular social context tend to develop a positive attitude towards learning English. However, they showed a negative attitude towards the English language policy.

On page 106 a noticeable result was attributed to the parental engagement factor where the difference lies between GR2 and GR3 towards GR1.



Pupils in Group 1 gave very positive responses towards parental engagement with the highest mean score ($M = 23.84$) from Group 2 ($M = 19.19$) and Group 3 ($M = 20.79$) who had fewer positive responses. The reason that might explain the unexpected results of the finding is the learners' social context. Languages, according to Spolsky (1989), are primarily social mechanisms because they are learned in social contexts. He goes on to say that, while language learning is individual, it occurs in society, whereas social factors may not have direct influences, they have strong and identifiable effects on learners' attitudes and motivation. The social context includes the learners' family or home, their peer groups, the community or target

language speakers, and their cultures. The parental engagement factors are one of the social contexts considered in the current study. According to Larsen and Long (2014), it was discovered in several studies investigating the parental role and the development of attitudes toward speakers of the target language that the learners' attitudes mirrored their parents' attitudes toward the target language. According to them, learners adopt their parents' attitude toward the target language, which affects the learners' achievement in learning the language. Parents have a particularly powerful influence on their children's attitudes.

On pages 109/110, I delved further into the figure depicted above and provided an explanation for its resemblance to a reversed V shape. I discussed the concept of peer social pressures as mentioned by Chambers and Trudgill (1998) and drew a connection to the context of language learning. Specifically, I found that primary school students exhibited a stronger correlation with parental engagement compared to secondary and university students. This observation can be attributed to the influence of peer group social pressures, including those exerted by their parents.

Nonetheless, there is a hierarchical relationship between motivation and attitudes. In other words, motivation (such as parental engagement) influences attitudes, which in turn influences language acquisition behavior (Ager, 2001).

Q7): Regarding the place of French in Tunisian society, the author states on page 31: „Education in Tunisia means being a French speaker since it is considered as the language of literature and culture, as well as the language of domination and influence (Hammadi, 2020).” Subsequently, on page 32, the author mentions that: “Similar phenomena are reported in Norwich, by Trudgill (1972, 1974), in Detroit by Wolfram & Riley (1967), Wolfram (1969), Fasold (1968) while Labov (1966, 1986) and Levine & Crockett (1966) have investigated the same phenomenon in other varieties of American English.” It should be noted that most of the cited case studies describe linguistic and social situations from 50 years ago. Consequently, it is essential to consider the changes that have occurred since then when drawing generalizable conclusions. Apart from the historical context of colonialism, what practical reasons still support the linguistic and social situation where French retains greater prestige than Arabic?

I appreciate your attention and concern regarding the relevance of the cited case studies. I would like to address your points and provide clarification on the matter.

Regarding the statement on page 31 about education in Tunisia and the significance of French as the language of literature, culture, domination, and influence, I acknowledge that the

language landscape and societal dynamics have undergone changes over time. While the statement highlights the historical context and perceptions associated with the language, I understand the importance of considering the present-day situation. I will make the necessary revisions to reflect the current status of French in Tunisian society, taking into account any shifts or developments that have occurred.

Furthermore, I acknowledge your observation about the age of the cited case studies on page 32, which primarily focus on linguistic and social situations from around 50 years ago. I agree that it is crucial to consider the changes that have taken place since then when drawing conclusions. In my revisions, I will ensure to include more recent studies that shed light on the current linguistic and social landscape, providing a more comprehensive and up-to-date perspective.

I appreciate your feedback and understand the importance of incorporating up-to-date research to ensure the accuracy and relevance of my work. I will make the necessary revisions to address this issue and ensure that the most recent references are properly included.

In relation to your question,

Apart from the historical context of colonialism, there are several practical reasons that contribute to the continued linguistic and social situation in Tunisia where French retains greater prestige than Arabic. Some of these reasons include:

1- Education and Job Opportunities: French is often seen as a language of higher education, professional advancement, and international communication. Many prestigious educational institutions in Tunisia use French as the medium of instruction, and proficiency in French is highly valued in certain professional fields, such as law, medicine, and engineering. As a result, individuals who aspire to pursue higher education or secure employment in these sectors often prioritize learning and mastering French.

2- Economic and Trade Relations: Tunisia has strong economic and trade ties with French-speaking countries, particularly in Europe and North Africa. French serves as a language of commerce, facilitating business transactions, negotiations, and international collaborations. The proficiency in French among Tunisian professionals helps foster economic relationships and opens doors to opportunities in multinational companies and international trade.

3- Cultural Influence and Media: French continues to exert a significant cultural influence in Tunisia. French literature, films, music, and other forms of media are widely consumed and appreciated. The French cultural presence, combined with the accessibility and popularity of

French media, contributes to the perceived prestige of the language and its association with cultural sophistication and cosmopolitanism.

4- Social Status and Prestige: Historically, French was associated with social prestige, and remnants of this perception persist in Tunisian society. Speaking French is often viewed as a symbol of social status, education, and sophistication. This perception can influence individuals' attitudes and aspirations regarding language use and proficiency.

It is important to note that while French retains a greater prestige in certain domains, Arabic remains the official language of Tunisia and is widely spoken by the majority of the population. The linguistic situation in Tunisia is complex and multifaceted, influenced by a combination of historical, practical, and social factors (Daoud, 2011).

C2: However, it is unfortunate that no data regarding the respondents' mother tongues, French and Arabic, are available. This limits the ability to contextualize attitudes toward English within a broader framework.

I appreciate your comment and would like to address the issue you raised regarding the absence of data on the respondents' mother tongues, French and Arabic.

During my interview process, I did inquire about attitudes toward the mother tongue, Arabic, and French. However, I made the decision not to include this specific data in my thesis for two reasons. Firstly, I had a maximum page limit of 150 pages, and including additional data would have exceeded this limit. Secondly, I am considering pursuing post-doctoral studies where I intend to explore the data related to attitudes toward the mother tongue, Arabic, and French in more detail.

While acknowledging the significance of considering the influence of the cited languages above, I aimed to provide a focused examination of English attitudes within the given limitations. My primary objective was to explore the attitudes and motivations of Tunisian youth toward English, which I believe contributes valuable insights to the field.

Q9: How could the research be designed to ensure the validity of the obtained data on a general basis?

Thank you for your question. Here are the steps I intend to take to ensure the validity of the obtained data on a more general basis:

1- Expanded Sample Size: In future research, I will aim to increase the sample size by including a more diverse range of participants from multiple primary schools, high schools, and

universities across various regions of Tunisia. This will provide a broader representation of the Tunisian youth population and enhance the generalizability of the findings.

2- Random Sampling: To avoid any potential bias in participant selection, I will employ a random sampling technique. This will ensure that each member of the target population has an equal chance of being included in the study, reducing the risk of sample bias.

3- Stratification: To capture the diversity within the Tunisian youth population, I will consider stratifying the sample based on factors such as gender, socioeconomic background, and geographic location. This will enable a more comprehensive understanding of how different subgroups perceive English language learning in addition to Standard Arabic, Tunisian Arabic, and French.

4- Multiple Data Collection Methods: In addition to interviews and surveys, I will incorporate other data collection methods such as classroom observations, focus groups, and interviews made with teachers and parents. By utilizing a combination of different qualitative and quantitative approaches, I can gather a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of language attitudes and motivations among Tunisian youth.

Longitudinal Study: To account for temporal changes and better capture the dynamics of language attitudes, I may consider conducting a longitudinal study that follows participants over an extended period. This will provide insights into how attitudes and motivations evolve over time and allow for a more robust analysis of trends.

By implementing these design enhancements, I aim to address the limitations of my current study and ensure the validity and generalizability of the obtained data. These modifications will enable a more comprehensive exploration of language attitudes and motivations among Tunisian youth.

Thank you for bringing up this important aspect, and I appreciate the opportunity to further develop my research design for future investigations. If you have any additional suggestions or recommendations, I would be grateful to consider them.

Finally, I would like to thank you for providing detailed feedback. I addressed each mentioned major and minor issue you have pointed out to improve the clarity of my writing. In conclusion, once again, I thank you for your evaluation and your dedication to improving the quality of my work. Thank you for your time and consideration.

References:

- Ager, D. E. (2001). *Motivation in language planning and language policy*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Chambers, J. K., & Trudgill, P. (1998). *Dialectology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carthage Mag. (2021). 5 Mind-Blowing Facts about the Tunisian Arabic. Carthage Magazine. <https://carthagemagazine.com/tunisian-arabic/>
- Daoud, M. (2011). The sociolinguistic situation in Tunisia: language rivalry or accommodation? *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 211, 9–33.
- Dridi, T., Salah, R. & Parapatics, A. (2020). Nyelvhasználat és (anya)nyelvi nevelés Tunéziában I. Anyanyelv-pedagógia, XIII(2), <https://anyanyelvpedagogia.hu/cikkek.php?id=842>
- Dweik, B. S. I., & Qawar, H. A. (2015). Language choice and language attitudes in a multilingual Arab Canadian community: Quebec–Canada: A sociolinguistic study. *British Journal of English Linguistics*, 3(1), 1–12.
- Holmes, J. (2008). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. London: Routledge.
- Larsen-Freeman, D., & Long, M. H. (2014). *An introduction to second language acquisition research*. London: Routledge.
- Lilia. (2017). Tunisian Arabic: A Wonderful Mosaic of Dialects. *Lingualism*. https://lingualism.com/maghrebi-arabic/tunisian-arabic-wonderful-mosaic-dialects/#elementor-toc_heading-anchor-6
- Lounes, B. (2020). Indigenous World 2020: Tunisia. IWGIA [Indigenous World 2020: Tunisia - IWGIA - International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs](https://www.iwgia.com/indigenous-world-2020-tunisia/)
- Mezrioui, R. (2021). État et construction identitaire de la «tunisianité»: entre norme et clivages, des altérités niées. *Les Enjeux de l'information et de la communication*, 222(22), 67-86.
- Ouanes, Y. (2016). "مغاور السند.. مساكن البربر المعلقة في جبال الجنوب التونسي". AA. <https://shorturl.at/gpzC5>
- Spolsky, B. (1989). Communicative competence, language proficiency, and beyond. *Applied Linguistics*, 10(2), 138–156

Veszprém, 25th June 2023

Rania Salah

Faculty of Modern Philology and Social Sciences

Multilingual Doctoral School

University of Pannonia