

MAIN OBJECTIVE

To understand the language attitudes of Moroccan students regarding their use and perception of, propensity for, or opposition to the French language as a relic of colonial Africa.

MOTIVATIONS FOR STUDY

LINGUISTIC AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- Arabization of post-colonial education system instills “national pride” (Salhi 2013)
- Today, French holds no official position in Morocco according National Charter on Education (Marley 2003; Benzakour 2010)
- French used mostly by urban elites, having a monopoly of economic sector (Benzakour 2010)
- Occupation of Morocco by French administration with Treaty of Fez 1912 (Hall, 1992)



LANGUAGE VS NATIONAL IDENTITY

- No overt interaction (Appel and Muysken 1987)
- National identity intrinsically linked with positive values of national language (Fishman 1999)
- “[...]language is a major vehicle of identity, along with cultural heritage, assumptions, values, and beliefs” (Simpson, 2008:44)

METHODOLOGIES

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do Moroccan university students perceive their cultural and national identity (or identities) in relation to the French language?

METHOD

- Standardized Open-ended Interview Style to elicit conversational data (Gal, Gal, and Borg 2003)
- Interviews (N = 9) conducted by author in French
- Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco
- Transcription and content analysis of data (Stemler, 2001)
- Three main identity categories determined

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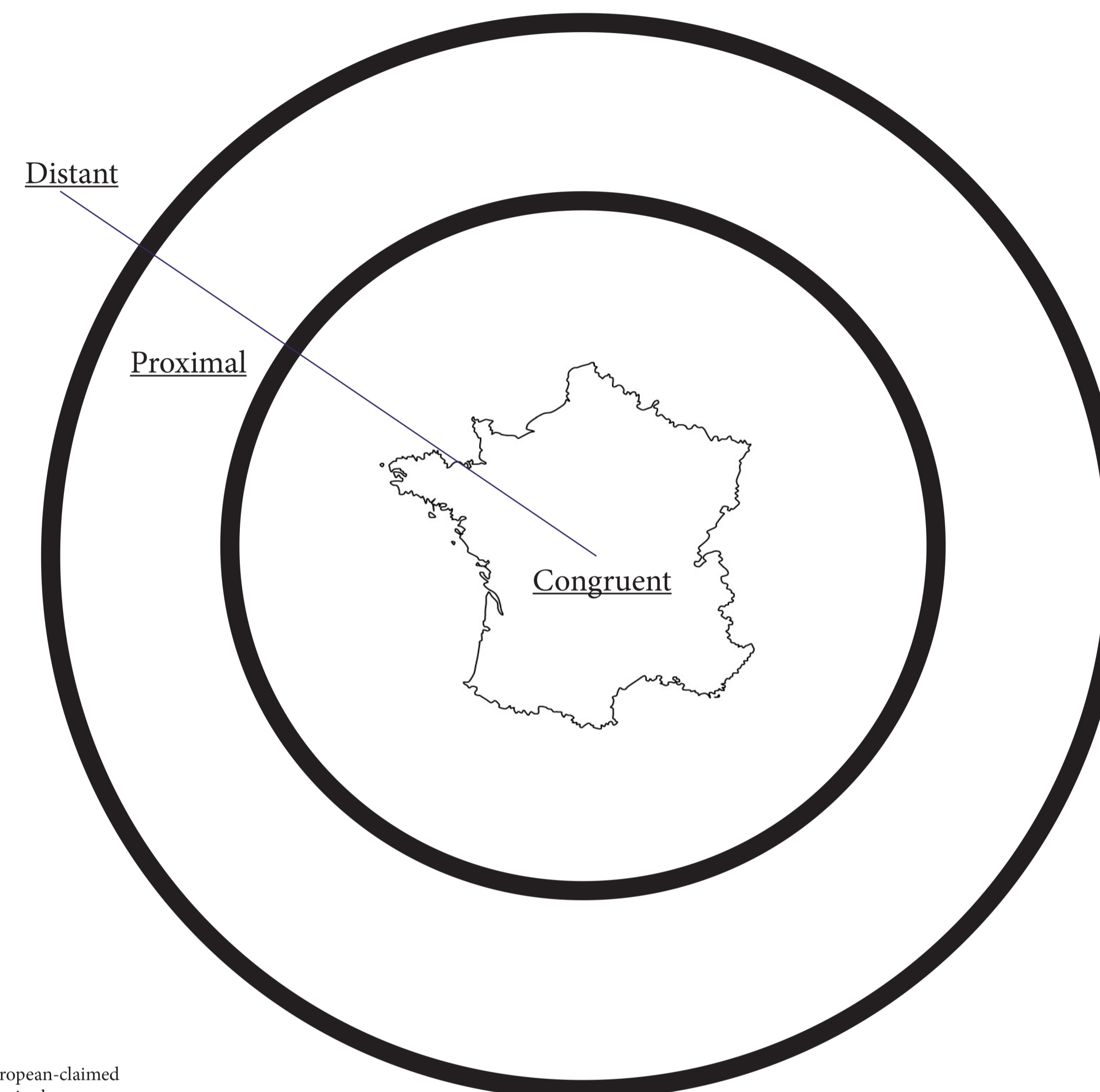


Fig 1: Map of European-claimed lands in Morocco in the 20th century

Fig. 2: Visual representation of identity portrayal in regards to the distance from the French language. The outer circle represents identity category I, the inner circle represents category II, and the insignia represents category III.

CONCLUSIONS

I. DISTANT - Dichotomous separation of national identity with the French language through statements suggesting a (perception of) fundamental distinction between language and identity.

II. PROXIMAL - Mutually inclusive association between national identity and the French language through the lens of bilingualism; simultaneous acknowledgement of these concepts' distinctions.

III. CONGRUENT - No differentiation between national identity and the French language; identity crisis and language mixing are key factors.

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SELECTED CONVERSATION DATA

I. DISTANT

WM: [...] **identity has nothing to do with language** [...] but identity itself – language, it's not an objective, it's not a finality as you say, language, it's a manner, it's a, it's a, **it's a tool** like you say in English.

WM: [...] **l'identité cela n'a rien à voir avec une langue** [...] mais la langue elle-même, c'est pas un objectif, c'est pas une finalité comme on dit, la langue c'est une manière c'est une, c'est un, **it's a tool** comme on dit en anglais. (WM, 9/4/2015)

OG: There are a lot of people who refuse [to speak French], **7na** we speak arabic, we are going to speak Arabic **because Arabic is our language.**

OG: Il y a beaucoup de personnes que te disent non, **7na** on parle l'arabe, on va parler l'arabe **puisque l'arabe c'est notre langue.** (OG, 4/4/2015)

WM: Morocco was able to make a very good transition to independence [...] and to construct its **own identity.** And with its own mentality, identity, and **also personality regarding language.**

WM: Mais le Maroc il a pu je crois de faire une très bonne transition [...] et de construire sa **propre identité.** Et avec sa propre mentalité, identité, et **donc personnalité au niveau de la langue** (WM, 9/4/2015)

II. PROXIMAL

OG: D'ailleurs Hassan II l'ex-roi du Maroc avait dit aujourd'hui que les personnes qui ne parlent que **deux langues sont des personnes analphabètes [...]** parce que c'est la base ici au Maroc. C'est quand tu apprends l'anglais que tu deviens quelqu'un d'exceptionnel.

OG: Furthermore, Hassan II the former king of Morocco said that today, people who only speak **two languages are basically illiterate [...]** because that's the base here in Morocco. It's when you learn English that you become someone exceptional. (OG, 4/4/15)

MB: [...] Puisque déjà apprendre une langue c'est surtout **être introduit à une nouvelle culture,** ce qui veut dire que c'est une richesse, ce n'est pas un fardeau, et enfin **personnellement je vois pas le français comme un fardeau.**

MB: [...] Because firstly learning a language is above all **being introduced to a new culture,** which means that it's a benefit, it is not a burden, and **personally I don't see French as a burden.** (MB, 22/4/15)

SA: [...] C'est une question assez dure parce que **je n'aime pas le système français et je suis pas trop fan de la France** en général mais je dois avouer que avoir le français m'aide beaucoup au Maroc. **J'aime bien la langue.**

SA: [...] It's a tough question because **I don't like the French system, and I'm not too much of a fan of France** in general but I have to admit that French helps me a lot in Morocco. **I really like the language.** (SA, 22/4/15)

III. CONGRUENT

AE: Il y a une espèce de **crises d'identité chez les jeunes ici au Maroc.** Parfois on oublie nos racines, nous nous sentons plus français que marocain. Moi aussi je l'oublie, de temps en temps **je me considère comme étant français autant que marocain.**

AE: There's a type of **identity crisis for the youth of Morocco here.** Sometimes we forget our roots, we feel more French than Moroccan. I do too, I forget it, **sometimes I consider myself just as French as Moroccan.** (AE, 8/4/15)

Interviewer: Et les langues, elles s'utilisent une moitié arabe ou une moitié français, une pourcentage comme cela?

MB: Ouais, ben en fait, quoique tu dises, **Je ne ferais pas une grosse différence là-dessus** puisque des fois mêmes un par un je peux utiliser dans **une même phrase l'arabe et le français au même temps.**

Interviewer: And your languages, you use fifty percent French and fifty percent Arabic?

MB: Yeah, well in fact, concerning what you say, **I wouldn't make such a distinction there** because sometimes even in the same phrase I use French and Arabic one after the other at the same time. (MB, 22/4/15)