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The Effect of Attitudes towards Language  
Use and Stereotypical Concepts among  
F/EFL Learners in Tlemcen University  

Thesis Submitted to the Department of English  
in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctorate in Sociolinguistics  

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Abstract

This study examines learners’ language attitudes through survey data. The attitudes of engineering students of Superior Schools towards French and English for specific purposes are questionable. Their stereotypes related to the dialect, national languages as well as the foreign languages can be associated with the attitudinal data. Language selection in different situations is expected to be influenced, accordingly. Questionnaires and interviews were used to elicit information that revealed an ambivalence of judgments which was confirmed as the mother tongue was stigmatized. Yet, the regional identity and loyalty were asserted by all informants. An important issue about prestige came about when it was related to foreign language instruction, mainly English. Language learning has proved to be influential. Thus, Standard Arabic as well as the foreign languages are judged favourably. The process of language standardization and language planning seem to have influenced the aspects that the informants would like to promote.

In an effort to uncover male/female parameters, it was admitted that the differences were not noticeable. The influence of the purpose in goal, i.e. either sciences and techniques branch or economics and management one, was indeed noticed as it was found out that there were differences between groups. It was discovered that the prominence of a foreign language can have a positive impact as French and English were considered favourably. Moreover, positive stereotypes were associated with foreign language speakers. Traits related to high status, intelligence and likeability were revealed. Hence, the present research has revealed that instrumental motivation is related to foreign language willingness to communicate, mainly in class. The prestige criterion was remarkable among girls as well as boys. Nonetheless, female students of both branches assigned prestigious features to foreign languages, mainly. This is in perfect conformity with patterns of language use in other language communities investigated for gender differentiation.

The case of Tamazight that was recognized by the government as a national and an official language was examined. The external level, that is, the political doctrine influenced to a certain extent the attitudes of the learners of both branches. It was found out that students could be more tolerant to a newly standardized variety.

Language learning fostered positive opinions as the medium of instruction was selected in various activities. Thus, the differences between groups were remarkable. As far as language selection in speech situation was concerned, language shift in accordance with language learning increasingly affected the informants’ competence. It was pointed out that the learning of French had its impact on ESP learners of sciences and techniques in different activities. Moreover, Algerian Arabic and Standard Arabic were used by students of economics and management, mainly.