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Linguistic Landscape and Language Ideology: A Multimodal Analysis of Government Websites in Morocco.

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Government Websites in Morocco.**

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1

Abstract:

Moroccan society has long been a multicultural society. It is characterized by linguistic complexity due to the variety of languages spoken in the region and the power relationship among languages used in politics, education, science, government...etc. The constitution names both Arabic language and Tamazight language as the co-official languages of the country, whereas French is still seen as a dominant language in the public sectors such as: higher education, banking, commerce, science, industry, policy and government affairs. In this paper, I examine the multifaceted use of language and the language choice in the virtual public sphere in Morocco and how this functions to express power-relations and ideology. Through the study of 31 government's official websites discourse, I will examine how language choice, the use of particular linguistic features, and the deletion of others are used to express an ideological and political orientation that arguably contradicts the Moroccan constitution's guidelines regarding the multilingualism of the country.

Acknowledgments

Linguistic Landscape and Language Ideology: A Multimodal Analysis of Government Websites in Morocco.

2

Table of Contents

Introduction

Moroccan society has long been a multicultural society. It is characterized by linguistic complexity due to the variety of languages spoken in the region and the power relationship among languages used in politics, education, science, government...etc. The constitution names both Arabic and Tamazight as co-official languages, whereas French is still the dominant language in administration, banking, commerce, education, industry, policy and government.

In this paper, I examine the use of different languages in the virtual public sphere in Morocco and how this functions to express power-relations and ideology. Through the study of 31 government's official websites discourse, I will examine how language choice, the use of particular linguistic features, and the deletion of others are used to express an ideological and political orientation that arguably contradicts the Moroccan constitution's guidelines regarding the multilingualism of the country.

Purpose Statement:

The purpose of this study is to examine the virtual linguistic landscape in the Moroccan government websites and look at how the language choice and other semiotic features reveals specific ideological and political agenda. To unpack this multimodal data, I will use different methodologies from the fields of Linguistic Landscapes, Social Semiotics and Multimodal Textual Analysis.

Research Questions

The central research question for this study is: What is the relationship between language, ideology, and power in the Moroccan government websites? And from this central question, another sub-question was emerged: to what extent the government websites' language choice agree or disagree with the language landscape stated in the constitution?

Literature Review

To analyze and understand the linguistic cyberspace in its relationship to power, ideology and inequality, I will use different elements from social semiotics (SS), linguistic landscape (LL) theory and Multimodal Textual Analysis (MTA). Here is brief overview of the scholarly perspectives and the research lens used in this paper. Linguistic Landscape (LL) as Ivković (2007) explained "is primarily a sociolinguistic concept and refers to overall signage in multiple languages in a specific geographical area." Also, it gives important information about language, power relationships, sociolinguistic and the socio-political sphere of specific geographical context. On the one and, "The linguistic landscape can provide important insights and a different perspective on our knowledge about language." (Gorter & Cenoz, 2008, p.343). On the other hand, it "is used to characterize and analyze multilingual signage in public spaces and its role in defining the socio-political and sociolinguistic character of a given territory" (Backhaus, 2007; Gorter, 2006; Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Shohamy, 2006; Spolsky & Cooper, 1991). And according to Thomas (1999), "the analysis of language can provide insights into how that mediation can affect the representation of people, places and events." (56).

As far as the corpus of this paper is mainly collected from the websites, I will use the concept linguistic cyberspace (LC) or the Virtual Linguistic Landscape (VLL) interchangeably. These technical terms have been used already in literature to refer to the same type of content that we are working on here. According to Ivković (2007), "I argue that the linguistic landscape of virtual space, which I call linguistic cyberscape (LC), is grounded in the concept of inter-linguistic and intercultural relations within a shared, physically defined space that is in sociolinguistic literature commonly referred to as LL." Also, he recommended that "LC should be viewed as a specific instance of LL." Regarding VLL Ivkovic & Lotherington (2009) states that "The VLL describes the linguistic cyberscape just as the LL describes the linguistic cityscape. In this way, the VLL functions as an identity marker, providing choice in textual access and expression." (p.18). The digital world is based on the physical world that it represents and adresses and the different languages that are used in the virtual linguistic landscape are grounded on the languages present in the physical world. In the same point Ivkovic & Lotherington (2009) say "Analogously, the presence of different languages and their interaction in virtual space in many ways reflects the functions of LL in the tangible world." Furthermore, Ivkovic (2012) has explained the concept of LC as a metaphor in itself. He said, "LC functions as a conceptual metaphor built on a source domain of physical, delineated space with the majority of the terms for virtual space phenomena construed through ontological ('virus', 'page'), or epistemic metaphors ('searching',' surfing').

Also, there are other different semiotic tools that can be of great importance in the analysis of this data. According to Van Leeuwen semiotics can help to "investigate how these resources are used in specific historical, cultural and institutional contexts, and how people talk about them in these contexts – plan them, teach them, justify them, critique them, etc." (3)

Language Landscape in Morocco

Morocco is a multilingual country. Different languages are spoken out there in different contexts, for different purposes, and in different ways in the public sphere. The Languages that people speak in Morocco today are: Moroccan Arabic, Tamazight, Standard Arabic, French, and Spanish. Every language has its different status in the society which make the multilingualism in this context marked by complexity. Among the languages, Moroccan Arabic is the variety that is widely spoken in the country. It is the language of the daily life activities, home, and street. But it has never been a medium of instruction in classrooms. Tamazight is the language of the indigenous people of Morocco. It is spoken by around half of Moroccans. And it was recently codified, standardized, became an official language in the constitution and gradually implemented in the educational system. Standard Arabic is the first language that students study in schools. It is an official language of the country and the language of formal situations, conferences, and religious practices. French is spoken by around sixty percent of Moroccans. It was exposed to country by the French colonization (1921-1956), and still dominating different

sectors of the public life of society such as: economy, finance, industry, and science in general. And it is aligned principally with the upper social classes and the elite.

Data collection

This study has been a great opportunity for me to dig deep into the virtual linguistic landscape of Morocco, review literature related to the subject and analyze the language and power relationships.

The data of this paper is principally collected through navigating the official websites of Moroccan government and analyzing them using mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods.

I located the main 31 official websites (see appendix 2) that represent the government's official discourse to the public. I looked at the multilingual discourse and analyzed it. I counted the different languages used in the webpages, the language of the front pages by default, and categorized the websites according to the language choice. Also, I compared some translations to see the effect of power and ideology on the language choice and the message. Moreover, I related the findings of this paper to its broader historical and cultural context as well as to the literature body of the LL field. As far as the Country's constitution has a detailed Article about the language landscape of Morocco, I made a reference to the article 5 of the Moroccan constitution as a consensual legal background of the official linguistic landscape of government and people.

Findings and Discussion

By analyzing the language choice of the front pages of the 31 official websites, I concluded that 67.74 % are use Arabic in the front page by default, whereas 32.26% are in French *(see Figures 1 & 2 below).* Tamazight language is not used in any of the front-page websites even if it is an official language in the constitution since 2011*(See Appendix 1: Article 5 of the Constitution).*

The presence of French as the language of the front page in more than the third of the country's official websites, even if it is not an official language, raises legitimate questions about the reasons behind this controversial linguistic choice. This case is not only restricted to the linguistic cyberscape but also to the society's linguistic landscape, even in higher levels. According to Marley (2004), "Despite its lack of official status it continues to be important in a number of domains, such as commerce and finance, science and technology, and the media." The source domain of French dates back to the "France's establishment of a protectorate in Morocco in 1912 produced linguistic consequences that remain today." (Bullock 2014). But, more importantly is that the language choice reveals power and ideology dynamism of those who speak it in the multilingual society. Bielsa & O'Donnell say "In one sense, the word 'power'…refers to the power of dominant institutions within our society, and how these institutions maintain their dominance through the use of language: media (newspapers, television), advertising, etc." (P.1)

Figure 3 shows all the translations available in the websites. There are 5 different languages in total. French, par excellence, has the highest percentage. It covers 96.77% of the content followed by Arabic 93.55%. Then, English version covers 51.61%, Spanish in the fourth place covers 16.13%, and Tamazight covers only 6.45%of the overall websites content. These

findings draw a clear picture of the virtual linguistic landscape and its hierarchical structure as it is presented (top-down) by the official sources. Generally, VLL is itself a considered a metaphor of the physical world's LL. According to Maglio and Matlock (1998) (as cited in Ivkovic & Lotherington, 2009). "There are important similarities between real and virtual domains, signaled by these metaphors, and, consequently, between the physical and VLL." And this makes the physical and virtual words have interchangeable influence. Moreover, Ivkovic & Lotherington (2009) state that "Metaphorical transfer of meaning from real to virtual contexts raises essential questions as to what extent our perception of virtual space is influenced by our embodied experience in the physical world."

The French dominance in many sectors of the Moroccan linguistic landscape, which I will discuss below in details, is considered a postcolonial continuum of the colonial ideology that benefits those who elite who replaced the colonizers power position after the independence. This is because back than in the colonial period 1912-1956 "knowledge of French was essential to obtaining and maintaining power. French was established as superior while Arabic language and Berber as inferior. This supremacy was part of the broader ideology of the French colonialism. The Francophone policy, which has been continued by postcolonial governments created a two-sided country with often contradictory ideological and political orientations." (Youssi, 1995). Also, as cited in Bullock (2014) "Members of the Moroccan elite play the role of 'ideology brokers' (Jaffe, 1999), whose linguistic practices, language attitudes, and ascription to the ideology of modernity serve to reinforce a system of privileges, class structure, and lines of power on the basis of linguistic segregation" (Chakrani, 2013, p.431). French still has this a high status in Morocco and considered by many people as the language of openness to the international sphere; however, lots of people are "wondering whether French is efficient as a viable linguistic medium for openness to the international scene and the global culture of the present time. This question derives from the fact that French is increasingly marginalized on the international scene and progressively on the Francophone scene itself, namely in the domains of finance, marketing, and scientific and technological research." Boukous (2016).

Regarding English language, it is covers 51.61 % of the websites content because of its international status. This makes it the fastest growing language in Morocco. According to Ennaji (2002), "In Morocco, English is increasingly popular in the fields of education, international trade, and scientific research: (6). Thus, there is "a growing competition between French and English." And English obviously "enjoys a prestigious status in Morocco because it is believed to carry no colonial overtones" (Ennaji, 2005, p.16). Furthermore, Fried (2015) claimed that "English is quickly replacing French as Morocco's second language, both among educators and politicians."

Spanish, in contrast, covers only 16.13 % of the websites discourse because of many reasons. According to Bullock (2014), "Spanish has not been retained in Morocco to nearly the same degree that French has been. In Morocco's postcolonial linguistic climate, Spanish has declined to the status of minor foreign language." (p.77). Also, Zouhir (2013) stated that "Spanish did not have a linguistic impact on the Moroccan linguistic situation as French."

Linguistic Landscape and Language Ideology: A Multimodal Analysis of Government Websites in Morocco.

7

Tamazight language has the lowest percentage (6.45 %) among the translations provided in websites discourse. Only two websites (Ministry of Education and Ministry of Culture) contain Tamazight translation of the content. Before it became an official language in 2011 constitution, "The Tamazight language has been banned from the institutional framework of Morocco including the legal, political, and educational systems although some positive developments have occurred recently." (Fischer 2017). Now, Tamazight has been under a Revitalization process and implementation in education; however, there is still a long way to go. According to Boukous, (2016). There is still responsible "need for the State, strategists and political scientists, to give it the attention it deserves because it could well be the scene of political and socio-economic aspects that go beyond cultural and linguistic aspects." (pp. 70-71)

Language and inequality

To go further and in the analysis, let's take a closer look at the websites that have French as the front page by default to see if they have any common ground. The findings stated that most of those websites French as the front page are related to finance, money (e.g. Ministries of Economy and Finance, Industry, Tourism, Energy, Agriculture, and Housing). French as a linguistic choice in this context reflect a systematic ideological discourse meant to address the upper social class and generally the elite of the society. Even if the discourse is made by public institutions, it does not seem to equally address all segments of the society. According to Thomas (1999), "these choices are part of the process of representation in discourse." (p.59). And according to Mar-Molinero (2000) as cited in Achugar (2008), "The value of a language always goes hand in hand with the social status of the communities that use it." The same situation has happened in several places in the world as cited in Bullock (2014), "the case of diglossia that Calvet describes in Tanzania, Mali, and Senegal parallels that of Morocco, where "access to power depends on mastery of the official language inherited from colonialism," (Calvet, 1998).

This institutional inequality that is embedded in the language choice in the virtual world is a metaphor based on the deeply rooted inequality in the physical world. The way French is being used in Morocco hinders different types of inequalities. The following example shows another type.

(Screenshot 1) is a screenshot of the front-page of the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism. If we compare the multimodal discourse it contains with the *Screenshot 2* and *Screenshot 3*, we can clearly see the semiotic difference between the three different translations. Even if a person may not know any of the three languages, they can see the difference, at least in term of the visual features. In the top-left part of the screenshots there is this big headline named 'Featured' (in the English version). And three featured headlines accompanied with three pictures just in the middle of the pages. Regarding the French version, the two images show the graduation hats. And the third image looks like a collage brochure. It has students of different backgrounds in educational contexts, some of them sitting and some of them standing in a library holding books in their hands. The headlines beneath these images are about scholarships announcements for graduate studies in tourism, in addition to two lists of admitted
students to the masters of tourism. Moreover, these scholarships are state funded scholarships. One the other hand, *Screenshots 2 and 3,* which are supposed to be the Arabic and English translations

of the same content of the **Screenshot 1**, are

completely different in term 'Featured' section of the page**.** The Arabic and English versions of the same official website have featured completely different discourse. It announces: "Revitalizing the bilateral cooperation between Morocco and Hungary", "First meeting between the Minister of Tourism, the Secretary of State for Tourism, and the professionals" and "The cancelation of nominations for responsibility positions in the central administration and tourism training institutions". The three main pictures In the Arabic and English versions are of course related to the announcements (see *Screenshot 2* and *Screenshot 3* above) and are not the same as the French version which make sense.

I conclude that the semiotic features of the discourse being analyzed have double standards when it comes to the language choice. According to Kroskrity (2000) as cited in Mariana Achugar. "Language ideologies represent the views of language constructed to serve the interests of a particular group." In the same context Dijk (1993) states that "the leading elites in politics, the media, scholarship, education, corporate business, and many other domains control the access to valued social resources and privileges, and thus are mainly responsible for inequality between majority and minority groups." This is obviously a good explanation to the findings of our elite discourse. Dijk Also argued that "elite discourse is one of the important means that establishes, enacts, maintains, expresses, and legitimates such dominance. Indeed, the power of elites is also defined by their privileged access to various forms of public discourse."

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. Firstly, the time constrains if compared with the amount of multimodal data collected from the 31 websites. Secondly, the large amount of literature related to Linguistic Landscape and research conducted in other geographical contexts. Thirdly, the wide variety of multimodal analysis tools, Social Semiotics features, and Linguistic Landscape approaches that could be used, too, to deeply unpack the discourse from various perspectives. Fourthly, the absence of a one official list of the government websites; Though, I collected the main websites I could reach to at this moment which is 31 websites.

Conclusion

As Boukous (2016) said, "the particular sociolinguistic situation prevailing in Morocco is marked by dynamics which brings the different languages into interaction. The language market is stratified according to the following format: an ex-colonial, super-central language (French) > a central language (Arabic) > a national coined (Colloquial Arabic) > a local language (Amazigh)." (p.67). This study concluded that the ideology and power affect in various ways the language choice in the multilingual contexts. And the competitiveness between powers between languages in a diverse society is very dynamic because it interacts with the sociopolitical and geopolitical contexts that surrounds it. Also, a language that has a higher status in a multilingual society is usually supported a political agenda or economic power. This widespread state results in equal access to power among the members of the same society who differ in terms of the language fluency. Furthermore,

it was observed that even if a language may not be official, like the state of French in Morocco, it may be a distinctive feature in having access to political or economy power.

Finally, Moroccan Multilingualism is complex. And dealing with this kind of language diversity is challenging. It should be approached by sociolinguistic research-based language policy that goes bottom-top not the opposite in order to represent the real identity of its community. However, Boukous (2016) stated that "the State policy may be authoritarian, efficient, or merely ideological and platonic. A non-authoritarian and efficient policy is one that meets the requirements of democracy and equity, i.e. a consensual policy formulated at the constitutional level and implemented at the institutional and operational ones." (See Weinstein, 1990).

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Linguistic Landscape and Language Ideology: A Multimodal Analysis of Government Websites in Morocco.
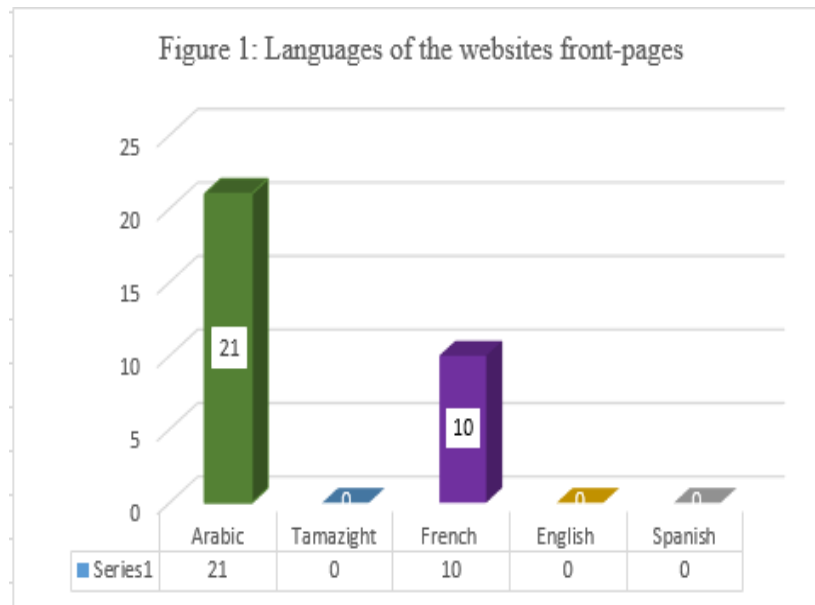
12

Appendixes:

Appendix 1: Figures
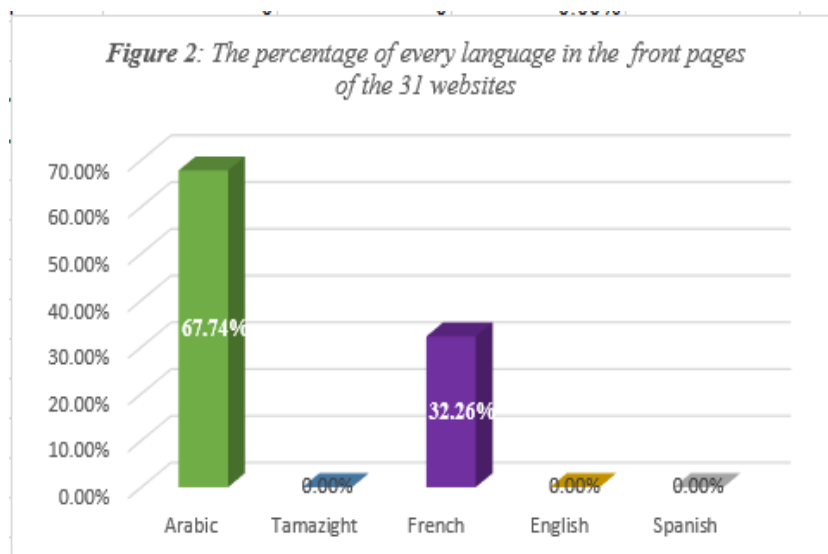

Figure 1: Language of the website's front-pages

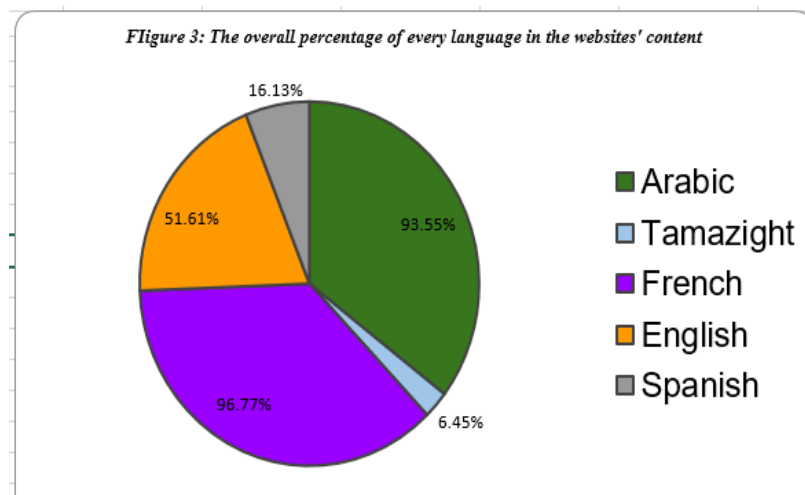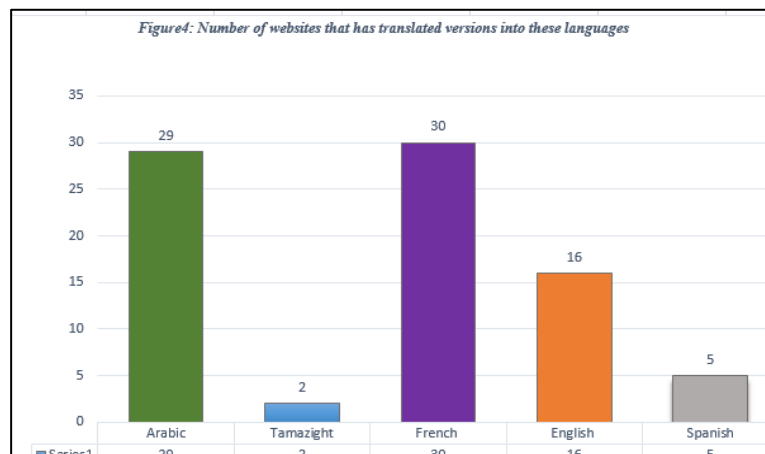*Figure 2: The percentages of everylanguage on the front pages of 31 gov website*
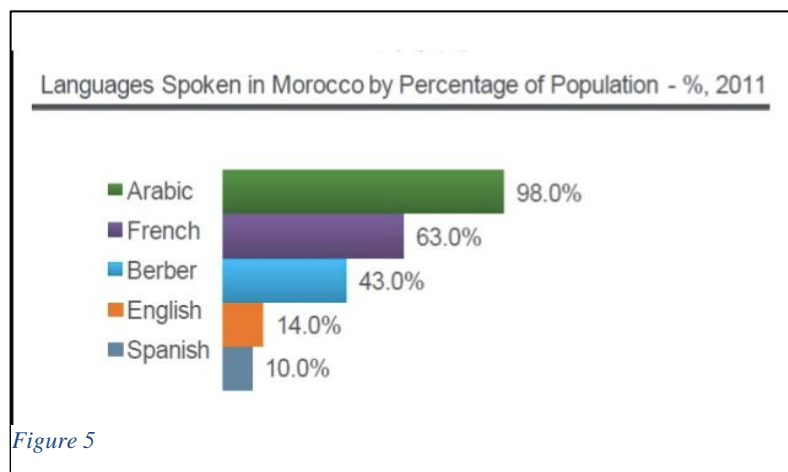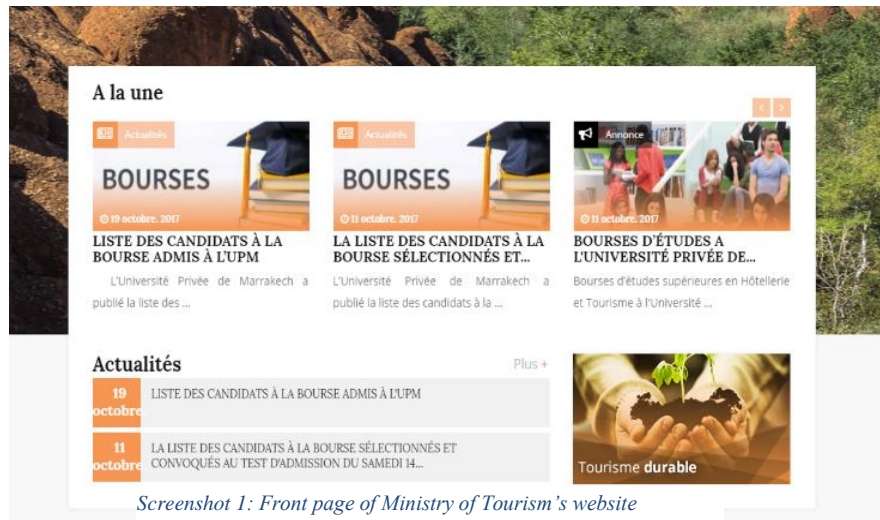
Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Appendix 2: A Screenshots

Linguistic Landscape and Language Ideology: A Multimodal Analysis of Government Websites in Morocco.

14

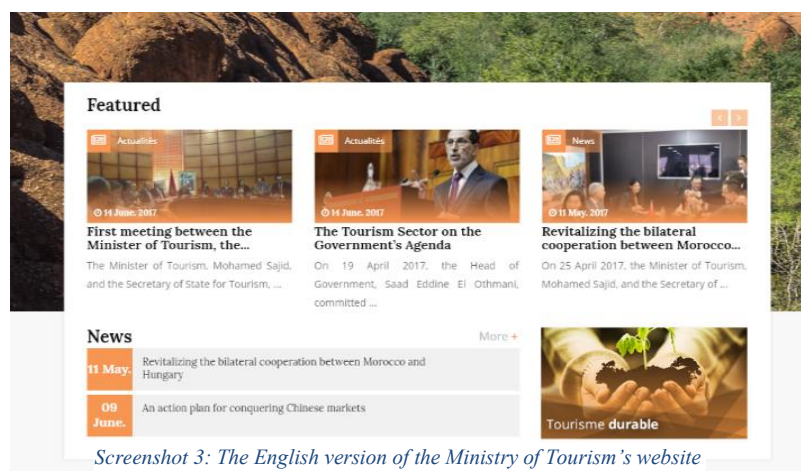*Screenshot 1: Front page of Ministry of Tourism's website*
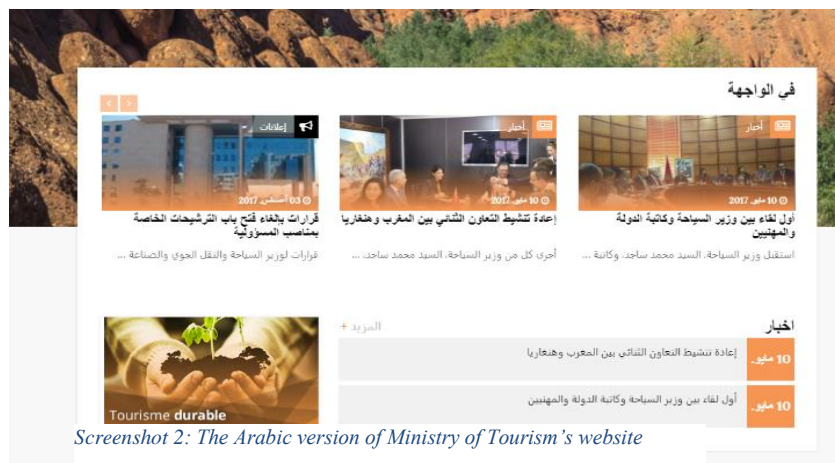
Screenshot 2: The Arabic version of Ministry of Tourism's website

Screenshot 3: The English version of the Ministry of Tourism's website

Appendix 3 : Article 5 of the Moroccan constitution

"Protection of language use Arabic is [demeure] the official language of the State. The State works for the protection and for the development of the Arabic language, as well as the promotion of its use. Likewise, Tamazight [Berber/amazighe] constitutes an official language of the State, being common patrimony of all Moroccans without exception an organic law defines the process of implementation of the official character of this language, as well as the modalities of its integration into teaching and into the priority domains of public life, so that it may be permitted in time to fulfill its function as an official language. • Integration of ethnic communities The State works for the preservation of Hassani, as an integral component of the Moroccan cultural unity, as well as the protection of the speakers [of it] and of the practical cultural expression of Morocco. Likewise, it sees to the coherence of linguistic policy and national culture and to the learning and mastery of the foreign languages of greatest use in the world, as tools of communication, of integration and of interaction [by which] society [may] know, and to be open to different cultures and to contemporary civilizations. • Right to culture A National Council of Languages and of Moroccan Culture [Conseil national des langues et de la culture marocaine] is created, charged with [,] notably [,] the protection and the development of the Arabic and Tamazight languages and of the diverse Moroccan cultural expressions, which constitute one authentic patrimony and one source of contemporary inspiration. It brings together the institutions concerned in these domains. An organic law determines its attributions, composition and the modalities of [its] functioning."

Appendix 4: Web address of the websites used as data of this paper

Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training, Morocco

http://www.men.gov.ma/Ar/Pages/Accueil.aspx

Ministry of health, Morocco

http://www.sante.gov.ma/Pages/Accueil.aspx

Ministry of culture c and communication, Morocco

http://www.minculture.gov.ma/

Ministry of Tourism, Morocco

http://www.tourisme.gov.ma/

Ministry of Economy and Finance, Morocco
https://www.finances.gov.ma/fr/SitePages/Home.aspx

Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Handicraft, Morocco
http://www.mcinet.gov.ma/~mcinetgov/fr

Linguistic Landscape and Language Ideology: A Multimodal Analysis of Government Websites in Morocco.

16

Ministry of Public Works, Morocco

http://www.mtpnet.gov.ma/

Ministry of Justice, Morocco

http://www.justice.gov.ma/

Ministry of Energy and Mining, Morocco

http://www.mem.gov.ma/SitePages/Default.aspx

National Human Rights Council, Morocco

http://www.cndh.org.ma/an

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Morocco

https://www.diplomatie.ma

Ministry of Communications, Morocco

http://www.mincom.gov.ma/

Ministry of the Modernization of the Public Sector, Morocco

http://www.mmsp.gov.ma/

Ministry of Culture, Morocco

http://www.minculture.gov.ma/

Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Morocco

http://www.habous.gov.ma/

Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Morocco

http://www.agriculture.gov.ma/

Ministry of Housing and Town Planning, Morocco

http://www.mhuae.gov.ma/

Ministry of Education, Higher Education & Scientific Research, Morocco

http://www.men.gov.ma/Ar/Pages/Accueil.aspx

Agricultural Development Agency

http://ada.gov.ma/