

Language Barriers on African Nationals in Morocco

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Abstract:

Morocco has become a destination for many African people over the last few years. So, thousands of African nationals have arrived in Morocco, both to settle and create a social life or to prepare for migration to Europe. Obviously, the issue of language barriers is a problem for those foreigners. One of the major obstacles foreigners face in Moroccan every day life is the issue of communication. The language barrier is the most remarkable obstacle since it prevents to communicate with others, which is indispensable in day -to- day life. It might generate obstacles for national Africans, such as applying for a job, pursuing studies, obtaining medical treatment, acquiring housing, and generally surviving. With an increase in foreign mobility to Morocco, adaptation challenges and issues have become more common. Adaptation to a new culture occurs on a variety of levels, including social, psychological, academic, and environmental. Adapting properly to a new culture is critical for social and academic success. Adapting to a new culture and way of life, on the other hand, has never been easy. The present investigation is to highlight the various challenges faced by African nationals with language barrier.

Keywords: African migrants ; Communication; Language barriers; Life style; satisfaction.

1. Introduction

Human communication is a social interaction process. It is an essential part of our daily life. It is a process of creating, exchanging, sharing ideas, information, opinions, facts, feelings, and experiences between humans. The language barriers have long been recognized as a cause of miscommunication. Communication technology has brought the world closer together in a global village, including language barriers.

Morocco is situated at the crossroads of North Africa and Europe, and as a result of its geographical location, the increase in the number of African students studying at Moroccan universities, as the Department of Higher Education and Scientific Research launched the merit-based Scholarship Program ‘Moroccan Scholarships for African Youth’ benefiting students from African countries, for the academic year 2021-2022. The Scholarships ‘includes 303 merit-based scholarships in 119 fields of study, in the form of full tuition and fee waivers, in courses of study, in addition to social benefits. Several universities are participating in the 1st edition of the said Program notably, the Euro-Mediterranean University of Fez (60 scholarships), Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane (40 scholarships), International University of Agadir-Universiapolis (38 scholarships), Mohammed VI Polytechnic University of Benguerir (30 scholarships), Mohammed VI University of Health Sciences of Casablanca (25 scholarships), Abulcasis International University of Health Sciences of Rabat (20 scholarships),

International University of Casablanca (20 scholarships), International University of Rabat (20 scholarships), Private University of Fez (20 scholarships), Private University of Marrakech (20 scholarships) and Mundiapolis University of Casablanca (10 scholarships), the same source added.' (Merit-based-scholarships-program).

The improved foreign relations of Moroccan economic activity, international partnerships with Europe, USA and other countries, Morocco has become home to a diverse range of cultures and civilizations. This degree of effort and cooperation has regularly propelled Morocco to the forefront of discussions, which has increased interest in Arabic as a foreign language acquisition. Since the 1990s Morocco's role changed as it became a transit country for irregular migrants traveling from sub-Saharan and West Africa on their way to Europe.

According to the High Commission for Planning (HCP), three out of five African migrants are men (59.3%). The rate of feminization migrants is 40.7%. This rate reaches its highest level among migrants originating from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with 53.8%, from the Côte d'Ivoire (53.6%), and the lowest among those of Guinea (27.6%), Mali (29.9%) and Central African Republic (32.8%). The other countries are in an intermediate situation.

'The crackdown began in June and intensified in late July, after at least 600 migrants successfully crossed to the Spanish enclave of Ceuta in northern Morocco'. (Alami, Aida. 2018). The European Union and those EU Member States most affected by this migration, notably France and Spain, put increasing pressure on Morocco to limit maritime departures and secure its own borders.

The language barrier is the most significant obstacle since it impairs one's capacity to communicate with others, which is necessary for survival. 'Language barriers are, as everyone knows, an important obstacle to transcultural communication.' (Cohen & Cooper, 1986, p. 534). It might generate difficulties for national Africans, such as applying for a job, pursuing studies, obtaining medical treatment, acquiring housing, and generally surviving. In the 1990s, Morocco has become increasingly popular as a transit country for sub-Saharan Africans. Morocco has been attracting an increasing number of African migrants seeking to work or create a social life in the country over the last few years. Obviously, like with any country, there are some problems that African migrants may face in Moroccan life due to cultural differences. While these problems are not unique to Morocco and there may be obstacles to overcome, Moroccan life continues to adhere to international norms. One of the most significant obstacles African people face in Moroccan daily life is the issue of communication. While it is widely accepted that knowledge of English is critical for Moroccan citizens in school, trade and industry, many people struggle with the language and are unable to communicate successfully. While many people speak English fluently at worldwide companies, operating in a country where no one knows or speaks English will provide a significant obstacle. Thus, communication difficulties vary according to where you are, but if you wish to study or work in Morocco and intend to stay for a long period of time, it is preferable that you learn Arabic. Apart from employment, in daily life, on the street, in a restaurant, or at a cafe, those African migrants will encounter Moroccans, and they need learning Arabic to communicate. The present investigation is significant because of the various challenges faced by the African migrants with language barrier.

2. Review of Literature

‘The objective of finding common purpose through mutually coordinated communication across cultures and languages continues to be a goal of many if not most people, organizations, and nations.’ (Brian H. Spitzberg and Gabrielle Changnon, 2009, p.2.). Morocco’s students is made up of Moroccans and foreign nationals. Therefore, Moroccan universities, institutes and schools not only acknowledge immigrant students but also implement teaching practices that match their needs. Previous studies have shown that the challenges immigrant students encounter significantly affect their academic success. Difficulties faced in spoken language may not be the only obstacle in terms of language barriers. Understanding written materials, completing paperwork, and problems experienced with the use of interpreters are also important obstacles African migrants may face. In connection with this view, language barriers to successful communication fall into two broad categories : « One type of barrier relates to a situation in which one immigrant, is not yet fluent in the mother language of the host country, and thus misinterprets the message due to difficulties in understanding accent, pronunciation, choice of vocabulary or grammar » (Gudykunst 2004: 29). The second type of barrier is identified at the discourse level, « that of cultural regularities and conventions relating to appropriate communication such as the use of greetings, orders, requests or apologies » (Scollon et al. 2012). Both types of barriers may lead to misunderstanding and damaged social relations. Language facilitates social cohesion among different group members . Thus immigrants not fluent in the host country language may feel not at ease when speaking native language. This may alienate them.

Adequate Arabic proficiency is crucial for academic success in university programs. The ability to read texts, understand lectures, participate in class discussions, sit exams and write assignments demands a significant level of skill in academic and communicative Arabic. Academic success of international students depends on how skill fully they use academic language in their studies. The mastery of academic language is regarded as one of the most important factors that distinguish successful students from unsuccessful ones. Thus, academic achievement, as we currently measure it, is the appropriate demonstration of learning by the student within the educational context. The entire social complex of learning and academic achievement takes place using language as the primary interactional vehicle. As Bailey puts it « students must learn norms for presenting information to the teacher so that the teacher can successfully monitor their learning » (Bailey, 2007, p. 10).

It is clear from the extent of the above literature it can be said that inefficacy of mother language may impact social, cultural, educational and health lives of foreign nationals in large extent.

3. Methodology

The present study has tried to understand and analyse challenges faced by the African nationals in Morocco due to a lack of Arabic and dialect language proficiency. The conducted among ninety six African immigrants with various status as students, working professionals, tourists and entrepreneurs by using a question pool. The survey was divided into different sections, questions pertaining to their nationality, mother tongue, occupational status, education level and level of Arabic proficiency.

4. Result and Discussion

The present study has tried to assess the specific problems caused by language barriers, challenges

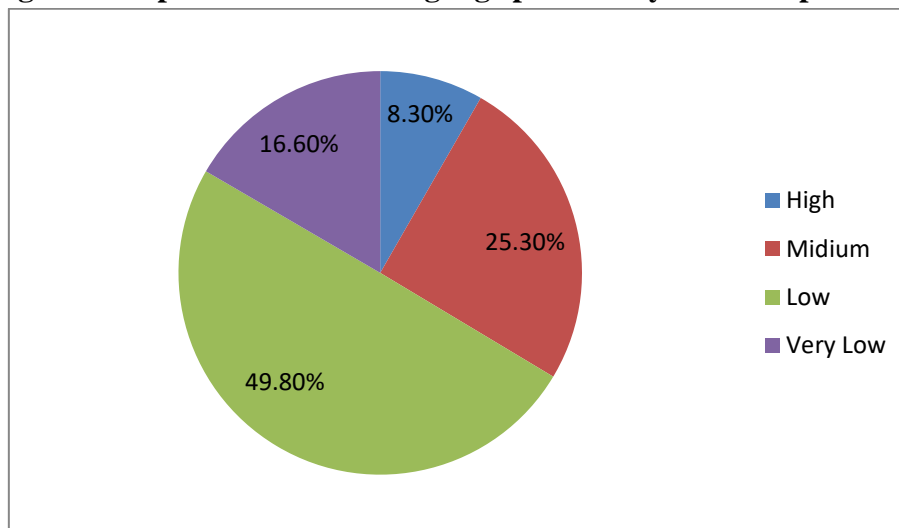
faced, and used strategies to overcome relating to their language barrier. The social profile of respondents is shown in the following table 1.

Table1 :

Particulars	Items	Percentage
Gender	Male	54.3
	Female	45.7
Marital Status	Married	37.4
	Unmarried	53.1
	Other	9.5
Occupation	Student	43.1
	Academician	18.3
	Entrepreneurs	23.5
	Other	15.1
Purpose of Residence	Student	43.1
	Working Professional	39.3
	Tourists	17.6
Mother Tongue	English	19.1
	French	42.8
	Other	38.1

Social profile of the African nationals in the study has revealed that 54.3% of them are male and among them 45.7% were females. Majority of the respondents (53.1%) were unmarried and 37.4% of the respondents were married. The study has further shown that among them 43.1% were students, 18.3% of them were academicians, 23.5% of them were entrepreneurs and 15.1% were being part of other sector jobs like tourism and hospitality. The classified respondents on their mother’s basis tongue, which revealed that 42.8% of them from French speaking African countries, 19.1% answered that English is their mother tongue, and 38.1% of the respondents were from other Arab and African countries.

Figure 1. Represents Arabic language proficiency of the respondents.



The study has shown that 49.80% percent of the respondents had very low level of Arabic language proficiency and 25.3% of them had medium level and 16.60% had very low level. The result has revealed that, the African nationals in Morocco are facing language barrier due to lack of Arabic and Dialect language proficiency.

Most respondents have revealed the difficulties due to lack of Arabic language proficiency especially Moroccan dialect in their day today lives while purchasing food from street shops, dealing with local markets and even they face difficulty while get around the city or making phone calls. They have difficulty communicating with experts such as lawyers, doctors, and local government bodies when asking for official documents because they do not want to make a mistake when conversing with them so as not to be misinterpreted. Several respondents have stated that they struggle with pronunciation, comprehending what others are saying, and organizing their thoughts. Very few of the respondents have indicated that they require assistance from a memeber of their community or a translator, especially to communicate with health care professionals. Shame and hesitation were the most frequently expressed emotion due to language barrier with natives. Other adjectives used to describe their feelings included frustrated, feeling like a child acquiring his language, stressed, lost, challenged, lonely, afraid, using their hands to communicate, negative body language from the person speaking to (which makes them want to shut down), sad, nervous, angry, useless, powerless and depressed. Moreover, they are restricted and uneasy in the presence of native speakers. And felt inconvenient in their way of life. They have a sense of helplessness, depression and anxiety. Among the several difficulties individuals have faced, the inability to interact freely has been the most frequently cited difficulties, followed by a lack of privacy and freedom to communicate effectively with others. They have claimed that life would be more easy if they could use Arabic language or Moroccan dialect fluently. They can attend colleges and universities fruitfully, watch movies without subtitles, and easily read the newspaper. Others expressed a desire for a private tutor, Arabic for non native speakers courses, and access to the world's greatest publications. Several individuals expressed a desire for an translator or interpreter.

5. Conclusion

The central question is whether the language barrier is a social issue (inadequate support for immigrants and outsiders), an individual issue (how much effort do learners of Arabic language put into their language studies), or is it not a problem nor an issue at all; it is simply the way life is. In a global world, all newcomers would have their own professional interpreters or translators, rather than untrained family members. However, overcoming linguistic barriers requires a two-way street. Language learners might forget about their objective of fluency and instead concentrate on what is more urgent. The language barrier and its effects on African immigrants speech in order to become functional in the language. Language learning is a never-ending process, and they have the remainder of their lives to achieve fluency. Native speakers, by the way they speak, might contribute to language difficulties. Thus, if native speakers communicate slowly and clearly, checking to ensure that the person with whom they are talking understands what they have said, avoiding idioms, Moroccan dialect, and most importantly, being patient, they can significantly reduce the impact of langaue barriers on those African or other Nationals staying in Morocco.

6. Limitation of the Study

The study was restricted to a particular community of African Nationals. Respondents may not be a precise representation since the think about was based on respondents living in Fez-Meknes Region. However, it ought to be emphasized that the bigger the test estimate, the more responses come. In addition, time limitation was another impediment of the survey.

7. Suggestions for Future Research

As in the above section of limitation which has being presented all the objectives and the study which should be overcome. Moving on other regions of Morocco may make this paper more rich in data collection which will expand more content on the present study.

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