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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **Navigating Multilingualism among Moroccan Diaspora Communities in Europe**

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**ABSTRACT**

Multilingualism has become an increasingly common feature of migrant communities across Europe. Among these communities, Moroccan diaspora populations navigate diverse linguistic environments that require the use of multiple languages in everyday life. This study investigates the challenges of multilingualism among Moroccan diaspora communities in Europe. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Moroccan diaspora social media and WhatsApp groups. A total of 189 participants residing in different European countries took part in the study. The findings reveal that participants regularly use multiple languages, particularly Darija, French, English, and the language of the host country, across various social contexts. The results further indicate that heritage language maintenance, intergenerational communication, language proficiency differences, and language choice are among the most common challenges experienced by participants. At the same time, respondents reported using a variety of strategies to manage multilingual communication, including language switching, family language practices, digital language resources, and community support networks. The study highlights the dynamic nature of multilingualism within Moroccan diaspora communities and emphasizes the need for greater support for heritage language maintenance and multilingual practices. It contributes to ongoing discussions on multilingualism, migration, and language use in contemporary European societies.

**KEYWORDS**

Moroccan diaspora, multilingualism, heritage language maintenance, migration, language practices, Europe

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### **Introduction**

Migration does far more than shift populations across borders; it fundamentally transforms global linguistic landscapes. As individuals relocate for education, employment, or family reunification, they carry deeply rooted communication patterns that continue to shape their everyday lives. Within these spaces, multilingualism is rarely a deliberate choice or an academic luxury. It is an unavoidable, daily tool for survival and connection as migrants learn to navigate multiple linguistic environments simultaneously.

The Moroccan diaspora stands as one of the largest and most vibrant migrant communities in contemporary Europe. Decades of rich migration histories have established deep-rooted communities in countries like France, Belgium, Spain, and the Netherlands. Consequently, second- and third-generation Moroccan migrants find themselves operating in complex linguistic settings where several languages coexist daily. Depending entirely on the social setting, a speaker might switch between Arabic, Darija, Amazigh, French, English, or the host country's official language. This constant linguistic balancing act demands immense cultural flexibility and continuous adaptation.

The coexistence of multiple languages creates valuable opportunities for communication, education, and social mobility. At the same time, it may generate challenges related to language choice, language proficiency, intergenerational

communication, and linguistic adaptation. For many diaspora families, language use extends beyond communication and influences educational experiences, family interactions, and participation in wider society. While older generations may maintain stronger use of heritage languages, younger generations are often more exposed to the dominant language of the host country. Such differences frequently shape communication patterns within families and communities.

Previous research has highlighted the important role of multilingualism in migrant contexts, emphasizing its contribution to social integration, educational achievement, and intercultural communication. Nevertheless, multilingualism is not always experienced as an uncomplicated advantage. Individuals often encounter difficulties associated with balancing multiple linguistic repertoires, maintaining heritage languages, and adapting to environments where different languages hold varying degrees of social and institutional value. These challenges become particularly visible within diaspora communities, where language practices are influenced by both transnational connections and local realities.

Within the Moroccan diaspora, multilingualism remains an important yet relatively underexplored area of research. Existing studies have frequently focused on migration, integration, cultural belonging, and diaspora experiences, while comparatively less attention has been devoted to the everyday linguistic challenges faced by Moroccan communities living in Europe. Understanding these challenges is important because language plays a central role in education, employment, family communication, and participation in public life.

This study investigates the challenges of multilingualism among Moroccan diaspora communities in Europe. Rather than approaching multilingualism only as a linguistic phenomenon, the study examines how it is experienced in everyday life. Particular attention is given to the languages commonly used by diaspora members, the difficulties associated with multilingual communication, generational differences in language practices, and the strategies employed to navigate diverse linguistic environments. By focusing on the experiences of Moroccan migrants and their families, this study contributes to ongoing discussions on multilingualism, migration, and language practices in contemporary Europe.

#### Research Questions

1. What languages are commonly used by Moroccan diaspora communities in Europe?
2. What challenges do Moroccan diaspora members encounter in multilingual environments?
3. How do multilingual practices vary across generations?
4. What strategies are used to manage communication in multilingual settings?
5. To what extent does multilingualism influence everyday interactions within Moroccan diaspora communities?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Multilingualism in Migration Contexts**

Multilingualism has long occupied a central position in sociolinguistic and migration studies. Early scholarship challenged monolingual perspectives by emphasizing the coexistence of multiple languages within migrant communities. Fishman (1991) argues that the maintenance of minority languages largely depends on successful intergenerational transmission. When younger generations gradually replace heritage languages with dominant societal languages, language shift becomes increasingly likely. Similarly, Gumperz (1982) highlights the importance of language choice in multilingual settings, demonstrating that speakers often alternate between languages according to social context, communicative purpose, and interpersonal relationships. Later, Grosjean (2010) further developed the understanding of multilingualism by arguing that multilingual individuals should not be viewed as separate monolinguals combined into one person, but rather as speakers who possess integrated linguistic repertoires.

Recent studies have expanded these foundational perspectives by examining multilingualism as a common feature of contemporary migration. Yağmur (2016) argues that immigrant multilingualism is shaped by social, educational, and political factors that influence language maintenance, language shift, and language use across generations. Research conducted in European migration contexts suggests that multilingualism should be viewed as a valuable resource that facilitates communication, social participation, and educational development rather than as a linguistic challenge alone.

Contemporary scholarship also highlights the increasing complexity of multilingual practices in diverse societies. Cenoz and Gorter (2020) argue that multilingual speakers frequently draw upon different linguistic resources depending on context rather than maintaining strict boundaries between languages. Similarly, Bozdağ (2024) demonstrates that migrants often use different languages according to the communicative demands of everyday interactions. These findings suggest that multilingualism has become an essential characteristic of modern migration experiences and plays a significant role in shaping communication practices within migrant communities.

## 2.2 Language Practices and Multilingual Challenges in Diaspora Communities

Diaspora communities often develop distinctive language practices shaped by migration, settlement, and transnational connections. Within these communities, language use frequently varies across different social domains, including family life, education, employment, and community interactions. As a result, multilingual speakers must continuously adapt their language choices to diverse communicative situations.

Although multilingualism offers important social, educational, and professional advantages, research indicates that it may also create significant challenges. One of the most frequently discussed issues concerns heritage language maintenance. Fishman (1991) argues that minority languages often face gradual decline when younger generations become increasingly oriented toward dominant societal languages. This process is particularly common in migrant communities where schools, workplaces, and public institutions operate primarily in the language of the host country.

Recent studies continue to highlight the difficulties associated with maintaining heritage languages within multilingual families. Hollebeke et al. (2023) found that multilingual families often encounter considerable challenges in transmitting heritage languages to younger generations, particularly when institutional support is limited. Similarly, Abdelsayed and Bellinzona (2024) found that Arabic-speaking families in Italy actively employ family language policies to support the transmission of Arabic to younger generations. Their study highlights the important role of parental attitudes, language practices, and family decisions in maintaining heritage languages within multilingual environments.

Similarly, Zabrodska (2025) argues that family language policies remain central to heritage language maintenance and that multilingual families actively negotiate language choices in response to changing social circumstances. Heritage language maintenance should therefore be understood as a long-term process influenced by family dynamics, community support, and broader institutional factors.

Another challenge frequently identified in multilingual communities relates to intergenerational communication. Differences in language proficiency between parents and children may create communication difficulties and influence family interactions. In many migrant families, older generations maintain stronger use of heritage languages, whereas younger generations often become more proficient in the language of the host society. Such linguistic differences may contribute to misunderstandings and communication barriers within families and communities.

## 2.3 Multilingualism among Moroccan Diaspora Communities in Europe

The Moroccan diaspora in Europe provides a particularly rich context for the study of multilingualism. Moroccan migrants and their descendants often navigate linguistic environments that involve Moroccan Arabic (Darija), Modern Standard Arabic, Amazigh languages, French, English, and the language of the host country. The use of these languages frequently varies according to age, educational background, generation, and country of residence.

Existing research on Moroccan diaspora communities has primarily focused on migration experiences, integration processes, and broader social issues. Comparatively less attention has been devoted to the multilingual realities that characterize everyday life within these communities. Nevertheless, available studies suggest that Moroccan migrants frequently employ multiple languages across different domains of life, adapting their language choices according to specific social and institutional contexts.

Recent European research highlights the growing importance of understanding multilingual practices within migrant communities. Bozdağ (2024) emphasizes that multilingual individuals increasingly develop flexible linguistic repertoires that allow them to navigate different cultural and social environments. Likewise, contemporary studies on multilingual families suggest that migration often results in complex linguistic settings where heritage languages coexist with majority languages and global languages such as English.

Despite this adaptability, research continues to highlight the challenges associated with language maintenance and multilingual communication in diaspora contexts. Studies conducted across Europe indicate that multilingual families frequently struggle to balance the preservation of heritage languages with the practical demands of education, employment, and social integration. Heritage language transmission, intergenerational communication, and language choice remain recurring concerns within migrant communities.

Despite the increasing visibility of Moroccan communities across Europe, relatively little research has specifically examined the challenges of multilingualism among Moroccan diaspora populations. Much of the existing literature focuses on broader migration-related issues, leaving a gap in our understanding of how Moroccan migrants navigate multiple languages in their everyday lives. Consequently, there remains a need for empirical research that explores the opportunities and challenges associated with multilingual communication among Moroccan diaspora communities. The present study seeks to address this

gap by investigating the multilingual experiences of Moroccans living in Europe and examining the strategies they employ to manage diverse linguistic environments.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the challenges of multilingualism among Moroccan diaspora communities in Europe. Quantitative research was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to collect and analyze numerical data in order to identify patterns, trends, and relationships within a specific population. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research is particularly useful for examining attitudes, perceptions, and experiences through standardized instruments.

The present study seeks to explore the languages commonly used by Moroccan diaspora members, the challenges associated with multilingual communication, and the strategies employed to navigate multilingual environments. To achieve these objectives, a questionnaire was selected as the primary data collection instrument due to its ability to gather data from participants residing in different European countries within a relatively short period of time.

#### **3.2 Sample**

The participants in this study consisted of **189 Moroccan diaspora members living in various European countries**, including France, Belgium, Spain, and the Netherlands. These countries were selected because they host some of the largest Moroccan diaspora communities in Europe.

The sample included both male and female participants from different age groups and educational backgrounds. Given the geographical dispersion of the target population, a **convenience sampling technique** was employed. Participants were recruited through Moroccan diaspora communities and social networks, allowing the researcher to reach individuals residing in different European countries.

The decision to focus on Moroccan diaspora members was based on the nature of the research topic. As individuals who regularly navigate multilingual environments involving heritage languages and host-country languages, they provide valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges associated with multilingual communication in migration contexts.

#### **3.3 Instrument**

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire consisting of four sections. The first section gathered demographic information, including age, gender, country of residence, educational level, and length of residence in Europe. The second section examined participants' language practices by exploring the languages they use in different contexts such as home, work, education, and social interactions. The third section focused on multilingual challenges, including difficulties related to language choice, language proficiency, heritage language maintenance, and intergenerational communication. The fourth section explored the strategies participants employ to navigate multilingual environments and manage communication across different linguistic settings.

The questionnaire consisted primarily of closed-ended items measured through a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). This format enabled participants to express the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with statements related to multilingual experiences and communication practices. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated. The overall reliability coefficient was 0.81, indicating a satisfactory level of internal consistency among the questionnaire items. According to George and Mallery (2003), reliability coefficients above 0.70 are generally considered acceptable in social science research.

#### **3.4 Data Collection and Analysis**

Data was collected through an online questionnaire created using Google Forms. The questionnaire was distributed through Moroccan diaspora groups on social media platforms and WhatsApp groups. These online communities provided an effective means of reaching Moroccan migrants living in different European countries and facilitated participation from individuals with diverse linguistic and social backgrounds. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study before completing the questionnaire. A total of **189 valid responses** were collected and included in the analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using the **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)**. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize participants' responses and identify patterns related to language use, multilingual challenges, intergenerational communication, and language management

strategies. The analysis focused on exploring the multilingual experiences of Moroccan diaspora members and identifying the main challenges they encounter while navigating different linguistic environments.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were respected throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the objectives of the study and were assured that their participation was entirely voluntary. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, no personally identifiable information was collected. All responses were used solely for academic purposes, and the collected data were stored securely. By adhering to these ethical guidelines, the study sought to protect participants' privacy and maintain the integrity of the research process.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Language Use among Moroccan Diaspora Communities

One of the primary objectives of this study was to identify the languages commonly used by Moroccan diaspora members living in Europe. The findings reveal that participants regularly use multiple languages in their daily lives, reflecting the multilingual nature of diaspora communities. Most respondents reported using more than one language across different social contexts, including family interactions, education, employment, and community engagement.

The results indicate that Darija and the language of the host country remain the most frequently used languages among participants. Many respondents reported using Darija primarily within family settings and community networks, while the host-country language was predominantly used in educational, professional, and administrative contexts. French also maintained a significant presence among participants, particularly among those residing in France and Belgium. In addition, a considerable number of respondents reported occasional use of English, mainly for professional purposes, online communication, and access to international information.

Language	Percentage
Host-country Language	42%
Darija	31%
French	17%
English	10%

**Table 1. Languages Most Frequently Used by Participants**

As shown in Table 1, the host-country language was the most frequently used language among participants, accounting for 42% of responses. Darija ranked second at 31%, reflecting its continued importance within family and community interactions. French represented 17% of language use, particularly among participants residing in France and Belgium, while English accounted for 10%, mainly in professional, educational, and online contexts. These findings highlight the multilingual nature of Moroccan diaspora communities, where language use varies according to social and communicative settings.

The findings suggest that multilingualism constitutes an integral part of everyday life for Moroccan diaspora communities. Rather than relying on a single language, participants frequently alternate between different linguistic resources depending on context and communicative needs. This finding supports the work of Grosjean (2010), who argues that multilingual speakers draw upon integrated linguistic repertoires rather than operating as separate monolingual speakers. The results also align with recent studies emphasizing the dynamic nature of language practices in migrant communities (Bozdağ, 2024).

### 4.2 Challenges of Multilingual Communication

The second objective of this study was to explore the challenges experienced by Moroccan diaspora members while navigating multilingual environments. Although participants generally viewed multilingualism positively, many reported encountering difficulties associated with managing multiple languages in everyday life.

The findings indicate that the most common challenges include maintaining heritage languages, communicating across generations, and adapting to the linguistic demands of different social settings. A considerable number of participants expressed concerns regarding the gradual decline of heritage language use among younger generations. Others reported difficulties communicating with family members who possessed different levels of proficiency in various languages.

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Heritage Language Maintenance	39%
Intergenerational Communication	28%
Language Proficiency Difficulties	19%
Language Choice in Different Contexts	14%

**Table 2. Main Multilingual Challenges Reported by Participants**

As shown in Table 2, heritage language maintenance emerged as the most frequently reported challenge, accounting for 39% of responses. Intergenerational communication difficulties ranked second at 28%, followed by language proficiency difficulties at 19%. Language choice in different social contexts represented 14% of responses. These findings suggest that maintaining multiple languages across generations remains one of the most significant concerns among Moroccan diaspora communities in Europe.

The results suggest that multilingualism involves both opportunities and challenges. While participants benefited from access to multiple linguistic resources, they also faced practical difficulties associated with balancing different language demands. These findings support Fishman's (1991) argument that heritage language maintenance remains a significant challenge within migrant communities. Similarly, recent studies by Hollebeke et al. (2023) highlight the difficulties multilingual families face in transmitting heritage languages across generations.

Interestingly, some participants reported that multilingualism occasionally created uncertainty regarding language choice in specific situations. This finding reflects the complex linguistic realities of diaspora communities, where language use is often shaped by social expectations, institutional requirements, and family traditions.

**4.3 Strategies for Navigating Multilingual Environments**

The third objective of this study was to examine the strategies employed by Moroccan diaspora members to manage multilingual communication. The findings reveal that participants actively develop various approaches to navigate diverse linguistic environments and maintain effective communication across different contexts.

Many respondents reported regularly switching between languages according to the situation and the individuals involved in the interaction. Others indicated that they consciously encouraged the use of heritage languages within the family while relying on host-country languages in educational and professional settings. Some participants also reported using digital resources, language-learning applications, and community activities to strengthen their multilingual abilities.

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Context-Based Language Switching	41%
Family Language Practices	26%
Digital Language Resources	19%
Community Language Activities	14%

**Table 3. Strategies Used to Manage Multilingual Communication**

As shown in Table 3, context-based language switching was the most reported strategy, accounting for 41% of responses. Family language practices represented 26%, followed by the use of digital language resources at 19%. Community language activities accounted for 14% of responses. These findings indicate that Moroccan diaspora members employ a variety of strategies to navigate multilingual environments and maintain effective communication across different contexts.

The findings suggest that multilingual speakers are not passive users of language but rather active agents who continuously adapt their communication practices. Participants demonstrated considerable flexibility in managing multiple linguistic demands and frequently employed strategies that enabled them to function effectively across different social environments. Also, it supports contemporary perspectives on multilingualism, particularly those advanced by Cenoz and Gorter (2020), who argue that multilingual speakers draw upon diverse linguistic resources in flexible and dynamic ways. The results further indicate that successful multilingual communication depends not only on linguistic competence but also on individuals' ability to adapt language practices to changing social contexts.

## 5. Conclusion

This study shows that for Moroccan migrants in Europe, multilingualism isn't just an occasional skill it is the very fabric of their daily lives. Participants constantly juggle Darija, French, English, and their host country's language, shifting between them depending on whether they are at home, at work, or in public. While this linguistic flexibility opens great professional and social opportunities, it comes with real challenges. The data highlights sharp friction points: intergenerational communication gaps, shifting proficiencies, and, most importantly, the steep uphill battle of heritage language maintenance. Passing down a native language across generations is getting harder as host-country environments dominate public life. However, Moroccan families aren't passive in this process. They actively use creative strategies like strict at-home language rules, digital media tools, and community networks to keep their roots alive. Ultimately, these findings remind us that multilingualism is a deeply personal, lived reality that shapes family bonds and identity. It underscores a pressing need for better policy support and educational resources to help migrant communities preserve their linguistic heritage.

## 6. Limitations of the Study

While these insights are valuable, the study has a few clear boundaries:

- **Sample Size & Scope:** With 189 participants, the findings can't map out the entire Moroccan diaspora across all of Europe, especially since integration and language policies vary drastically by country.
- **Online Recruitment Bias:** Relying on Facebook and WhatsApp groups for convenience sampling means we missed out on migrants who aren't digitally active or connected to these specific online hubs.
- **Self-Reported Data:** Questionnaires capture what people *think* they do or *wish* they did, but they can miss the messy, subconscious realities of daily speech.
- **Lack of Qualitative Depth:** Due to time and resource constraints, this study was purely quantitative. It handles the broad numbers well but misses deeper personal stories.

Future research should use mixed methods combining surveys with direct interviews and observations to truly capture the emotional and cultural nuances of the Moroccan multilingual experience.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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