



# Modernization and Language Survival: A Sociolinguistic Study of the Chaouia Variety in Foug Toub, Batna, Algeria<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This study investigates the sociolinguistic dynamics of the Chaouia variety of the Tamazight language in Foug Toub, Batna, Algeria, focusing on its resilience amidst the challenges posed by modernization and the influence of global languages. A mixed-method approach was employed, combining data from a questionnaire administered to 150 residents of Foug Toub and semi-structured interviews with 10 participants from diverse demographic backgrounds. The findings reveal that, despite the pressures of modernity and globalization, the Chaouia variety remains widely spoken in everyday interactions and is regarded as a vital component of cultural identity among its speakers. Respondents expressed a strong emotional attachment to the language and a commitment to preserving it for future generations. However, the study also highlights significant challenges, particularly societal attitudes toward Chaouia outside its native regions, where speakers often feel judged or alienated. Recommendations include integrating Chaouia into educational curricula, media, and cultural initiatives to promote linguistic pride and awareness, counteracting the risk of a language shift or decline. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of addressing the socio-political and cultural factors influencing language maintenance. This research contributes to the broader field of sociolinguistics by demonstrating the resilience of the Chaouia variety and its critical role in maintaining the sociocultural fabric of Foug Toub. It advocates for strategic measures to ensure the continued vitality of Chaouia in a rapidly changing world, emphasizing the need for community-driven efforts and inclusive language policies to preserve Algeria's linguistic diversity.

**Keywords:** Chaouia; Tamazight; Language Maintenance; Modernization; Algerian Arabic; Cultural Identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Artículo de investigación

## Resumen

### **Modernización y supervivencia lingüística: un estudio sociolingüístico de la variedad chaouia en Foum Toub, Batna, Argelia**

Este estudio investiga la dinámica sociolingüística de la variedad chaouia de la lengua tamazight en Foum Toub, Batna, Argelia, centrándose en su resiliencia ante los retos que plantean la modernización y la influencia de las lenguas globales. Se empleó un enfoque de método mixto, combinando datos de un cuestionario administrado a 150 residentes de Foum Toub y entrevistas semiestructuradas con 10 participantes de diversos orígenes demográficos. Los resultados revelan que, a pesar de las presiones de la modernidad y la globalización, la variedad Chaouia sigue siendo ampliamente utilizada en las interacciones cotidianas y se considera un componente vital de la identidad cultural entre sus hablantes. Los encuestados expresaron un fuerte apego emocional a la lengua y su compromiso de preservarla para las generaciones futuras. Sin embargo, el estudio también destaca importantes retos, en particular las actitudes sociales hacia el Chaouia fuera de sus regiones de origen, donde los hablantes a menudo se sienten juzgados o alienados. Las recomendaciones incluyen la integración del chaouia en los planes de estudio, los medios de comunicación y las iniciativas culturales para promover el orgullo y la conciencia lingüística, contrarrestando el riesgo de cambio o declive lingüístico. Además, el estudio subraya la importancia de abordar los factores sociopolíticos y culturales que influyen en el mantenimiento de la lengua. Esta investigación contribuye al campo más amplio de la sociolingüística al demostrar la resiliencia de la variedad Chaouia y su papel fundamental en el mantenimiento del tejido sociocultural de Foum Toub; aboga por medidas estratégicas para garantizar la vitalidad continua del Chaouia en un mundo en rápida evolución, haciendo hincapié en la necesidad de esfuerzos impulsados por la comunidad y políticas lingüísticas inclusivas para preservar la diversidad lingüística de Argelia.

**Palabras clave:** Chaouia; Tamazight; Mantenimiento del idioma; Modernización; árabe argelino; Identidad cultural.

## Résumé

### **Modernisation et survie linguistique : étude sociolinguistique de la variété chaouia à Foum Toub, Batna, Algérie**

Cette étude examine la dynamique sociolinguistique de la variété chaouia de la langue tamazight à Foum Toub, Batna, en Algérie, en mettant l'accent sur sa résilience face aux défis posés par la modernisation et l'influence des langues mondiales. Une approche mixte a été utilisée, combinant les données d'un questionnaire administré à 150 habitants de Foum Toub et des entretiens semi-structurés avec 10 participants issus de divers milieux démographiques. Les résultats révèlent que, malgré les pressions de la modernité et de la mondialisation, la variété chaouia reste largement parlée dans les interactions quotidiennes et est considérée comme un élément essentiel de l'identité culturelle de ses locuteurs. Les personnes interrogées ont exprimé un fort attachement émotionnel à la langue et leur engagement à la préserver pour les générations futures. Cependant, l'étude met également en évidence des défis importants, en particulier les attitudes de la société à l'égard du chaouia en dehors de ses régions d'origine, où ses locuteurs se sentent souvent jugés ou marginalisés. Les recommandations incluent l'intégration du chaouia dans les programmes éducatifs, les médias et les initiatives culturelles afin de promouvoir la fierté et la conscience linguistiques, et de contrer le risque de changement ou de déclin linguistique. En outre, l'étude souligne l'importance de s'attaquer aux facteurs sociopolitiques et culturels qui influencent le maintien de la langue. Cette recherche contribue au domaine plus large de la sociolinguistique en démontrant la résilience de la variété chaouia et son rôle essentiel dans le maintien du tissu socioculturel de Foum

Toub. Elle préconise des mesures stratégiques pour assurer la vitalité continue du chaouia dans un monde en rapide évolution, soulignant la nécessité d'efforts communautaires et de politiques linguistiques inclusives pour préserver la diversité linguistique de l'Algérie.

**Mots-clés :** Chaouia ; Tamazight ; Entretien de la langue ; Modernisation ; Arabe algérien ; Identité culturelle.

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## INTRODUCTION

Language is a foundational pillar of cultural identity (Romaine, 2009), acting as both a repository of shared heritage and a dynamic medium through which collective values, traditions, and worldviews are transmitted (Hall, 1997). It encodes cultural concepts that may lack direct equivalents in other languages, reflecting unique ways of understanding the world.

Algeria's linguistic landscape is a mosaic of cultural heritage (Benrabah, 2013), where many different ways of speaking flourish across its various communities. Among these languages, Tamazight, the language of the Amazigh (Berber) people, shines with a deep-rooted history. It dates back to at least 2,000 - 3,000 BCE, making it one of the oldest known languages in North Africa. As a vital link, this old language connects the region to its rich history and cultural beginnings.

Tamazight has a long and complex history in Algeria, deeply intertwined with the country's cultural and political evolution (Sabri & Blackwood, 2021). Historically spoken by the majority in regions like Kabylia and Aurès, Tamazight has been a vital marker of identity, fueling significant cultural and political activism (Edwards, 2002; Laidani, 2019), which eventually led to incremental legal recognition: Tamazight was declared a national language in 2002 and gained official language status, in the 2016 constitution (Aoumeur, 2023; Tabti, 2022), as stated in the 'Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne [JORA], No. 14, 2016, p. 6, Art. 4.', "*Tamazight est également langue nationale et officielle.*".

Current efforts to preserve and revitalize Tamazight (Berber) in Algeria reflect both governmental commitment to safeguarding the language as a cornerstone of Amazigh identity. Since its constitutional recognition as a national and official language in 2016, Tamazight has been integrated into Algeria's educational system, with mandatory teaching in primary schools and specialized university departments, such as the University of Tizi Ouzou, offering degrees in Amazigh language and culture (Benrabah, 2013). The government has also established the *High Commission for Amazighity* (HCA), which promotes Tamazight through media, including the public television channel Tamazight TV, launched in 2018, and radio broadcasts in regional dialects like Kabyle, Chaoui, and Tuareg.

Batna City is home to a mixed population comprising Arab speakers alongside Chaouis. The majority of its inhabitants are descended from Chaouis and are considered to be from one of their ancestral areas. One important community that speaks Chaouia (Tachawit) is a Chaoui village in *Foum Toub*, whose large community is renowned in the history of Chaoui as a region deeply rooted in its traditions.

Despite North Africa's long history of linguistic diversity, including the Amazigh identity (Alalou, 2023), significant gaps remain in understanding its sociolinguistic dynamics and varieties. Moreover, while prior studies have broadly examined the vitality, standardization, and policy challenges of Tamazight (Maddy-Weitzman, 2012), three critical gaps persist. First, although language endangerment frameworks exist (Brenzinger, 2007), no empirical study specifically assesses whether

Chaouia in Foug Toub is declining, stable, or expanding. Second, while research has explored Amazigh languages in urban contexts (Chaker, 2004), it remains unclear whether speakers of Foug Toub actively use Chaouia outside their native region. Third, despite the well-documented effects of globalization on indigenous languages (Crystal, 2000; Fishman, 2001), the localized impact of modernization, such as technology, education, and migration, on Chaouia's survival remains unexamined. Consequently, the absence of a micro-level, community-based study integrating language attitudes, intergenerational transmission, and modernization effects leaves a crucial research void. Addressing this gap requires fieldwork-driven methodologies, including surveys, interviews, and observational data, to provide a comprehensive assessment of Chaouia's current and future trajectory in Foug Toub.

The following list of research questions served as the basis for this investigation:

**RQ1:** Is the Chaouia language in Foug Toub near extinction, even though it is a big part of the Tamazight language, or is it expanding?

**RQ2:** Do Foug Toub individuals speak Chaouia outside of Foug Toub?

**RQ3:** Does Modernization have a negative or a positive impact on its existence?

Three main hypotheses are proposed to be verified or rejected in order to overcome the research challenges mentioned earlier. These are the following:

1. Young people in Foug Toub may perceive limited practical or economic benefits from acquiring their ancestors' language, Chaouia, which could explain their lack of motivation or interest in learning it.
2. The Chaoui people of Foug Toub may not practice Chaouia outside of Foug Toub.
3. Because Foug Toub is one of the many locations heavily touched by modernity, particularly through the media, the current generation may not consider Chaouia a trend or anything worth learning.

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## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This research analyzes the complex multilingual setting in the Algerian context, where the following languages interact in a contested sociolinguistic hierarchy: Standard Arabic, the constitutionally official language (Benrabah, 2013); Darija, the Algerian Arabic vernacular, dominates daily communication (Grandguillaume, 2004); French, having retained socioeconomic prestige in education and media despite postcolonial policies (Benrabah, 2007); English, which has gained ground in youth culture and digital spaces (Belmihoub, 2018); and Tamazight, the co-official language since 2016, but facing uneven implementation (Tabti, 2017). It also studies the geographical distribution of these languages and focuses on how the Amazigh people use them. The discussion focuses on sociolinguistic aspects, such as bilingualism and multilingualism, which influence people's communication and information

processing in Algeria. The work develops ideas that belong to the area of interest in sociolinguistics, including language maintenance, shift, and death. Analyzing these processes is intended to enhance our understanding of their impact on cognitive psychology, the evolution of language, and the broader realm of sociolinguistics.

### **The Linguistic Situation in Algeria**

Flexibility and change are inherent aspects of life that influence movement, economic activities, and social interactions. These dynamics are particularly evident in Algeria, where a significant shift in linguistic practices and attitudes has occurred due to the interaction of various languages and dialects. Fishman (1964) argued that language interaction profoundly impacts linguistic, psychological, social, and cultural patterns, a phenomenon that is clearly observable in Algeria's multilingual landscape.

In the late 20th century, sociolinguistic studies began to focus on the dynamic roles of language interaction in a globalized world, emphasizing the ability of individuals to master multiple languages beyond their mother tongue. Weinreich (1953) defined bilingualism as the ability to use two languages in a given context, while Haugen (1953) highlighted its importance in fostering intelligibility across languages. This historical trajectory has shaped Algeria's bilingual and multilingual identity, where individuals exhibit varying levels of fluency in French, Algerian Arabic (Darija), and Tamazight.

Algeria's rich sociolinguistic diversity is further demonstrated by its multilingualism, defined by Okal (2014) as the ability to communicate effectively in multiple languages. Hoffman (1991) and King (2017) expanded this definition to include the use of two or more languages in various social contexts and linguistic variations within specific regions. In addition to Arabic, Tamazight, and French, English has emerged as a fourth language, gaining prominence in education and government sectors, particularly in academic and research contexts (Belmihoub, 2018) and among younger generations (Outemzabet & Sarnou, 2023).

The linguistic landscape of Algeria is also characterized by diglossia, where different languages are used in distinct contexts. Standard Arabic, the official language since independence in 1962, is primarily used in formal settings such as education and government (Aitsiselmi, 2006). Algerian Arabic, or Darija, is the most commonly spoken dialect in daily communication, despite its lack of a standardized written form (Jacob, 2019; Kaddour et al., 2025). Darija has evolved through influences from Arabic, French, Ottoman Turkish, Berber, and Spanish, reflecting Algeria's complex linguistic history (Benrabah, 2005).

French, inherited from the colonial period, continues to play a significant role in Algeria's linguistic identity. It is widely used in education, professional domains, and media, despite efforts to reduce its influence (Belaskri & Drew, 2023). English, on the other hand, is gaining traction as a language of international communication and academic research, though it is not as widespread as French (Belmihoub, 2018; Outemzabet & Sarnou, 2023).

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Tamazight, the indigenous Berber language, symbolizes Algeria's cultural heritage and ethnic identity. Recognized as an official language alongside Arabic, Tamazight represents the historical roots of the Berber-speaking communities (Aitsiselmi, 2006; Jacob, 2019). However, its practical application in education and public life remains limited due to its pluricentric nature and low degree of codification. Written in both Tifinagh and Latin scripts, Tamazight continues to face challenges in achieving widespread use, despite its significance as a marker of cultural pride and identity (Kaddour et al., 2025; Outemzabet & Sarnou, 2023).

Algeria has a diverse linguistic landscape featuring Berber with numerous significant variations. Kabyle, also known as Takabaylit, is the primary language in the northern areas of Tizi Ouzou, Bejaia, Bouira, and Boumerdes. It is characterized by its unique writing system, as recognized by the Algerian Ministry of Education.

Tachawit or Chaouia is the second most widely used Berber dialect. Regions that significantly use the language are Batna, Oum el Bouaghi, Khenchela, and Souk Ahras. It is a reasonably large Zenati dialect, with population estimates of around 3 million, but exact population figures cannot be provided due to the unavailability of updated statistics.

The Touareg (Tamahak) of the Hoggar and Tassili zones are reportedly purely linguistic due to the limited contact resulting from their pastoral and nomadic nature. The Mzabs, also known as Tamzibit, is a community located in Ghardaia. They live in fortified villages called K'sours and follow the Ibadi sect of Islam. They actively promote Islamic teachings across many locations in Algeria, showcasing the cultural customs and distribution of the Mzabs. Smaller Berber settlements such as Taznatit, Tarifit, Tashelhit, Tagargrent, Temacine, and Tidikelt exist with fewer speakers, frequently facing the risk of extinction and living in isolation.

Foum Toub is a village located in southeastern Algeria, about 49 km southeast of Batna, situated in the Aurès region at an altitude of 1,164 meters, not far from the ancient city of Timgad. It lies within the mountainous Aurès region, known for its rich history, dramatic terrain, and the traditional Berber-speaking Chaouis population.

In conclusion, Algeria's linguistic situation is a reflection of its complex history and cultural diversity. The coexistence of multiple languages: Arabic, Tamazight, French, and English, illustrates the interplay between historical influences, globalization, and cultural preservation. While modernization and globalization have introduced new linguistic dynamics, Algeria's multilingual identity remains deeply rooted in its historical and cultural legacy. Future efforts to preserve and promote linguistic diversity in Algeria must address the challenges posed by language shift and maintenance, ensuring that all languages, particularly indigenous ones like Tamazight, continue to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

## Language Shift, Maintenance, and Death

Language shift is a complex and global phenomenon that does not occur due to a single factor but rather a combination of immigration processes, historical events, and cultural influences (Holmes, 2013). This suggests that while immigrants may initially continue to speak their mother tongue, over time, a shift is likely to occur as they face restrictions in the use of their home language in certain domains. Similarly, language shift is evident in minority language areas, often driven by socio-political changes such as colonization (Fishman, 1991). These factors collectively contribute to the gradual decline of minority languages in favor of dominant ones.

Moreover, language shift is the process of change in the language spoken by a community and is driven by social pressures and various socially induced changes in different aspects of a community's life. Weinreich (1979) noted that the functions of languages in people's social lives significantly influence linguistic shifts. He emphasized that while languages may be preserved in certain regions, they can become endangered in others. In addition, Al-Wer et al. (2020) highlight that language change is closely tied to the functions a language fulfills within a society, further illustrating how socio-political and cultural factors contribute to the dynamics of language shift.

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Building on this, language shift is influenced at both the macroscopic and microscopic levels. At the macroscopic level, it encompasses economic, political, and cultural issues, as well as the impact of modern technologies. At the microscopic level, it relates to individual factors such as identity and occupation (Tandefelt, 1992; Weinreich, 1979). Furthermore, as noted by Potowski (2013), language shift can also be understood as a social strategy, where individuals or groups adopt a dominant language to gain access to positions of prestige, power, or economic security. This highlights the multifaceted nature of language shift, which operates across societal and individual dimensions.

Preserving ancient languages, such as the Berber languages (Tamazight), has always been a complex endeavor. Language maintenance refers to the actions people take to preserve their original language in certain situations, avoiding its decline or extinction (Fasold, 1984; Fishman, 1966; Holmes, 2013). These efforts are vital for maintaining linguistic variety in the face of demands to assimilate linguistically. Language preservation efforts mainly prioritize standard forms rather than all dialectal variations, as noted in research on language revitalization and preservation (Pine & Turin, 2017; Trudgill, 1991). These campaigns are usually centered in educational settings but extend to wider cultural and political activities (Holmes, 2013).

Allocation of resources and assistance for these projects is often based on competition, prioritizing Indigenous languages over immigrant languages, which may face challenges in establishing their cultural and linguistic influence within the broader community. Efficient language preservation tactics ensure the language's continued



use in various aspects of life, enhancing its vitality and increasing its chances of survival (Holmes, 2013).

Linguists and anthropologists are concerned about the rapid endangerment and extinction of minority languages globally. Approximately 50% of the world's languages have vanished over the last 500 years (Sasse, 1992), and current assessments suggest that more than 50% of the 6,809 languages documented in the Ethnologue are at risk of extinction in the 21st century (Grimes, 2000).

David Crystal (2000) eloquently characterizes language death as distinctive because, unlike human remains or artifacts, a language does not leave any archaeological evidence after it ceases to be spoken. Campbell and Muntzel (1989) classify language death into four distinct categories, from progressive displacement to sudden extinction without transitional bilingualism. Changes in the economy, people relocating, and social and political factors such as language laws and negative attitudes toward specific languages play significant roles in determining whether languages become rare or vanish entirely (Campbell & Muntzel, 1989). Studying endangered languages is crucial for preserving their distinctive sentence structures, meanings, and cultural significance, thereby ensuring their endurance and expanding our understanding of the diverse linguistic landscape.

## **METHODOLOGY**

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### **Research Design**

To collect data for this investigation, the study used an exploratory, descriptive approach well-suited to examining the growth or decline of the Chaouia variety in Foug Toub, Batna, and its interactions with modernity amid the presence of foreign languages in Algeria. Additionally, the research explored whether residents were willing to protect Chaouia or if they were inclined to adopt other languages, addressing sociolinguistic trends also noted by Rouabah (2020). For a more complete understanding of the present case study, the researchers used a mixed methods approach, which seeks a more complete understanding through the integration of quantitative and qualitative research methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Tashakkori et al., 2020), using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews as the primary research instruments (Bryman, 2016).

### **Informants' Profiles and Research Instruments**

This study involved 150 participants who completed the questionnaire and 10 interviewees, all of whom were residents of Foug Toub in Batna, Algeria. The sample included both male and female genders, ranging from 18 to over 60 years of age. Participants spoke diverse native languages, including Tamazight dialects and Algerian Arabic, reflecting the multilingual nature of the region.

The questionnaire aimed to explore the impact of modernity on Chaouia, investigating whether it faces extinction or growth. It consisted of 18 questions divided

into two sections: the first focused on participants' profiles, while the second explored their perspectives on Chaouia in Foug Toub. Most questions were yes-or-no questions, with some requiring explanations, and others offering multiple-choice options.

The interviews were semi-structured (Karatsareas, 2022) and designed to accommodate the diverse backgrounds, ages, and educational levels of respondents. Each interview lasted a minimum of 10 minutes and explored participants' experiences with the Chaouia variety. Respondents were allowed to choose their preferred language, though Algerian Arabic was primarily used for its universality. The use of Chaouia during interviews helped build trust, particularly with older participants, while younger participants often preferred Algerian Arabic. Code-switching and code-mixing between Chaouia and Arabic were common throughout the interviews. To ensure data quality, interviews were individually conducted to minimize stress and distractions, with all sessions recorded in high quality to facilitate future translation.

### **Ethical Concerns**

In conducting the study, the researchers followed ethical rules to ensure the integrity of the research process and the protection of participants, as recommended in research guidelines (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Before the recording commenced, all participants were asked to sign permission forms or give verbal confirmation. Furthermore, the research strictly followed confidentiality protocols to ensure that any personal information gathered from the questionnaire and the interviews remained undisclosed (Cohen et al., 2000).

## **RESULTS**

This section presents and analyzes the results obtained during the data-collecting phase. The goal is to extract significant insights from the gathered data and provide informed perspectives based on these findings.

### **Findings from Section One of the Questionnaire**

Section One of the questionnaire investigates the sociolinguistic and demographic characteristics of participants, focusing on their linguistic practices, professional status, and daily use of the Chaouia variety. It is divided into five sub-sections, which provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the use and preservation of the Chaouia variety.

#### *Findings from Questions N°1, N°2, and N°3*

In order to provide a clear overview of the study population, Table 1 below summarizes the key demographic findings from Questions N°1, N°2, and N°3.

Specifically, it presents data on participants' gender, age, and educational level, offering valuable context for understanding the subsequent analysis.

**Table 1.** *Participants' Profiles*

Participants' Gender				Female	Male
				48 (32%)	102 (68%)
Participants' Age		18 – 25	25 – 40	40 – 60	Over 60
		23.4 %	25.3 %	38 %	13.3 %
Participants' Educational Level	None	Primary	Middle	Secondary	University
	8.7 %	10.7 %	17.3 %	28.7 %	34.7 %

The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to over 60 years. In particular, the highest proportion of the sample was represented by those between 40 and 60 years old, accounting for 57 of the total respondents, or 38%. Respondents aged 25 to 40 years constituted 25.3% of the total, with 38 participants. Additionally, 35 participants, representing 23.3% of the total, were aged between 18 and 25 years. The smallest group consisted of those aged 60 and above, comprising 20 individuals, who accounted for 13.3% of the total.

The majority of participants possess a university degree, accounting for 34.7% of the total, which corresponds to 52 individuals. Subsequently, 43 individuals, or 28.7% of the participants with secondary education, followed. Out of the total, 26 individuals possess a middle school education, accounting for 17.3% of the group. Additionally, 16 individuals have completed only elementary school, accounting for 10.7% of the total population. Finally, those without formal education constituted the smallest category, comprising just 13 participants and accounting for a ratio of 8.7%.

#### *Findings from Questions N°4 and N°5*

Table 2 below presents a summary of participants' professional status and place of residence, based on their responses to the relevant survey questions. This information offers additional context about the backgrounds of the study participants, complementing the demographic data previously discussed.

**Table 2.** *Participants' Professional Status and Place of Residence*

Do you have a job?								Yes	No
								79.3 %	20.7 %
Participants' Place of Residence									
Ain Ayoub	Ain Tinn	Amrous	Bouathrikene	Foum Toub	Khneguet Maach	Seffah	Tabalit	Tibikaouine	Tkhabit
4.7 %	5.3 %	5.3 %	6.7 %	50.7 %	5.3 %	6.7 %	4.7 %	5.3 %	5.3 %

119 individuals, accounting for 79.3% of the total sample, reported being employed. Meanwhile, the remaining 31 participants, or 20.7% of the total, indicated that they were unemployed. This distribution highlights the predominance of working individuals in the sample, which may influence their linguistic practices and attitudes, as employment often necessitates interaction in dominant languages (Holmes, 2013).

In terms of residence, the Foum Toub district consists of thirty-one settlements and participants who were distributed across several of these areas. Of the total respondents, 50.7%, or 76 individuals, reported living in Foum Toub itself, making it the most represented location. Additionally, 20 participants, evenly split between Seffah and Bouathrikene, reported living in these areas, with each accounting for 6.7% of the total sample. Following this, 40 individuals, distributed equally across Khneguet Maach, Tibikaouine, Tkhabit, Ain Tinn, and Amrous, represented 5.3% of the sample for each location. Lastly, 14 participants, evenly divided between Tabalit and Ain Ayoub, accounted for 4.7% of the total sample for each area.

#### *Findings from Question N°6*

To gain a clearer understanding of the participants' linguistic background, particular attention was given to their family language environment. In this context, information was collected about their parents' native languages, the language used by their parents in communication with each other, as well as the participants' own first language learned at home. These results are summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3.** *Respondents' Mother Tongues*

	Algerian Arabic	Chaouia	Other
What is the mother tongue of your mother?	41	101	8
What is the mother tongue of your father?	23	127	0
What language do your parents use with each other?	51	99	0
What is the first language you have learned at home?	54	96	0

The findings reveal significant linguistic diversity among participants, reflecting the multilingual context of Algeria. Regarding their mother's primary language, 101 participants identified Chaouia as their mother tongue, 41 reported Algerian Arabic, and eight indicated Kabyle. Similarly, 127 participants stated that Chaouia was their father's first language, while 23 reported Algerian Arabic, highlighting Chaouia's dominance among fathers in the region due to its cultural and historical significance. When asked about the language their parents used to communicate, 99 respondents reported Chaouia, while 51 indicated Algerian Arabic, underscoring the intergenerational transmission of Chaouia within families, though Algerian Arabic's influence is evident. Additionally, 96 participants reported Chaouia as their first language acquired at home, compared to 54 who reported Algerian Arabic. These findings suggest that while Chaouia remains a significant familial and cultural language, Algerian Arabic's growing presence in the home reflects broader sociolinguistic trends in Algeria, where dominant languages increasingly influence minority ones.

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#### *Findings from Questions N°7 and N°8*

Table 4 presents participants' reported ability to speak and understand languages other than their mother tongue.

**Table 4.** *Participants' Spoken and Understanding of Languages*

Do you speak any other language (s) except your mother tongue?	Yes	No
	79.3 %	20.7 %
Do you understand any other language (s) except your mother tongue?	Yes	No
	89.3 %	10.7 %

Most of the respondents claimed that they do speak some languages other than their mother tongue by answering “yes”; they represented 119 participants and 79.3% of the overall sample. Whereas the remaining participants, who totaled 31, had a ratio of 20.7%, answered ‘no’, indicating that they only speak their native vernacular. The 119 respondents who acknowledged speaking languages other than their native vernacular were asked to list them in detail.

Table 5 provides an overview of the multilingual abilities within the sample by listing the languages participants reported speaking apart from their mother tongue.

**Table 5.** *Spoken Languages by Respondents in Fom Toub*

Spoken Languages	AF	RF
Algerian Arabic	83	69.74 %
Chaouia	23	19.32 %
Kabyle	5	4.2 %
English	20	16.8 %
French	53	44.53 %

Note: AF = Absolute Frequency; RF = Relative Frequency

Notably, 79.3% of respondents (119 out of 150) stated they speak at least one additional language, while 20.7% (31 participants) did not. Among these multilingual speakers, Algerian Arabic was the most frequently spoken (69.74%, or 83 participants), followed by French (44.53%, or 53 participants). Chaouia was spoken by 19.32% (23 participants), English by 16.8% (20 participants), and Kabyle by 4.2% (5 participants). These figures highlight the strong presence of Algerian Arabic and French beyond the mother tongue, along with meaningful, though smaller, engagement in both Berber and foreign languages.

Table 6 below shifts the focus to the range of languages understood by the study’s participants, highlighting the extent of receptive multilingualism within the sample.

**Table 6.** *Understandable Languages by Respondents in Foug Toub*

Understandable Languages	AF	RF
Algerian Arabic	94	70.15 %
Chaouia	30	22.39 %
Kabyle	6	4.48 %
English	21	15.67 %
French	60	44.78 %

Note: AF = Absolute Frequency; RF = Relative Frequency

Table 6 shows that an even larger proportion, 89.3% (134 out of 150), reported understanding at least one language other than their mother tongue, with only 10.7% (16 participants) indicating otherwise. Among those with receptive multilingualism, Algerian Arabic was understood by 70.15% (94 participants), French by 44.78% (60 participants), Chaouia by 22.39% (30 participants), English by 15.67% (21 participants), and Kabyle by 4.48% (6 participants). These statistics demonstrate not only the dominance of Algerian Arabic and French in both spoken and understood categories but also reveal that languages like Chaouia and English function as additional languages of comprehension across the sample.

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#### *Findings from Question N°9*

##### Significance of *Chaouia* in Daily Routines

In the final question of the first section, 150 participants were asked to reflect on the significance of Chaouia in their daily routines across various settings in Foug Toub. As detailed in Table 7, participants self-reported their frequency of Chaouia use in a range of social contexts, offering clear statistical insights into the language's role and variability in everyday routines.

**Table 7.** *Participants' Daily Usage of Chaouia in Foug Toub*

	To what extent do you speak Chaouia daily in Foug Toub?			
	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Home	77	42	17	14
Street	69	61	7	13
School	35	39	44	32
Market	57	60	19	14
Hospital	46	49	37	18
Restaurant / Cafeteria	52	49	32	17
Shops	54	55	25	16
Taxi / Bus	57	54	23	16
Commune Center	39	37	47	27
Farm	81	52	5	12
Wedding	42	65	28	15
Mosque	36	36	31	47

The findings presented in Table 7 reveal notable patterns in the daily use of Chaouia among participants in Foug Toub, highlighting both its areas of vitality and domains where it is less dominant. The home context emerges as a stronghold of Chaouia, with the majority of participants (77 always; 42 sometimes) affirming its everyday use within families, while only a small number rarely (17) or never (14) speak it at home.

In contrast, public spaces like the street and market still reflect appreciable levels of Chaouia use (street: 69 always, 61 sometimes; market: 57 always, 60 sometimes), affirming the language's relevance in everyday community life. Nevertheless, a gradual decline is evident as the "rarely" and "never" categories become more populated, suggesting that alternative languages may be gaining ground in these less intimate settings.

A significant reduction in Chaouia usage occurs within institutional and formal environments. At school, the majority of participants (44 rarely, 32 never) make limited use of Chaouia, with only a minority always (35) or sometimes (39) speaking it. Similar declining trends are noted in the commune center (47 rarely, 27 never), hospital, and workplace-related domains, likely reflecting institutional language policies, sociolinguistic norms, or the influence of more dominant languages such as Algerian Arabic or French.



Remarkably, rural and agricultural spaces, specifically the farm, showcase the strongest retention of Chaouia use (81 always, 52 sometimes), with only a handful of cases reporting limited (5) or no (12) use. This underscores the deep-rooted connection between the language and traditional rural life, where local customs and heritage remain vibrant.

Social and cultural settings show further variation. Weddings bring relatively high rates of Chaouia use (42 always, 65 sometimes), highlighting the language's ongoing role in communal and celebratory gatherings. In contrast, the mosque presents the most limited Chaouia use (36 always, 36 sometimes, 31 rarely, 47 never), likely influenced by religious practices or the presence of standardized liturgical languages.

Overall, the data illustrate that while Chaouia persists as a vital language in private and rural domains, its usage is increasingly variable across public, institutional, and formal settings. These findings suggest that language maintenance strategies in Foug Toub should be sensitive to context, with particular attention to supporting Chaouia in spaces where it faces the most significant decline.

## **Findings from Section Two of the Questionnaire**

This section presents the findings from Section Two of the questionnaire, which focuses on the role of Chaouia in Foug Toub, particularly its significance in shaping identity, patterns of language use, and its transmission to younger generations. Additionally, it explores participants' perspectives on various aspects of Chaouia, including its suitability, necessity, and future amidst increasing exposure to foreign languages.

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### *Findings from Questions N°10, N°11, and N°12*

Table 8 below introduces participants' views on the relationship between Chaouia, local identity, language use practices, and children's language learning in Foug Toub. It provides insights into how Chaouia is perceived as a marker of identity, how frequently it is used in various contexts, and the extent to which it is being transmitted to younger generations. Through these data, Table 8 offers a snapshot of the interconnections between language, cultural affiliation, and intergenerational language maintenance within the community.

**Table 8.** *Chaouia in Fom Toub: Identity, Language Use, and Children's Language Learning*

Are you for the idea that Chaouia is a significant factor in Fom Toub's identity?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	93.3 %	6.7 %
What language (s) do your children use regularly?		
<b>Chaouia</b>	<b>Algerian Arabic</b>	<b>Both</b>
15 %	13 %	72 %
Do you think young children should learn how to speak Chaouia?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	86 %	14 %

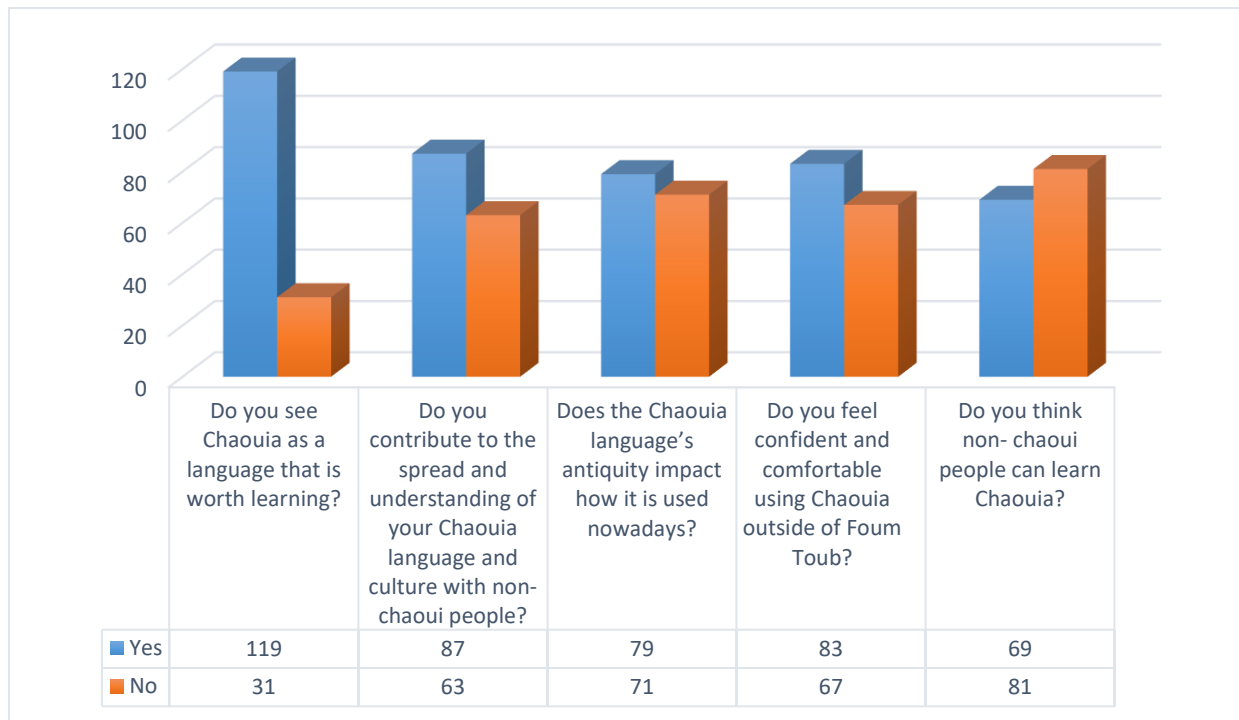
Out of the 150 participants, 93.3% agreed that Chaouia is an important aspect of Fom Toub's identity, while only 6.7% disagreed. This overwhelming agreement underscores the deep cultural and historical significance of Chaouia in the region.

When asked to elaborate on their responses, participants provided a wide range of explanations. Their responses to open-ended questions highlight the strong connection between the Chaouia language and cultural identity in Fom Toub, as well as the varying perspectives on its preservation and transmission. Many participants emphasized Chaouia's significance as an ancestral legacy and a marker of cultural distinctiveness, with 86% affirming the importance of teaching it to young children to preserve their heritage and prevent communication barriers in a predominantly Chaoui region.

Additionally, out of the 150 participants, 110 responded to the second question, which specifically targeted parents. Among these, 73 participants (72.3%) stated that this percentage of the parents reported that their children are bilingual in Chaouia and Algerian Arabic, reflecting the coexistence of these languages in the region. However, some participants argued that learning Chaouia should not be obligatory, citing its limited utility outside Fom Toub and advocating for a focus on globally applicable languages like Arabic, French, or English.

#### *Findings from Question N°13*

Figure 1 below visually summarizes participants' perspectives on various aspects of the Chaouia language, including its value, promotion, and accessibility. and illustrates both the pride and the challenges associated with preserving and promoting Chaouia in contemporary life.



**Figure 1.** Participants' Perspectives on Various Inquiries Regarding Chaouia

The data reveal mixed attitudes: 119 participants see learning Chaouia as important while 31 do not, and only 87 actively promote it to non-Chaoui individuals compared to 63 who are hesitant, often due to confidence barriers. Views are also divided on the impact of the language's antiquity, with 79 participants recognizing its historical significance while 71 feel it is less relevant today. Confidence in speaking Chaouia outside Foudm Toub is similarly split (83 confident, 67 not), highlighting the complexities of using a minority language beyond its community. Finally, responses were almost evenly divided on whether non-Chaoui individuals can learn the language (69 yes, 81 no), reflecting ongoing uncertainty about its wider accessibility.

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#### *Findings from Questions N°14, N°15, N°16, N°17, and N°18*

Table 9 introduces participants' opinions on the appropriateness and adaptability of Chaouia across different situations in the context of increasing exposure to foreign languages.

**Table 9.** *Participants' Opinions on the Suitability, Necessity, and Future of Chaouia Amidst Exposure to Foreign Languages*

Do you think Chaouia is suitable to be spoken on all occasions?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	28 %	72 %
Do you think that nowadays, you are forced to know and speak other languages rather than Chaouia?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	82.7 %	17.3 %
Since the dominant language in Algeria is Algerian Arabic, and with the exposure to new foreign languages, do you think you will continue to use Chaouia even if its use becomes very limited?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	78 %	22 %
Do you think that Algeria's exposure to many new foreign languages will cause the death of Chaouia over time?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	15.3 %	84.7 %
Is it a personal or imposed decision that you or your siblings do not speak Chaouia?	<b>Personal</b>	<b>Imposed</b>
	65.7 %	34.3 %

The findings in Table 9 reveal complex attitudes toward the suitability, necessity, and future of Chaouia in the context of growing multilingualism and foreign language influence in Algeria. While a large majority of participants (72%) believe that Chaouia is not suitable for all occasions, indicating that its use is largely context-dependent, only 28% see it as universally appropriate.

Furthermore, a striking 82.7% of respondents feel compelled to learn and speak languages other than Chaouia, reflecting the practical pressures of linguistic diversity and the dominance of languages such as Algerian Arabic and foreign tongues in daily life. Despite these challenges, optimism for Chaouia's continuity remains strong: 78% assert they will continue to use Chaouia even as its use becomes limited, and only 15.3% foresee the eventual disappearance of the language due to foreign language exposure—84.7% reject this outcome. Notably, decisions around not speaking Chaouia are mostly viewed as personal (65.7%) rather than imposed (34.3%), pointing to a degree of agency in language choice. Collectively, these results underscore a resilient attachment to Chaouia despite societal and linguistic shifts, while also highlighting the pragmatic adaptations and nuanced perspectives present within the community.

## Interviews Findings

This section presents the findings from the interviews conducted with 10 interviewees, offering insights into various sociolinguistic and cultural aspects of the Chaoui community. The questions explored a range of topics, including participants' educational experiences, media consumption habits, views on linguistic diversity, the impact of modernization on the Chaouia language, and the social dynamics of speaking Chaouia or other languages in different contexts.

*Interview Question One: Have you ever had the opportunity to study in an educational institution or even a Quranic school?*

The interview responses to the question about opportunities to study in either educational institutions or Quranic schools illustrate the diverse educational backgrounds among participants. Several interviewees reflected on dual experiences, such as Speaker 7, who shared, *"Fortunately, I had the opportunity to study in both of them, as I have a bachelor's degree in economics and have memorized the Holy Qur'an (not all of it)"*, highlighting the integration of religious and formal education. Others, like Speaker 4, recounted, *"Yes, in public educational institutions from primary to university"*, demonstrating a trajectory of academic advancement, while Speaker 2 offered, *"Yes, I got the opportunity to study at the Qur'anic school, which was fantastic. I also attended school till I reached middle school in Foum Toub"*, expressing appreciation for religious and secular instruction. Notably, Speaker 10 mentioned, *"I studied in a Quranic school only and I memorized the Quran"*, representing the small cohort with exclusive religious schooling. Overall, out of ten interviewees, five reported solely academic education, four had both academic and Quranic backgrounds, and only one had exclusively Quranic education, underscoring a prevalent trend toward integrated or academic-focused learning while maintaining a strong cultural connection through religious studies.

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*Interview Question Two: Do you listen to or watch any Chaoui radio or television shows? Do you think it is an effective idea?*

Responses to the question about Chaoui radio and television programming reveal a mix of personal engagement and strong collective endorsement for such media. Half of the interviewees stated they watch or listen to these programs, with Speaker 6 noting, *"I watched several programs in the Chaouia variety. And of course, I encourage doing so because the various programs provide valuable and useful information...[and] give an image of the culture of the Chaoui people and their various customs and traditions."* Those who do not personally watch or listen, like Speaker 1, still see merit in these efforts: *"I encourage doing so because it will allow us to learn about things related to our culture that we may not have known."* Even skeptics of content availability, such as Speaker 10, who explained, *"these programs are rarely shown on television and I do not own an upgraded smartphone"*, nevertheless advocated: *"I advise people who have the opportunity...to learn about their*

*mother tongue.*”. Ultimately, regardless of individual viewing habits, all interviewees agreed that promoting Chaoui media is an effective strategy for expanding and enriching knowledge of the language, heritage, and identity.

*Interview Question Three: What are your thoughts on Algerians’ exposure to a variety of other languages?*

Interviewees expressed predominantly positive views regarding Algerians’ exposure to a variety of other languages, emphasizing benefits such as cultural enrichment and global connectedness. For instance, Speaker 1 described it as *“a wonderful thing... since it opens up to the world and will help to the enrichment of Algerian culture”*, while Speaker 2 highlighted its value for *“the growth and development of all spheres, whether economic or cultural”*. Several interviewees also linked multilingualism to technological and communicative advancement, with Speaker 5 noting, *“It has become an essential tool for keeping up with the world and its advancements, as well as improving language and communication skills.”*. Nonetheless, some participants voiced caution, particularly about potential impacts on native languages: Speaker 3 stated, *“Exposure... may hurt the mother tongue and national dialects, hence I oppose it.”*, and others, like Speaker 6 and Speaker 10, suggested that while multilingualism is positive, it should not come at the expense of maintaining Chaouia. Overall, nine out of ten interviewees viewed exposure to multiple languages as beneficial, provided that such exposure does not undermine Algeria’s linguistic heritage.

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*Interview Question Four: Do you believe Chaouia will be affected by this modernization?*

Interviewees expressed divided opinions regarding the impact of modernization on the Chaouia variety. Six out of ten believed that Chaouia would remain resilient, emphasizing its deep cultural roots and daily use in Foug Toub—Speaker 5 explained, *“the Chaouia variety is the only one that expresses our identity, and we can’t live without it because it’s a part of who we are.”*, while Speaker 10 asserted, *“we consider it our official language here...and the majority of people use it extensively in their daily lives.”*. Conversely, four participants warned of negative consequences, attributing potential decline to increased prioritization of foreign languages and diminishing pride in the mother tongue. Speaker 6 cautioned that *“parents began to teach [foreign languages] to their children at the expense of their mother tongue...thus it is on its way to extinction.”*, and Speaker 3 argued that modernization *“destroys national identity in general and the Chaouia variety in particular.”*. These perspectives highlight ongoing tensions between cultural preservation and the social realities of modernization, with some confident in Chaouia’s endurance, while others see significant risks of language shift and loss.

*Interview Question Five: Do you speak Chaouia comfortably when you visit Batna City, or do you feel some sort of way?*

Out of ten interviewees, seven reported feeling comfortable speaking Chaouia in Batna City, frequently expressing pride in their Chaoui heritage and mother tongue. Speaker 1 shared, *"I do not feel embarrassed when speaking it. On the contrary, I am proud of it."*, and Speaker 6 similarly affirmed, *"I am proud of my Chaoui origins and that I am proficient in my mother tongue, which many people have lost."*. Speaker 9 added, *"The majority of Batna locals speak the Chaouia variety."*, underlining a sense of belonging and linguistic community. However, three participants described feeling discomfort due to social pressure and stigma. As Speaker 3 noted, *"Everyone who speaks Chaouia in Batna is mocked and opposed."*, while Speaker 4 observed, *"Although Batna is considered the capital of Chaouia, there is often a lack of acceptance of the language."*. Speaker 8 further remarked, *"People stare at me strangely when I speak Chaouia, even those with Chaoui origins."*. Some responses also highlighted situational challenges; for instance, Speaker 5 felt mostly comfortable but switched to Arabic when others could not understand Chaouia, and Speaker 7 avoided using it in settings where it might not be understood. Overall, the findings reveal a blend of pride and resilience among most Chaouia speakers in Batna, alongside persistent challenges related to social perception and acceptance.

*Interview Question Seven: Have you ever been judged for speaking Chaouia by individuals living in Batna?*

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Interviewees' responses to the question of whether they had ever been judged for speaking Chaouia in Batna reveal a divided experience. Half of the respondents reported instances of judgment and highlighted accompanying negative stereotypes. For example, Speaker 1 stated, *"Some people regard us as retarded or dislocated from Batna city because we speak it,"* and Speaker 6 remarked, *"Many residents associate Chaouia speakers with the countryside, calling us 'Duarist'."*. Similarly, Speaker 8 recounted, *"Most of them consider us illiterates because we do not speak Algerian Darija or any other language other than Chaouia"*, while Speaker 5 noted, *"Some people make conclusions about others based on the language they speak."* Speaker 4 further emphasized the social impact, stating, *"Their view of you alters dramatically."*. In contrast, the other half of participants did not encounter any judgment, stressing that Chaouia is commonly spoken and widely accepted in Batna, as Speaker 2 noted, *"Batna is dominated by the Chaoui character."*. Speaker 9 agreed, highlighting the prevalence of the language in the region, and Speaker 10, while mentioning occasional communication issues, did not recall personal experiences of judgment. Speaker 3, although not directly judged, expressed concern about the language's decline. These responses underscore a complex sociolinguistic landscape in Batna, marked by both negative stereotypes and stigma as well as pride and widespread acceptance of the Chaouia variety, reflecting broader social dynamics and ongoing negotiations of linguistic identity.

*Interview Question Eight: Have you ever been judged because you spoke a language other than Chaouia here in Foug Toub?*

Interviewees' experiences of being judged for speaking a language other than Chaouia in Foug Toub reveal a community divided between linguistic conservatism and emerging acceptance. Half of the respondents admitted to experiencing negative attitudes or discrimination when using languages other than Chaouia. For instance, Speaker 3 noted, *"Everyone who speaks a language other than Chaouia will be judged, and I have noticed a little racism in Foug Toub."*, while Speaker 6 reported comments like, *"You are of Chaoui origins, why do you speak Arabic?"*, expressing the expectation that Chaouia should remain the primary means of communication. Speaker 8 pointed out that this is *"a fairly common phenomenon"*, and Speaker 9 explained that *"Most individuals in Foug Toub speak exclusively in Chaouia and are often astonished when another language is used."*. Meanwhile, Speaker 4 observed clear disapproval from locals towards non-Chaouia languages. Conversely, the other five participants reported no such experiences, often because they only spoke Chaouia or perceived the community as more open. Speaker 2 even described Foug Toub as *"an outstanding location with people that is at the forefront of urbanization."*. Speaker 7 further added that Algerian Arabic is so widespread that it is not seen as foreign. Thus, interviewees' testimonies highlight both strong expectations for Chaouia loyalty and growing pockets of linguistic tolerance within Foug Toub.

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## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study offer a multidimensional perspective on the sociolinguistic status of Chaouia in Foug Toub, situating them within the broader theoretical context outlined in the literature review. Both the questionnaire and interview data point to the centrality of Chaouia as a marker of cultural identity (Fishman, 1964; Romaine, 2009) and reveal distinctive patterns of usage, attitudes, and challenges associated with modernization and multilingualism.

### Chaouia and Cultural Identity

In line with Romaine (2009) and Fishman (1964, 1966), the overwhelming majority of questionnaire respondents (93.3%) affirmed that Chaouia is fundamental to Foug Toub's collective identity. Interviewees echoed this sentiment, frequently expressing emotional attachment and pride in their mother tongue. For instance, many interview participants emphasized the importance of passing Chaouia down to future generations, illustrating Fishman's concept of language loyalty and Holmes's (2013) assertion that language functions as a vehicle for cultural transmission.



### **Patterns of Use: Contexts and Domains**

Data from both research instruments reveal a high degree of Chaouia maintenance, especially in private and rural domains. Questionnaire figures demonstrate frequent use within the household and in agricultural settings, while daily interactions in markets and streets also support its vitality. Interviews reinforced this trend; several participants described feeling at ease using Chaouia within Foudj Toub and rural spaces, where the language is not only expected but celebrated.

Conversely, both sources of data reveal declining use in institutional and formal contexts such as schools, workplaces, and religious settings, a finding consistent with Holmes (2013) and Fishman (1991). Interviewees attributed this decline to the dominance of Algerian Arabic, French, and the growing necessity to use globally relevant languages, mirroring broader sociolinguistic patterns of language shift (Potowski, 2013).

### **Attitudes toward Bilingualism, Multilingualism, and Modernization**

The literature on Algeria's linguistic situation (Benrabah, 2013; Belmihoub, 2018) describes a complex environment of language contact, bilingualism, and increasing English use. Both questionnaire and interview findings confirm that while the intergenerational transmission of Chaouia remains generally strong, the emergence of bilingualism and code-switching is pronounced, which reflects patterns highlighted by Weinreich (1979) and Trudgill (1991). Parents often aspire for their children to be bilingual, equipping them for opportunity while maintaining local identity. Most interviewees considered exposure to other languages as culturally and economically enriching, provided it does not come at the expense of Chaouia.

However, the tension described in the literature between language preservation and the perceived prestige of global languages (Maddy-Weitzman, 2012; Fishman, 2001) was evident in both datasets. While a strong majority expressed a desire to continue using and transmitting Chaouia, minority voices, especially among interviewees, articulated concerns about declining intergenerational use and stigma in urban or formal domains, resonating with the findings of Rouabah (2020) and Sasse (1992) regarding factors contributing to language endangerment.

### **Language Preservation and Perceived Risks**

While most respondents expressed confidence in the resilience of Chaouia, a minority voiced concerns about the potential risks posed by modernization and the dominance of other languages. These individuals fear that increased exposure to global languages, like French and English, could lead to the gradual erosion or extinction of Chaouia. Such concerns are consistent with studies on language endangerment, which warn about the threats posed by globalization and dominant languages to minority languages (Crystal, 2000; Sasse, 1992; Zeng et al., 2023).

At the same time, the majority of respondents maintained a positive outlook, believing that Chaouia's deep cultural roots and emotional significance would ensure its survival (Rouabah, 2020). This reveals a strong sense of devotion to their mother tongue and a collective commitment to safeguarding it for future generations.

### **Language Attitudes and Discrimination**

Consistent with the literature's attention to sociolinguistic hierarchies (Benrabah, 2005; Kaddour et al., 2025), the study found that both support and discrimination shape language practices in Fom Toub and Batna. Half of the interview participants recounted experiences of judgment or negative stereotypes when using Chaouia in Batna or conversely, when using languages other than Chaouia in Fom Toub. Questionnaire results reflected this ambivalence, with notable percentages acknowledging pressures to use more "prestigious" languages, and personal narratives describing feelings of pride contrasted with episodes of alienation, corroborating Kaddour et al.'s (2025) and Holmes's (2013) observations on the social realities of minority language use.

### **Language Shift and Prospects for Maintenance**

Finally, as the literature review underscores, language shift is a persistent risk in multilingual contexts (Crystal, 2000; Brenzinger, 2007). While the majority of participants in both the questionnaire and interviews expressed optimism about Chaouia's survival, some, especially younger respondents, voiced concerns about its limited utility outside the region and the cultural prestige of Algerian Arabic, French, or English. This finding points to the importance of targeted language policies, education, and positive media representation (Pine & Turin, 2017; Holmes, 2013), as recommended in both your analysis and the literature reviewed.

Ultimately, the findings of this study add insightful contributions to the field of Algerian sociolinguistics. Both data strands confirm that Chaouia's endurance hinges on a delicate balance between tradition and adaptation, underpinned by individual choices and collective identity.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The current study has shown that the Chaouia variety continues to serve as a cornerstone of cultural identity and daily communication in Fom Toub, even as modernization and multilingual influences reshape linguistic practices in Algeria. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the findings reveal a strong personal and collective attachment to Chaouia across generations, confirming its role in reinforcing community bonds and preserving ancestral heritage. While quantitative results demonstrate the language's sustained use in private, rural, and family settings, qualitative interviews illuminate both pride in linguistic roots and multi-faceted challenges faced when Chaouia is spoken outside its native domains. These include

social pressures, shifting domains of use, and the rising influence of Algerian Arabic, French, and English, especially among the youth. The overall evidence suggests that while Chaouia exhibits notable resilience, its future hinges on balancing the pragmatic benefits of multilingualism with community-driven efforts to maintain language loyalty.

To ensure the long-term vitality and transmission of Chaouia, several interrelated measures are recommended. First, integrating Chaouia as both a subject and a medium of instruction in regional education can enhance its prestige and facilitate intergenerational transfer. Second, expanding the presence of Chaouia in local media, including radio, television, and digital platforms, will bolster its public image, reach broader audiences, and connect with younger speakers. Third, grassroots community initiatives, such as cultural festivals, storytelling, and intergenerational programming, should be fostered to create natural and supportive environments for using Chaouia. It is also vital to encourage families to use Chaouia in the home and to raise awareness through campaigns and workshops about the importance of language maintenance. Policymakers and educational leaders must support these community-led efforts through inclusive language policies and adequate resource allocation. Moreover, future comparative research on other Berber-speaking or minority language communities in Algeria is recommended for crafting context-sensitive strategies and enhancing the nation's linguistic diversity.

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## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Several limitations should temper the interpretation and generalization of the study's findings. The research was geographically centered on Foug Toub, which may not capture the full sociolinguistic complexity of Chaouia-speaking populations across Algeria, where regional and community variations in language practice exist. While the sample size for the questionnaire was large, the qualitative segment comprised only ten interviewees, which may restrict the representativeness of individual perceptions, especially regarding generational and gender differences. Limited access to comprehensive and up-to-date theoretical literature may have impacted the depth of the analysis, and the challenges of integrating survey and interview data underscore the inherent difficulties of mixed-methods research. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data raises the potential for social desirability and recall bias. Nonetheless, by acknowledging these limitations and calling for expanded and comparative future research, the study lays essential groundwork for preserving Chaouia and enriching the understanding of linguistic resilience in multilingual contexts.

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## **Authors' Contributions**

KAMECHE Bouthyna: conceptualization, methodology, writing – original draft preparation, supervision, validation, visualization.

MOUAS Samia: data curation, formal analysis, critical review and editing of the manuscript, supervision, validation, and visualization.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there are no potential financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could be perceived to influence the integrity, submission, or publication of this article.

### **Ethical Implications**

To ensure full transparency and align with academic and editorial ethics requirements, all procedures involving human participants in this study were reviewed and approved. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. The potential ethical implications were considered and addressed as part of the study's methodology.

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Portions of this manuscript were prepared with the assistance of an AI tool (you.com) and (perplexity.ai) for proofreading, grammatical correction, and translation. All AI-generated suggestions were thoroughly reviewed, edited, and validated by the authors, who retain sole responsibility for the final content.

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