UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI
"L'ORIENTALE"

ANNALI

del Dipartimento di Studi
Letterari, Linguistici e Comparati
Sezione linguistica

AIΩN
N.S. 7
2018

**UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI NAPOLI
"L'ORIENTALE"**

ANNALI

*del Dipartimento di Studi
Letterari, Linguistici e Comparati
Sezione linguistica*

AIΩN

N.S. 7

2018

UniorPress

INDICE

Valentina Schiattarella

SHIFTING TO ARABIC? RECENT LINGUISTIC CHANGE AMONG SIWI-ARABIC BILINGUALS (EGYPT)[*]

Abstract

Il siwi è una lingua berbera parlata nell'oasi di Siwa, Egitto. I suoi parlanti sono bilingui: il contatto tra l'arabo e il siwi è visibile a tutti i livelli della grammatica (Souag, 2009; 2013), ma il fatto che la lingua sia in pericolo è attribuibile principalmente a fattori recenti. Analizzando dati raccolti sul campo, sarà mostrato che ciò è visibile, tra alcuni parlanti, attraverso l'uso di code-switching e la perdita in corso di alcune caratteristiche del berbero.

Parole chiave: Siwi, linguistica berbera, documentazione linguistica, code-switching, contatto, arabo

Siwi is a Berber language spoken in Siwa, Egypt. Its speakers are mostly bilingual: contact between Arabic and Siwi is visible at all levels of grammar (Souag, 2009; 2013), but the endangerment of the language can be mainly attributed to recent factors. Analysing data collected in the field, the paper aims to show that this rapid endangerment is reflected among some speakers by the use of code-switching and the on-going loss of some Berber features.

Keywords: Siwi, Berber linguistics, language documentation, code-switching, contact, Arabic

1. Introduction

Contact between Arabic and Siwi is not recent at all. As shown by Souag (2009, 2013), contact with different strata of Arabic has deeply influenced all levels of grammar in Siwi, even if the language still retains typical Berber features and can undoubtedly be considered as being part of this family.

Valentina Schiattarella, Università degli Studi di Napoli "L 'Orientale", Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo,

Arabs have lived in the area where Siwi is spoken for more than one thousand years. According to Souag (Souag, 2013: 28-29), some words probably entered the language before Siwi detached from other Berber varieties. Moreover, many loanwords come from the varieties of Arabic spoken in the Egyptian oases (Souag, 2009). Egyptian and Bedouin Arabic are of course other sources of influence, as the presence of those two groups is still obvious in the oasis. Some other strata of borrowings cannot be clearly explained, since Siwi probably retains forms that other neighbouring varieties of Arabic have lost (Souag, 2013: 32-34).

In recent times, because some socio-cultural factors have changed Siwi daily life quite radically, as we will see in 1.3, continuous contact with the Arabic community inside and outside the oasis has had its consequences not only on the grammar of the language, but also on the loss of traditional literary genres, customs and traditions.

Another consequence of this intense contact is the use of code-switching between Siwi and Arabic (mainly Egyptian Arabic).

The purpose of this article is to present some recent on-going changes in the language. After a general introduction, I will show how the loss of some Berber lexical items and grammatical features can be considered very recent because that loss is not attested to in past sources and not shared by all speakers. After that, I will give a preliminary analysis of code-switching in Siwi, based on authentic spoken data collected by myself from 2011 to 2014 in Siwa and El Gaṛa oases.

Rather than study the pragmatic and syntactic functions of code-switching, the article is an attempt to show how, in Siwi, code-switching seems to be a consequence of an even more intense contact with Arabic, caused by socio-cultural changes like the possibility of marrying a non-Siwi partner and the use of Arabic at home.

Furthermore, I will use comments given by the speakers during the transcription/translation sessions to prove that this particular insertion of Arabic lexical items is clearly recognizable as code-switching and distinguishable from borrowings, which are, on the contrary, pervasive among all speakers, even those who speak little Egyptian Arabic.

1.1 Some remarks on Siwa

Siwa is an Egyptian oasis situated in the Libyan Desert. The oasis is only about 60 km east of the Libyan border and it is connected to the rest of Egypt thanks to a 310-km-long road that links it to the coastal city of Marsa Maṭruḥ.

The population is divided into two groups: eastern (*šarqiyīn* or *əlfaya*) living in the eastern part of the oasis and western peoples (*ɣarbiyīn* or *ttaxsib*), living in the western part. They are also divided into tribes.

Siwa has been known since ancient times thanks to the oracle temple of Amon, where Alexander the Great crowned himself as the son of the God Amon in 331 a. C.

The Siwi language (*žlan n isiwan*) is a variety belonging to the Eastern group of Berber (Afro-asiatic), together with most of the Berber varieties spoken in Libya. It shares features mainly with the Libyan varieties of Sokna and El Fogaha (Souag, 2013: 18-26).

Almost the entire population of the oasis is bilingual, as Egyptian Arabic is spoken besides Siwi. Some Siwis can also speak other varieties, as different Arabic-speaking communities live in the oasis, like Bedouins[1]. The only monolinguals in Siwi are pre-school age children whose parents are Siwi (school in Siwa, like in the rest of Egypt, starts at the age of 6 years), and some very old men and women.

The Siwi language is also spoken in another small oasis called El Gaṛa, 130 km east of Siwa, belonging to the municipality of Siwa.

Neither Siwi nor non-standard Arabic have official status. The only official language of Egypt is Standard Arabic, which is used, in Siwa, only in formal and written domains, such as education, administration and for religious purposes.

1.2 Overview of the languages spoken in Egypt

Egypt is a mainly Arabic-speaking country where different varieties of this language are spoken. According to Wilmsen and Woidich (2007),

---

[1] Some Bedouin villages, like Maraqi, are part of the oasis.

the Arabic varieties spoken in Egypt can be divided into three groups. Urban dialects are spoken in the main cities and, among them, those spoken in the north are similar to Cairo Arabic, which serves as Standard Egyptian Colloquial (Wilmsen and Woidich, 2007: 1). In this article, I will refer to this variety as Egyptian Arabic. Bedouin dialects are scattered over various parts of the country, such as on the Mediterranean littoral to the west of Alexandria, in the Western Desert, in the oasis of Daxla and Fayyum and in the fringes of the Nile Delta and the Nile valley. Rural sedentary dialects are spoken by peasants in the Nile Delta and in Middle and Upper Egypt (Wilmsen and Woidich, 2007: 2). The varieties in the oases seem to show several developments not shared by other varieties, but they also have diverse features that make it difficult to consider them as constituting a separate group (Wilmsen and Woidich, 2007: 7).

There is great variation among the different varieties of those three groups (urban, Bedouin and rural sedentary dialects), but in general two main phonological features can be recognized: *q corresponds to [q] or [ʔ] in the oases (except Baḥriya, where it is [g]), [g] among Bedouins and [ʔ] in Egyptian Arabic (Cairo), *g corresponds to [ʒ] or [ʤ] among Bedouins and in most of the oases, while it is [g] in Egyptian Arabic.

Apart from Berber, which is only spoken in Siwa and El Gaṛa, another Afro-asiatic language, Beja, is spoken in Egypt. A portion of the population speaks a non Afro-asiatic language, namely Nubian (Eastern Sudanic, Nilo-saharan family) (Miller, 1996).

1.3 Is Siwi an endangered language?

Is it possible to consider Siwi as an endangered language? There are several factors that suggest that the language is in danger, and they are all linked to the fact that Arabic is increasingly spreading, in all domains. The most important factors are: Siwa was conquered in 1820 by the Ottomans in power in Egypt, ruled by Muḥammad Ali; the first school, where all subjects were taught in Standard Arabic, was established in the oasis in 1928. Furthermore, contact with outsiders significantly increased from the 1980s, when the road connecting Siwa to the coastal city of Marsa Maṭruḥ was built. It was

also in the 1980s that electricity and subsequently television arrived. As mentioned before, Siwi has no official status in Egypt. Among those factors, what seems to be more relevant is the fact that marriage between Arabic and Siwi speakers has become common practice and is now quite widespread (Schiattarella, 2015a; 2015b). Even if the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger considers Siwi as being "definitely endangered", Siwi is still the language spoken at home and passed down to children, at least in the case when both parents are Siwi. The situation changes in the case of mixed couples, because Arabic is usually the language chosen in the family, so the chain of transmission from mother to child is often interrupted in this environment. Nevertheless, Siwi is also acquired by all children who grow up in Siwa, that is, both children of mixed families and children of non-Siwi parents through peer socialisation (Serreli, 2016: 250-263).

It is clear that there is a change in progress, because Siwi shows some heterogeneity among its speakers, especially if we take into account geographical, age and gender factors and the degree of daily contact with Arabic speakers.

From a geographical point of view, Siwi does not show great linguistic variation among the different parts of the oasis. Probably the only area where Siwi is different is El Gaṛa, though more data is needed. Spontaneous data about this variety are indeed very scarce (Schiattarella, 2015a, 2017). El Gaṛa is more isolated than Siwa and the contact the inhabitants have with Arabs is less frequent. More research on the area would certainly show interesting outcomes at the linguistic level.

There is a degree of heterogeneity also if we consider the language spoken by young people and that spoken by the elderly. The former is likely to be much more influenced by Egyptian Arabic.

Age is not the only factor to be considered: if the speakers are often in close contact with Arabic speakers, like those who work with non-Siwi Egyptians or members of mixed couples, their speech will likely show instances of code-switching, mainly towards Egyptian Arabic, as we will see afterwards.

Gender is not a determining factor in causing linguistic heterogeneity, but from a quantitative point of view, it is more likely

that men will have greater contact with Arabic speakers, because women spend most of their time at home.

In the case of mixed couples, namely when one partner is Siwi and the other speaks Arabic, the language usually chosen for communication inside the family, and passed down to offspring, is Arabic. In some cases, the Siwi partner uses Siwi when speaking to the child in the absence of the non-Siwi partner. In general, however, the Siwi partner is the one that sets aside Siwi in favour of Arabic, and this happens for several reasons: Siwi is regarded as difficult for the Arabic-speaking partner and, additionally, Arabic seems to be considered more useful for the children's future (Serreli, 2016: 249-256). While Siwis usually have a very positive attitude towards their language and its preservation, mixed-couples are undoubtedly the perfect environment where Siwi can lose its strength.

2. Loss of some features and lexical items

2.1 Loss of some features

Siwi can be regarded as a language with its own system, but it has lost several features that are present in the majority of Berber languages.

It is hard to establish when Siwi lost those features, but probably some of them were already absent at a very early stage of the language, such as the absence of the state opposition on nouns, while others remain present only among some speakers.

Some examples of Berber features that have been lost in Siwi are mentioned below:

a) Siwi has no gender distinction in second and third plural independent pronouns, subject affixes (obligatorily attached to the verbs) and clitics (direct/indirect objects, possessive, etc.), while most other Berber languages still retain this distinction (Galand, 2010: 103-122 for an overview on pronouns in several Berber varieties). This loss is attested in all past sources of Siwi.

1) *ənknəm*   *əčč-əm*[2]
   IDP.2PL   eat.PFV-2PL
   'You (M/F.PL) ate'

2) *əntnən*   *i-təčč-ən*
   IDP.3PL   3-eat.IPFV-PL
   'They (M/F) eat'

b) Nouns in Siwi (unlike the majority of the Berber languages, but like most varieties spoken in Libya) do not show state distinction anymore, if they ever had it.

Nouns in Berber usually have two forms: annexed state and free state (for a typology of this opposition in Berber, see Mettouchi, 2014).

To cite only some cases, the noun is in the annexed state after almost all prepositions, numerals and for the post-verbal subject (or any post-verbal argument represented by a bound pronoun in the core of the clause in Kabyle), while the absolute state is the citation form of the noun and is used in the pre-verbal position or for the post-verbal direct object:

   tə-mmut   *t-qʃiʃ-t*
   SBJ3SG.F-die.PFV   F-child[ANN]-F
   'The girl died' (Kabyle, Mettouchi, 2014: 50)

   i-sʕa   *t-a-qədʕi-t*
   SBJ3SGM-possess.PFV   F-ABS.SG-herd-F
   He had a herd' (Kabyle, Mettouchi, 2014: 52)

---

[2] If not overtly specified, examples are taken from the author's data. The symbols used in the examples do not always correspond to the ones used in the IPA, namely: *š* [ʃ]; *ž* [ʒ]; *y* [j]; *č* [ʧ]; *ǧ* [ʤ]; *x* [χ]; *ɣ*[ʁ]; *ḥ* [ħ]; *ʕ*[ʕ]; *h* [ɦ]. Moreover, in the IPA, pharyngealization is marked by a raised *ʕ* [ˤ]. For example: *ḅ*=*bˤ*. Stress is marked by an acute accent. List of abbreviations: ABS: absolute state; ANN: annexed state; AOR: aorist; COMPAR: comparative; DEM: demonstrative; DO: direct object; F: feminine; IDP: independent pronoun; IO: indirect object; IPFV: imperfective; M: masculine; NEG: negation, PFV: perfective; POSS: possessive; PL: plural; RES: resultative; SBJ: subject pronominal paradigm; SG: singular.

It is not clear whether Siwi has ever had this state opposition, but if this was the case, it was lost at a very early stage, because no traces are found. In the following examples, post-verbal subject or object have exactly the same form, including as far as accent is concerned:

3)   *t-usə́d*   **tfunást**
        3SG.F-come.PFV   **cow.F**
        'The cow came'

4)   *tə-ktə́r*   **tfunást**
        3SG.F-bring.PFV   **cow.F**
        'She brought a cow'

There are at least two changes induced by language attrition that seem to be more recent, because they are still not completely shared by all speakers.

The first is the lack of gender agreement between feminine plural nouns and adjectives. The adjective can agree in gender or number with the noun, or only in number (the masculine plural form is then used, as a unique form for both masculine and feminine):

5a)   *təltawén*   **tizəwwarén**
        women.F   **big.PL.F**

or

5b)   *təltawén*   **izəwwarə́n**
        women.F   **big.PL**
        'Old women'

This loss is likely to be attributable to the influence of Arabic (Souag, 2013: 92-93).

The second change, which seems to be very recent, is the tendency to use the singular masculine relativizer as a unique form, with no gender or number agreement.

Laoust (1931: 119) found three forms: *wən* (SG.M), *tən* (SG.F) and *wiyən* (PL.M/F). Leguil (1986), Vycichl (2005) and Souag (2013) agree that the plural form is not present anymore and *wən* is used for both feminine and masculine plural.

Recently, the tendency to use *wən* as an invariable form, disregarding gender agreement in the singular, has been noted by Schiattarella (2014, 2015a):

6)   *tizárrət*   **wə́n**   *kwə́s*   *n*   *ššʕaṛ-ə́nnaw*
     broom.**F**   **REL(M)**   beautiful.COMPAR   of   hair-POSS.1SG
     'The broom that is more beautiful than my hair'

Occurrences of the feminine singular relativizer are nonetheless still attested:

7)   *əlmə́ṣrəb*   **tə́n**   *t-tə́ṛṛaḥ*   *i*   *šalíwən*   *loxrín*
     road.**F**   **REL.F**   3SG.F-go.IPFV   to   town.PL   other.PL
     'The road that goes to the other towns'

Both forms are found among all categories of speakers, and reflect what Leguil expected to happen in 1986 : "*wən*, *tən*, *wiyən* ont le même statut quel *lli* en arabe […] *wiyən* semble avoir disparu […] Si *tən* disparait à son tour, *wən* sera invariable comme *lli*" (Leguil, 1986: 108).

These are only some of the typical Berber features absent in Siwi. Even if the influence of Arabic is obvious, Siwi has also created its own system with some innovations which are not attested to anywhere else among Berber languages (probably also because we lack documentation for some varieties which share similarities with Siwi), and others that are shared with its closest varieties. This however goes beyond the aim of the article and will not be dealt with here.

2.2 Loss of some lexical items

Some lexical items seem to have been lost in Siwi quite recently: while they were attested at the beginning of the 20th century, they are

no longer so. Here follows some items that were rejected by my main consultants:

	Laoust (1931)	New data (2015)
Desert	*əddafa*	*ṣṣaḥra*
Car	*ṭrombil*	*lʕaṛbiya*
King	*ažəllid*	*əlmalək*
Female donkey	*tiẓiṭ*	*masʕuda*
Imam	*mʕairif* (Arabic)	*limam*
Parents	*iyâran*	*lwalden*

Along with the loss of those lexical items, there are some which are only recognized by elderly speakers or others that are falling out of use, such as *tixəṛxaṛen, tibəṛbaṛen*[3], only attested in the initial formula of folktales, whose meaning is unknown to the majority of speakers.

3. Code-switching among some speakers

The lexicon of Siwi is highly influenced by Arabic and this is not a recent fact: as noticed by Souag, the majority of items in past wordlists can be considered Arabic loans (Souag, 2013: 34). In general, Berber languages contain a large number of borrowings, even if the percentage may vary from one variety to another (Kossmann, 2013: 87-167 for an overview of borrowings in Northern Berber).

In Siwi, borrowed items from Arabic enter the language regardless of the fact that they are cultural forms (items that identify new concepts/objects and have no Siwi equivalent) or core forms[4] (items that replace forms already existing in the language).

In general, scholars seem to agree that the distinction between borrowing and code-switching is hard to establish, because the two concepts are linked and probably reflect different stages of the

---

[3] According to some speakers, *tixəṛxaṛen* refers to things that are dragged, while *tibəṛbaṛen* refers to the speech/words (Schiattarella, 2017: 21-22).

[4] See (Myers-Scotton, 1993) for the distinction between the two types of forms.

same phenomenon: borrowings (especially those referring to core forms) can enter the lexicon after having been used in instances of code-switching (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

Phonological or morpho-syntactic integration can help establish this distinction, even if it cannot be considered as the only way to distinguish borrowings (more integration) from code-switching (less integration). Moreover, the fact that borrowings are also used when there is already an equivalent in the recipient language suggests that their use cannot be considered only as a manifestation of the necessity the speaker has to fill a lexical gap. The same can be said for code-switching.

Nevertheless, there are cases where the status of code-switching is clear: lexical items are not part of speakers' usual lexicon and are only found among a limited portion of the population. Additionally, the foreign status of those lexical items is recognized by all speakers, including those who spontaneously use them. This diagnostic feature is underlined by Manfredi, Tosco and Simeone-Senelle (2015: 286):

> CSW is the presence of lexical or sentential material belonging to different linguistic systems, provided that its different origin is still transparent in the speaker's output in one or more grammatical domains.

Moreover, it is likely that the use of code-switching is motivated by pragmatic functions, as suggested by Mettouchi 2008 for Kabyle (Berber, Algeria). This last aspect goes beyond the scope of this article.

In this section, I propose to use criteria developed during the elicitation sessions with Siwi speakers, during my fieldwork, in order to establish whether we have cases of code-switching or borrowing.

The criteria used for this evaluation are 1) self-correction, in which the speaker corrects him/herself and translates the words into a Siwi form and, 2) evaluation of the informants who, listening to the recordings of the speaker, suggested a better Siwi form or simply underlined how this was not "proper" Siwi. Those criteria are certainly biased by the speakers' ideology regarding Siwi and Arabic, but they are particularly useful when it comes to

distinguishing borrowings from code-switching. They give us insights on the status of those lexical items and whether 1) they are part of the speakers' usual lexicon; 2) they are perceived as foreign and 3) they are used by the entire population.

Code-switching towards Arabic (mainly Egyptian Arabic) was mostly noticed among Siwi speakers who have daily contact with non-Siwi Egyptians. The speakers chosen for this study belong to this category, as shown by their metadata:

Speaker	age	education	job	gender / languages spoken / notes
Speaker 1 (S1)	45	university	manager of the Office of Tourism of Siwa	M / Egyptian Arabic and English / married with an Arabic-speaking woman from Alexandria
Speaker 2 (S2)	40	high school	manager of a restaurant	M / a bit of English and Egyptian Arabic / daily contact with tourists
Speaker 3 (S3)	50	high school	manager of the museum of Siwa	M / Egyptian Arabic and English / I noticed that he chose Arabic rather than Siwi, when speaking to people whose parents were not both Siwi (one Arabic, the other Siwi-speaking)
Speaker 4 (S4)	30	university	artisan	F / Egyptian Arabic and English / married to an Arabic-speaking Egyptian man. She uses Arabic at home with her husband and English when working for NGOs projects
Speaker 5 (S5)	35	high school	shop keeper	M / Egyptian Arabic and English / He uses Egyptian Arabic with tourists every day
Speaker 6 (S6)	35	university	hotel employee	M / Egyptian Arabic and English / He uses Egyptian Arabic with tourists every day

Their code-switching is not limited to the insertion of single lexical items, but includes phrases or entire chunks of the conversation.

The context is also important. Data come from recordings carried out during fieldwork in Siwa (2011-2014). People were asked to speak in Siwi about a topic of their choice. It was indeed explained that the focus of study was Siwi. This is a crucial point to consider because in dialogues, when one of the speakers started to switch towards Arabic, they were often warned by the addressee to "speak Siwi".

In this recording, the speaker starts talking about all the beauties of the oasis, stressing how different it is from the rest of Egypt. It is likely that he repeated this story many times in Egyptian Arabic to tourists, as he is the person to whom people go to obtain information about the oasis:

8) *ɣú(ṛ)-nnax   ləḅḥeṛə́t   /   amán   n   tísənt   /*
    at-1PL   lake.F   /   water.PL   of   salt.F   /

    *yə-ʕmaṛ-ín-a   əlmanẓár   /   **gamīl   giddan**   /*
    3-do.PFV-PL-RES   view.M   /   **beautiful.M   very**   /

    g   isíwan   /
    in   Siwa   /
    'We have a lake, salt water, it makes a **very beautiful** view in Siwa' (S1)⁵

During the transcription/translation session, when listening to his narration, the speaker suggested replacing *gamīl giddan* with the Siwi *kwayəs kom*, probably because he remembered my request "to speak Siwi".

əlmanẓar, an Arabic word which has kept its morphology, was not considered as foreign or incorrect by him.

What is interesting here is that *kwayəs* and *kom* are both of Arabic origin (Eg. *kuwayyis* 'good', Souag, 2013: 88; *kom* 'heap', Vycichl, 2005: 245), but must have been adopted for a sufficient amount of time to be now felt as proper Siwi forms. In this example, the

---

⁵ I thank Valentina Serreli for her suggestions and for helping me with the transcription in Arabic.

difference between code-switching (*gamīl giddan*) and borrowing (*kwayəs kom)* is clear-cut.

Talking about the story of Alexander the Great, who arrived in Siwa and went to the temple of Amon in order to crown himself as the son of the God Amon, he said:

9)   *yə-ffáɣ*   *sg*   *lmáʕbadd*   /   **ṃaḅṣūt**   /
     3SG.M-go_out.PFV   from   temple.M   /   **happy.M**   /
     'He went out of the temple, (he was) **happy'** (S1)

But then he corrected himself, telling me that there was a more correct Siwi way of saying this, with the verb:

     yə-ṃḅṣít-a
     3SG.M-be_happy.PFV-RES
     'He was happy'

Talking once more about the temple, he said:

10) *ámra*   *di*   *innuqúš*   /   **mawgūda**   *ə́gd-is*   /
     now   EXIST   inscriptions   /   **present.F**   in-3SG.M   /
     'Now there are inscriptions, they are (still) inside it' (S1)

Then, he told me that *mawgūda* (Egyptian Arabic) was not Siwi.

Another speaker first uses an adverb in Egyptian Arabic (in bold), then replaces it with a Siwi one, *(n) məlḥaq*, of Arabic origin, as well:

11) *əlqə́ṣṣət*   **faʕlan**   /   *n*   *məlḥaq*   /   *yáʕni*   /
     story.F   **truly**   /   of   real   /   I_mean   /
     '(This) story is **for real**, for real, I mean' (S2)

In the following example, the speaker does not correct himself, but when translating with my main consultant, the latter suggested

replacing *fi lbidaya* with the Siwi *g əllawəl* (*g* 'in'; *llawəl* is Arabic 'first', Souag, 2013: 111), again considered as the correct Siwi form:

12) **fi lbidaya** / *yə-bnú-n* *agbiwən-ə́nsən*
    in beginning / 3-build.PFV-PL houses-POSS.3PL
    'At the beginning, they built their houses' (S3)

Example 13 is also very interesting: the speaker starts with the Siwi adverbial phrase: *ámra dáwa* and then she translates it into Arabic.

Moreover, she uses *qabila* rather than the Siwi borrowing *ləqbayəl:*

13) *ámra dáwa* / **fi əlwəqt əlḥāli** /
    now DEM.SG.M / **in time current** /

    díllan g isíwan ḥdáš **qabīla** /
    to_exist.PL in Siwa eleven **tribes** /
    'Now, **nowadays**, in Siwa there are eleven **tribes'** (S4)

The word *əlwəqt* is actually the only word Siwi has for 'time' and the fact that **q* is realized as [q] and not as [ʔ] means that it has not entered the language recently, through Egyptian Arabic. Nevertheless, in this case, it is part of a fixed expression and certainly to be considered as an instance of code-switching.

The following excerpt is from the same speaker:

14) *ámra dawá-ya i-tásəd ššúɣl*
    now DEM.SG.M-RES 3SG.M-come.IPFV job.M

    n ssiyáḥət / **mā-ʕraf-š eħ** /
    of tourism.F / **NEG-know.1SG-NEG what** /
    'At this moment, jobs for tourisms are introduced, **I don't know what else'**
    (S4)

mā-ʕraf-š eh is from Egyptian Arabic: negation in Siwi is formed by prefixing *l(a)-* to the verb:

> *l-ə́ssn-ax*
> NEG-know.PFV-1SG
> 'I don't know'

The Siwi interrogative word for 'what' is *hanta* or *tanta*.

As far as discourse markers, interjections and adverbs are concerned, in Siwi, some of them are found among all categories of speakers (men and women, of different ages), like *yaʕni*, 'I mean'; *xaḷaṣ*, 'that's all'; *ṭabʕan*, 'sure, of course', while others are only very frequent among some speakers and are recognized as foreign. In my analysis, their use is therefore to be considered as a case of code-switching.

In the following dialogue, one speaker (S6) asks the other (S5) to talk about Siwa and the difference between them and the rest of the country. S5 code-switches towards Egyptian Arabic several times during the conversation:

15) **xalli_bālak**   *lə́ʔnna*   *w-i-(y)ók*   /
    be_careful.M   because   DEM-PL-2SG.M   /

    əddbáš   *n*   *ənnháṛdin*   /   *ámra*   *daw-ók*   /
    thing.PL   of   past   /   now   DEM-2SG.M   /

    ənšní   /   *lá-di*   *əddbáš*   *n*   *w-i-(y)ok*   /
    IDP.1PL   /   NEG-EXIST   thing.PL   of   DEM-PL-2SG.M   /

    ah   /
    yes   /

    yaʕtabar   *am*   *ədbáš*   *qdím-ən*   /
    let_s_consider   like   things   old-PL   /

masalan   /   *dílla-n*   *əgd-ók*   /
for_example /   there_are-PL   here-2SG.M /
'**Be careful** because those, the things of the past, nowadays, we… there are no such things' (S5)
'Yes' (S6)
'**Let's say**, like old things, **for example**, we have them here (in Siwa)' (S5)

At the end of the recording, S6 warned me that S5 was not always faithful to my request "to speak Siwi".

The following excerpt is from a conversation where the speaker talks about how things have changed in Siwa, especially in the way people entertain themselves in the evening. In the past, people gathered around an old woman to hear stories, while now they prefer watching television:

16) *dí*   *ənnẓám*   /   *ənnháṛdin*   /
      EXIST   system   /   in_the_past   /

      ya_reet *ga-nə́-ddwəl*   /   *am*   *əlláwəl*
      if_only   IRR-1PL-come_back.AOR /   like   first
      'There was a system, in the past. **If only** we could come back as (we were) before' (S5)

As shown in this paragraph, the use of code-switching in Siwi cannot be justified by the fact that lexical items from Arabic are "necessary", because there is a Siwi equivalent (even if of Arabic origin). Neither are they linked to concepts absent in the language.

It is possible that the topic of those narrations has influenced the linguistic production of the speakers, because Siwis usually tell stories about Siwa in Arabic or English to non-Siwi Egyptians or foreigners. But again this is not enough to explain the use of code-switching: when speakers having less contact with non-Siwi Arabic speakers were asked to talk about the same topic, the use of code-switching was very limited or even absent. The fact that all speakers are bilingual and hence able to code-switch is of course a crucial factor to

consider, but the main factor for code-switching seems to be the degree of daily communication in Arabic by Siwi speakers.

4. Conclusion

In the case of Siwi, as in many other languages, it is not only contact with Arabic that has led the language to such a high degree of endangerment. Arabic and Siwi have probably co-existed since the first Berbers reached the oasis and it is likely that the language was influenced by Arabic even before it became detached from other Berber varieties. The contact and influence that different strata of Arabic have had on all parts of Siwi grammar have been studied by Souag (2013).

Through the synchronic analysis of spoken data from Siwi speakers, I have shown that the presence of Arabic is not only in the form of lexical or grammatical borrowing, but also in the form of code-switching.

In code-switching, items are not integrated from a phonological or morphological point of view, are not used by all speakers and their foreign status is easily recognized.

At the current stage of the language, code-switching seems to be attested among people who have daily contacts with Arabic, at home (when one of the partners is not Siwi), or at work, when dealing with non-Siwi Egyptians.

A clear signal that the language is changing is not only given by the use of code-switching but also by the fact that the language is in a transitional stage, where some Berber features are being lost by a large part (but still not all) of the population (cf. 2.1):

> In a situation of language obsolescence, one expects to encounter a multiplicity of sporadic changes which would be considered to be mistakes by fluent speakers (if they existed) (Aikhenvald, 2012: 77).

Code-switching and contact induced-changes are not obligatorily linked to language shift or language endangerment (or death): two languages can influence each other and be "healthy" at the same

time[6], and language shift can also happen without the intermediary stage of code-switching (Myers-Scotton, 1993: 223). Moreover, a language can die abruptly, for a genocide or catastrophe, or for severe political repression, for example.[7]

Despite these considerations, in the case of Siwi the risk that the language loses its status compared to Arabic is high, mainly because of two reasons. The first is that the two languages are not equal, as we have seen in 1.3. In mixed couples, Arabic is the language chosen for the transmission from mother to child[8] and children who grow up in mixed families tend to use Arabic, even when talking to Siwi people. The second is that bilingualism is asymmetrical[9]: Siwi people speak Arabic while Arabs rarely speak Siwi.

For all those factors, the possibility that code-switching leads to a shift towards Arabic in the future is a possible scenario[10], especially if additional socio-cultural changes increase the use of Arabic in Siwis' everyday communication.

As far as linguistic perceptions and attitudes are concerned, as pointed out by Serreli (2016, forthcoming), when Siwis were invited to comment on the use of their language by younger generations, they strongly condemned the presence of items from Arabic, especially when there was no adaptation to Siwi at all or when a Siwi equivalent was available. Moreover, they criticized the use of Arabic and Siwi in the same discourse (code-mixing according to Serreli's terminology). This is indeed perceived as a corruption of the language, especially when this phenomenon is considered as being a way of neglecting Siwi (Serreli, 2016; forthcoming).

---

[6] For a distinction between normal language contact situations and language decay, see Sasse (1992: 59-80).

[7] Campbell and Muntzel (1989: 182-183) refer to this kind of language death as "sudden death" and "radical death".

[8] A different scenario is sometimes possible, even among speakers of smaller languages. According to François (2012: 93), among Mwotlap or Vurës (spoken in Torres and Banks Islands, Northern Vanuatu), when marrying someone from a different island, each member learns each other's language and children are raised bilingually.

[9] "Asymmetrical bilingualism", according to François's terminology (François 2012: 99).

[10] See Myers-Scotton (1993: 224-226) for all the steps involved in this process.

There are some inconsistencies between the attitudes of the speakers on one side and the actual use of the language, on the other side, as shown in this article.

At least a part of the speakers does spontaneously code-switch (towards Arabic) and there are many on-going changes in the language, not shared by all speakers. This happens regardless of the fact that speakers perceive it as being wrong.

Of course, the positive attitudes that Siwi speakers have towards their language, mainly encouraged by the connection Siwi has with the preservation of their heritage, traditions and customs (Serreli, 2016; forthcoming) should not be underestimated: a positive attitude often: "nurtures the maintenance of smaller languages" (Lüpke, 2015: 97), but to what extent this will have an impact on the current and future situation is still unpredictable.

Bibliographical references

Aikhenvald, Alexandra, 2012, Language contact in language obsolescence, in Chamoreau C. and Léglise I. (eds), *Dynamics of Contact-induced Language change*, Berlin/New York, Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 77-109.

Campbelle, Lyle and Muntzel, Martha C., The structural consequences of language death, in Dorian N. (ed), *Investigating Obsolescence: Studies in Language Contraction and Death* (Studies in the Social and Cultural Foundations of Language), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. pp. 181-196.

François, Alexandre, 2012, The dynamics of linguistic diversity: egalitarian multilingualism and power imbalance among northern Vanuatu languages, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (214), pp. 85-110.

Galand, Lionel, 2010, *Régards sur le berbère*, Milan, Centro Studi Camito-Semitici.

Kossmann, Maarten, 2013, *The Arabic Influence on Northern Berber*, Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics (67), Leiden, Brill.

Laoust, Emile, 1931, *Siwa*, Paris, Leroux.

Leguil, Alphonse, 1986, Notes sur le parler berbère de Siwa (II), in *Bulletin des Etudes Africaines de l'Inalco* VI (12), pp. 97-124.

Lüpke, Friederike, 2015, Ideologies and typologies of language endangerment in Africa, in Essegbey J., Henderson B. and Mc Laughlin F. (eds), *Language*

Documentation and Endangerment in Africa, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, Benjamins, pp. 59-106.

Manfredi, Stefano, Simeone-Senelle, Marie-Claude and Tosco, Mauro, 2015, Language contact, borrowing and code-switching, in Mettouchi A., Vanhove M. and Caubet D. (eds), *Corpus-based Studies of Lesser-described Languages: The CorpAfroAs corpus of spoken AfroAsiatic languages*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, Benjamins, pp. 283-308.

Myers-Scotton, Carol, 1993, *Duelling Languages: Grammatical Structure in Codeswitching*, Oxford, OUP.

Mettouchi, Amina, 2008, Kabyle/French codeswitching: A case study, in Lafkioui M. and Brugnatelli V. (eds), *Berber in Contact: Linguistic and Sociolinguistics Perspectives*, Cologne, Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, pp. 187–198.

Mettouchi, Amina, 2014, Foundations for a typology of the annexed/absolute state systems in Berber, in Taine-Cheikh C. and Lux C. (eds), *Berber in typological perspective*, STUF – Language Typology and Universals 67(1), Berlin, Mouton De Gruyter, pp. 47-61.

Miller, Catherine, 1996, "Nubien, berbère et beja : notes sur trois langues vernaculaires non arabes de l'Égypte contemporaine", CEDEJ *Égypte/monde arabe, Première série, Les langue en Égypte*, online since the 08/07/2008, http://ema.revues.org/index1960.html.

Sasse, Hans-Jurgen, 1992, Language decay and contact-induced change: Similarities and differences, in Brenzinger M. (ed), *Language death*, Berlin/New York, Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 59-80.

Schiattarella, Valentina, 2014, Relativization in Siwi (Berber), in Belkadi A., Chatsiou K. and Rowan K. (eds), *Proceedings of Conference on Language Documentation and Linguistic Theory 4*, London, SOAS.

Schiattarella, Valentina, 2015a, *Le berbère de Siwa: documentation, syntaxe et sémantique*, PhD dissertation, Paris, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes.

Schiattarella, Valentina, 2015b, A gender-based language disparity in a conservative society? The case of Siwi, in *The Middle East in London Magazine* 11 (5), pp. 13-14.

Schiattarella, Valentina, 2017 (2nd edition), *Berber texts from Siwa. Including a grammatical sketch*, Köln, Rudiger Köppe Verlag, foreword by Lionel Galand.

Serreli, Valentina, 2016, *Society, languages and ideologies in the oasis of Siwa. Listening to people's voices*, PhD Dissertation, Università degli studi di Sassari Sassari and Aix/Marseille Université - IREMAM, Aix-en-Provence.

Serreli, Valentina, forthcoming, *Contact-induced change from speakers' perspectives: a study of language attitudes in Siwa*, in Manfredi S., Tosco M. and Banti G. (eds), *Arabic in Contact. Studies in Arabic Linguistics*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins.

Souag, Lameen, 2009, Siwa and its significance for Arabic dialectology, in *Zeitschrift für Arabische Linguistik* (51), pp. 51-75.

Souag, Lameen, 2013, *Berber and Arabic in Siwa (Egypt): a study in linguistic contact*, Köln, Rudiger Köppe Verlag.

Vycichl, Werner, 2005, *Berberstudien & A sketch of Siwi Berber (Egypt)*, Köln, Rudiger Köppe Verlag.

Wilmsen, David and Woidich, Manfred, 2007, Egypt, in Versteegh, K. (ed), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, vol. 2, Leiden, Brill, pp. 1-12.

La rivista è in distribuzione presso: