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Between Loss and Salvage: Kabyles and Syrian Christians Negotiate Heritage, Linguistic Authenticity and Identity in Europe

Heidi Armbruster * and Souhila Belabbas *

Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Southampton, Southampton SO17 1BJ, UK

* Correspondence: H.Armbruster@soton.ac.uk (H.A.); belabbas.souhila92@gmail.com (S.B.)

Abstract: This paper brings together two different communities, Kabyles (Amazighs) and Syrian Christians, who are nevertheless marked by some commonalities: a strong diasporic dispersal as a historical experience, political, cultural and linguistic marginalization in their countries of origin, the deep association of collective identity with an "endangered" heritage language, a lived experience of multilingualism, and a post-emigration struggle of language maintenance and transmission. The Kabyles have roots in northern Algeria, and associate their language, Kabyle, with a pre-Arabized history of northern Africa, with claims to cultural authenticity and indigeneity. This paper focuses on research conducted in the UK, a relatively new immigrant setting for this community. The Syrian Christians originate from Turkey and have dispersed across different European countries since the 1960s. They make strong identity claims to Aramaic, "the language of Jesus", yet have also found its preservation and intergenerational transmission challenging. This paper focuses on research conducted in the German speaking context. Drawing on ethnographic research with these communities, we bring their post-migration language preservation activisms into a dialogue. This shows the enduring significance of the heritage language for social, cultural and historical identity, despite considerable language decline. It also demonstrates that the current survival of the "mother tongue" hinges on multilingual and multi-sited language activisms which bear the hallmarks of both new creativities and diminishing fluencies.

Keywords: endangered languages; language maintenance; diaspora; multilingualism; Kabyles; Syrian Christians

1. Introduction

This paper brings together research within two migrant communities—Kabyles in the UK, and Syrian Christians in Germany and Austria. While they are rooted in different cultures and geo-political histories, they nevertheless share some interesting commonalities: a strong diasporic dispersal as a historical experience, political, cultural and linguistic marginalization in their countries of origin, the deep association of collective identity with an "endangered" heritage language, a lived experience of multilingualism, and a post-emigration struggle of language maintenance and transmission.

The Kabyles are an Amazigh ethnic sub-group indigenous to northern Algeria. The historical Amazigh territory ranges from the Canary Islands to the oasis of Siwa in Egypt, and from the Mediterranean in the north to the Sahara in the south (Brett and Elizabeth 1997), and is historically known as "Tamazgha" (Maddy-Weitzman 2011). With the arrival of Islam in North Africa by the mid-7th century, some Amazighs were Islamicized and Arabized, while others maintained their cultural distinctiveness and language (Plantade 1993). Today, the Amazighs represent 30% of the Algerian population (Belmihoub 2018). They associate their language Kabyle, a variety of the Tamazight language, with a pre-Arabized history of northern Africa, from which claims to cultural authenticity and indigeneity

are drawn. As a result of the French colonization of Kabylia and the social and political instability in post-independence Algeria, many Kabyles have left the country and live dispersed in France, Canada, and many other countries. This part of the article is based on Belabbas' ethnographic study in the UK, a relatively new migratory setting for Kabyles.

Syrian or Syriac Christians are indigenous to a cross-border region in southeast Turkey, north-western Iran, northern Syria and northern Iraq. The group that this paper focuses on hails from southeast Turkey and has dispersed across different European countries since the 1960s. As a result of strong outmigration, only a small community remains in Turkey. They make strong identity claims to Aramaic, "the language of Jesus", yet have also found its preservation and intergenerational transmission challenging. This part of the paper is based on Armbruster's research in Turkey, Germany and Austria.

In both the communities that we worked with, concerns with the weakened state of the "mother tongue"[1] were common, and language preservation efforts were part of organized activist as well as non-organized and everyday practices of identity. While we worked in specific locations and will consider examples from local fieldwork in this paper, language preservation concerns were embedded in diasporic landscapes and networks in which resources, expertise and debates circulated, heightened by electronic communication.

Based on INALCO[2] (2012) and Ethnologue[3] statistics, the number of Kabyle speakers ranges from 5 to 7 million worldwide, of whom 5 million are in Algeria. The majority in Algeria also speak Arabic, French or both. The largest number of speakers abroad is in France. Their settlement in France, Canada and other places led to the creation of a plethora of organizations promoting the preservation of Kabyle culture and language. Their activities and transnational reach accelerated the consolidation of an Amazigh identity which has radiated back to Algeria (Kourdache 2001). While the remaining number of neo-Aramaic speakers in southeast Turkey is miniscule (about 2500), here, too, identity politics and language debates have engaged a transnational community audience, encompassing countries of immigration in Europe, Turkey, and beyond. In this article we will focus on local sites whilst placing the respective language concerns also in a spatio-historical context. We depart from the single-site focus (such as the home) common to research on heritage language practices in migrant contexts, and examine differently cited language activisms, and the way in which they produce as well as challenge experiences of bonding, "insiderhood", and community. In exploring the relationship between the ambition and/or ability to speak one's "mother tongue", people's actual plurilingual realities and language ideological spaces, we shed light on questions of language maintenance in contexts in which language minoritization is both a pre- and postmigration experience, and in which speakers struggle to maintain a resource that is of limited value in the domains of work, education or public life in the nation states in which they now live.

1.1. Language Maintenance-Superdiversity—Political Minoritization

We draw theoretical inspiration from debates on language maintenance (LM) in migratory transnational contexts. Migrants are often considered central protagonists in literature on language maintenance (LM) and language shift (LS) (e.g., (Fishman 1964, 1991)). In the process of resettlement in new nation states immigrants typically face linguistic contact experiences that are detrimental to their own linguistic cultures as they adapt to dominant host society languages (Pauwels 2019, pp. 235–36). According to Pauwels language shift, this is generally defined as situations where "one language is abandoned in favour of another language without the former being at risk of obsolescence as it is still being used elsewhere" (Pauwels 2019, p. 235), whereas language maintenance relates to strategies of language preservation in situations of LS. Whereas LS scenarios in migrant contexts were typically seen as transgenerational processes in which a stage of "transitional bilingualism" or "transitional multilingualism" (Pauwels 2016, pp. 26–27) eventually gives way to language loss, sociolinguistic scholarship influenced by post-structuralist and mobility paradigms presents a more constructivist and fluid notion of language practices in which migrant multilingualism is the norm, and hence, one might conclude, diverts from an

inevitable trajectory of loss (see (Blommaert 2010)). Pauwels suggests that conventional notions of LS may no longer capture the multilingual language practices in "superdiverse" Western cities in which a growing number of people engage in dynamic forms of "language mixing and switching" (Pauwels 2019, p. 248), and in which speakers may neither claim pride of place for any of the languages they use, nor compartmentalize their linguistic choices in terms of confined social networks or functional domains (Pauwels 2019, p. 249). Jan Blommaert proposed a similar idea in the notion of "'truncated' multilingualism", drawing attention to what he sees as dynamic communicative realities in the age of globalization: repertoires constituted of partial competences in "concrete accents, language varieties, registers, genres [and] modalities" (Blommaert 2010, p. 102). He suggests replacing conventional notions of the multilingual individual as someone who juggles a series of separate languages with someone who switches between and hybridizes resources from various languages in the process of exerting linguistic agency and living out social relations (see also (Moore et al. 2010)).

This idea has also found entry into the notion of "translanguaging", understood as both code-switching and mixing as well as micro-social practices of "going between different linguistic structures and systems (. . .) and (. . .) beyond them" (Wei 2011, p. 1223) in ways that are creative of multilingual "spaces" and "moments" (Wei 2011, p. 1223) of sociality (also Wei and Zhou 2013).

As Pauwels states, this dynamic model of what constitutes a "speaker", a "language" and, indeed, "multilingualism", complicates more conventional notions of LM and LS, which tend to imply more bounded concepts of "language" (2016, p. 183)[4]. She sees value in redefining LS, therefore, not as the loss of a language but as the loss of multilingual language repertoires and LM as strategies to preserve and rejuvenate them (Pauwels 2016, pp. 183–84). While these views are bound to challenge monolingual language ideologies that are still common in many immigration countries (see also (Pauwels 2019, p. 249)), they may do little to assuage linguistic minorities who struggle with language loss, and might strive for linguistic purity, standardization, and other strategies of language shift reversal. In this context, diminishing proficiencies in the heritage language are often associated with a cultural risk rather than an asset.

These issues apply, even if in differently nuanced ways, to the two cases we discuss here. Kabyles in the UK and Syrian Christians in Germany and Austria practice everyday forms of multilingualism in the dynamic terms described above, whilst making strong identity claims to an endangered heritage language and put various efforts into LM. Crucially, their language contact experiences were not a post-migration novelty but part of their pre-migration lifeworlds. However, as we will show below, in both cases, they have struggled to place their "native" language within their changing language repertoire after migrating.

Rather than dismissing the notion of LM as a parochial desire for ethno-linguistic sectarianism, we want to take a closer look at what gets preserved and valued in practices of language maintenance in these specific immigration contexts where the heritage languages in question—Kabyle and Aramaic, respectively—index neither a state language nor membership in a particular nation state (including the country of origin) and already rely on speakers' multilingual resources for their diasporic survival. We focus in particular on activisms formed around language learning, language maintenance and loss, and through which the work of identity and sociality is performed. We use the term "activism" in a broad sense, implying both more organized public-facing "mother tongue" campaigns as well as small, every day, even spontaneous language practices which are informed by an awareness of or dedication to LM. Evidently, such activist agencies are mediated in different socio-cultural settings and within the constraints and opportunities that those settings present. To illustrate some of these differently contextualized agencies, we address a range of sites in which they became apparent to us as researchers. This includes individual speakers as agents of LM in research interviews, as well as in community events, intellectual debates, online exchanges, and domestic family spaces. This allows

us to address both the ideological and moral stances that inform diverse LM practices as well as the relative, partial and emergent "mother tongue" fluencies across various social contexts. It will be seen that "mother tongue" language practices speak to both, experiences and fears of loss and desires for boundary maintenance, as well as to new avenues of linguistic revitalization, which may both engage and disengage speakers. Before discussing these cases, we situate both groups in their migration trajectories, which are complexly interwoven with historical experiences of minoritization.

1.2. The Kabyles—Migrant Trajectories

Algerian migration to the UK started in the 1990s, due to the unstable political situation and civil disturbances in Algeria during the so-called Black Decade.[5] The decision made by many Algerians to seek asylum abroad is generally associated with the events of this time (Collyer 2003). Early Algerian migration to the UK included both Kabyles and other Algerians, and the Algerian community currently in London includes both Arabs and Amazighs (Hopkins and Fiaz 2009, p. 35). By 2012, the number of Algerian migrants in the UK had reached 22,000 (Migration Policy Centre Team 2013). However, exact statistics on Kabyle migration to the UK are not available.

Belabbas' study is pioneering in this field. Except for Collyer's (2008) work, there has been little analysis of Kabyle responses to their new environment in the UK. The research participants presented here immigrated to the UK between the late 1980s and 2000s, and differ in relation to their immigration status, socio-economic and educational background. While the first cohort have a secure socio-economic situation in the UK today and are often well educated, many of those who have arrived since 2014 are undocumented migrants, yet also have university degrees. They brought a rich linguistic repertoire with them, yet generally stressed the importance of learning English for social mobility in the UK. Some of the newcomers that Belabbas met made a point of wanting to ensure a sense of cultural "integration" through volunteering in charity shops, maximizing exposure to British TV, and initiating conversations with parents at school gates.

Most research participants lived in different British cities, but met in London for Kabyle cultural and political events and gatherings. London has been seen as a prime example of what Vertovec (2007) called "super-diversity", and a city where people view cultural diversity as "a normal part of social life" (Wessendorf 2013, p. 149). Being "by far the most linguistically diverse part of the UK" (Ahn et al. 2010, p. 1) makes it a fertile ground for multilingualism. Belabbas argues that the Kabyles' post-migration language attitudes and practices have been vastly influenced by this culturally and linguistically diverse environment. As will be seen below, their attitudes towards French and Arabic in particular have been situationally articulated.

1.3. Syrian Christians—Migrant Trajectories

The Syrian/Syriac Christian (Suryoye)[6] community referred to here, belong to the Syriac Orthodox Church, which is rooted in the ancient Christian cultures of the Middle East (Armbruster 2013). Like the Kabyles, Syriac Christians do not have a nation state of their own but live as religious and ethnic minorities across different countries in the Middle East, and, as a result of emigration, in a global diaspora. The community addressed here originate from southeast Turkey, where a small minority of about 2500 people remain. However, they live in much larger numbers in Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, and Switzerland, where they have settled since the 1960s, both as labour migrants and refugees.[7] Syriac Christian history in Turkey is interwoven with the complex history of the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of the Turkish nation state in 1923. Victims of anti-Christian pogroms in the late 19th century and of the massacres targeting Eastern Anatolian Armenians and Syriac Christians during World War I, experiences of persecution and loss are tightly woven into the community's historical memory.[8] The Kurdish-Turkish conflict that dominated their home region in the 1990s, and a long history

of Turkish state nationalism that offered few protections to ethnic and religious minorities, increased a sense of being beleaguered, as well as the pressure to emigrate.

Language has played a major role in how the Suryoye have negotiated this history, their mutual ties and diasporic dispersal. Since Armbruster's first experiences of fieldwork among the community in Austria, Germany and Turkey in the mid-1990s, she has heard the Suryoye debate their language. It was both a regular subject "of debate" as well as a subject created "in debate", in the sense that speaking and using the "mother tongue" could be an act of articulating and authenticating identity. Language was one of the most prominent symbolic resources through which the Suryoye engaged reflections on their history, culture, and diasporic dispersal, and in which a personal stake in this communal history could be claimed, sought or felt. This was heightened, sometimes dramatically, by the perception that the "mother tongue" was dying.

The research that we draw from here was conducted by Armbruster in Berlin and Vienna. While Vienna hosts the largest group of Austrian Suryoye (about 3500), Berlin (about 3500) is relatively small on the Suryoyo German map (other cities are demographically more significant). However, both cities are highly diverse and homes to large numbers of people, with origins in Turkey. This has also mattered to how the Suryoye positioned themselves post-migration in these locations. In addition, Germany and Austria are known for strong monolingual language ideologies in key domains of society. Public discourses surrounding Turkish illustrate this particularly well. Turkish represents the largest non-indigenous linguistic heritage group in Germany, yet has been exposed to stigmatizing discourses that align Turkish language practices with idioms of integrationist failure.[9] The "deficit" model applied to *some* immigrant languages and *some* multilingualisms also informs the practical and ideological openings and closures that immigrant communities have faced in major domains of social participation (e.g., education, work). Aramaic has ideological invisibility in Germany and Austria, in the sense that it does not figure in public debates on immigrant languages. However, the tainted ideological position of Turkish, and, to some extent, Arabic, has also influenced attitudes of distancing towards those languages among the Suryoye, despite the fact that they belong to the multilingual repertoire of many in the community. To date, Aramaic has still only found small inroads in the German education system, and its maintenance is reliant on the ethnic communities in question. In Austria, Aramaic can be taught in state schools, as integrated into Syriac Orthodox religious education.

2. Methods and Participants

In both cases, our research addressed broader collective and diasporic identities which included language concerns, but was not solely linguistically focused. The Kabyle case is based on ethnographic fieldwork in London conducted between 2016 and 2019. The research examined questions of Kabyle identity formation in the UK, and included a specific focus on community activists and individuals who participated in the formation of a new ethnic organization in London. Belabbas' fieldwork revolved around community gatherings and individuals who organized and actively participated in events and historical commemorations central to the Kabyle calendar and to their main national narratives such as Yennayer (New Year), or the Berber Spring and Black Spring in Algeria (Tilmatine 2017). These events also illustrated many British Kabyles' desire to bond with other Kabyles and connect with their shared history in Algeria. The research also included an online dimension, as people actively engaged in practices of community networking and organizing via social media platforms, notably Facebook, Messenger, and WhatsApp. Belabbas was added to a chat group designed for the Kabyle organization members and took part in discussions held there. The participants involved were of different ages, immigration status, educational, social, and economic backgrounds, but all shared a belief and strong interest in their common origin. As the research unfolded, closer biographical and interview research was conducted with ten main informants who had come to know each other through the cultural organization and the virtual environment.

The material representing the Syrian Christian case stems from anthropological ethnographic fieldwork which Armbruster conducted over intermittent periods between the late 1990s and the 2010s in Turkey, Germany and Austria. The focus was on multi-sited practices of diaspora, history and identity. This included more traditional participant observation in a Syriac monastery in Turkey, as well as more urban styles of fieldwork in Vienna and Berlin. We draw on the researcher's familiarity gained throughout this period about language issues and debates observed in these sites, and work with more recent interview and some observational online data gathered in 2021 among engaged language activists in Vienna and Berlin, who were known to Armbruster from earlier fieldwork.

3. Language Activisms among Kabyles

The participants involved in this study shared a commitment to Kabyle identity activism. They expressed this differently, varyingly foregrounding cultural, social or political issues. These differences were related to their North-African class and cultural background, lived experiences, linguistic repertoire, gender, religious and/or political affiliation, as well as to their different migratory trajectories. Because most of them were born in Kabylia, they spoke Kabyle, and regarded it as their mother tongue. Only two respondents were born in France (Tamazight) and England (Numidia). While Numidia spoke Kabyle fluently, Tamazight did not. In order to compensate this felt deficiency, she chose "Tamazight" for her research pseudonym. While the majority of the research subjects were fluent in Kabyle, they also spoke Modern Standard Arabic, which is the language they typically learned at school, as well as the vernacular Arabic spoken in Algeria, also known as Darija. Although Kabyle children in Algeria learn French from primary schools, they are exposed to the language at a very early age. In addition, they also learn English from secondary school. Therefore, there are no monolingual Kabyle speakers. Kabyles are multilinguals with at least two languages in their repertoire. In what follows, the driving forces behind the Kabyle resistance to Arabic and the development of their transnational activism will be explained.

After Algerian independence, politicians who promoted the Arabic language believed that "Tamazight meant backwardness, rurality, ignorance and neo-colonialism, while Darija was merely "bad Arabic" to be overcome by Arabic speakers themselves who needed to work towards a universal spoken language" (McDougall 2017, p. 268). They attempted to replace French, Tamazight and Darija with Modern Standard Arabic in different domains, such as education, media, and the workplace. The Arabization process and the Arab-Islamic political ideology inspired Amazigh activists to establish the *Académie Berbère d'Echanges et de Recherches* (Berber Academy for Cultural Exchange and Research, later named Agraw Imazighen) in Paris in 1967 (Goodman 2005). Following the prohibition of both Tamazight and Darija in public spaces and schools, Amazigh cultural initiatives were only possible in exile in France, and often supported by French intellectuals such as Pierre Bourdieu (Goodman 2005). As a result of social, political, and economic upheavals prior to and after Algerian independence, most Kabyle intellectuals left for France (House 2006). There the Amazigh Academy promoted the Amazigh language through standardization, as expressed in the development of a Neo-Tifinagh writing system for example (Silverstein 2004). The study of the Tamazight language and culture was institutionally established by the Berber Study Group at the *Université de Paris-VIII-Vincennes*, a collaboration of both Kabyle and non-Kabyle scholars (Silverstein 2004). The Berber Academy transformed into "*Agraw Imazighen*" in 1969, aiming to recover the Amazigh cultural and linguistic patrimony, and began to publish the "*Bulletin d'Etudes Berbères*" (Tilmatine 2017).

Despite these pioneering developments in France, many Kabyles, including those involved in this study, believed that their Kabyle variety was endangered, and should be protected from decline. Research participants saw this evidenced in the exclusion of the Kabyle language in the Algerian education system. There is a plethora of educational and cultural books on Kabyle culture and language, but not in Kabyle. Therefore, politically active Kabyles (Collyer 2008) have devoted much effort to upgrade the status of this Kabyle

variety, by including Kabyle in a multilingual online dictionary called *Glosbe*[10], and creating language teaching websites and phone apps. Apart from work in linguistics, they also produced theatre, poetry and music to transmit the Kabyle language and culture. Moreover, language activists have sought to replace Arabic words by equivalents from Tamazight to preserve and codify Kabyle and demarcate their distinctiveness from/within Algeria as an "Arab nation". As will be shown below, this has also informed Belabbas' respondents' relationship to Arabic. Research participants who were parents found the transmission of Kabyle to their British-born children challenging if not impossible. Thus, they sometimes said they focused on the transmission of Kabyle cultural knowledge and heritage. People who were married to non-Kabyle speakers found it even harder. Of six participants with at least two children, only one, Numidia, spoke Kabyle fluently, while her brother lost his Kabyle as he grew up. Her summer visits in Kabylia and ongoing online contact with her cousins and in-laws helped her to maintain her linguistic knowledge. In what follows, the UK research participants' use of Kabyle will be addressed by looking at three main sites of engagement: Everyday multilingual practices activated in research interviews and conversations; standardization practices around the script; and, finally, online interactions and networking around Kabyleness. As will be seen, the use of the language is both socio-politically informed and often mixed with other languages.

3.1. Everyday (Multilingual) Activisms

Among the research participants in the UK, the Kabyles' efforts to lift the status of their heritage language also became expressed in disciplining their use of Arabic. This was particularly pronounced because the researcher has Kabyle heritage herself, and respondents often actively displayed their Kabyleness for her benefit. When Belabbas arrived at a Berber Spring event in London in April 2017 the woman who checked the tickets at the entrance welcomed her in Tamazight. When Belabbas replied with an Arabised Kabyle greeting *marhva yeswan* from the Arabic word *Marhaba*, the woman said: "It's better to say *ansuf yeswen* than *marhva yeswan*", as the former was "pure" Amazigh. Because of the researcher's limited Kabyle linguistic skills, she strategically used Kabylized Arabic and French words in ways that she hoped would support access to the Kabyle spaces in the UK. However, sometimes research participants made a point of teaching her "proper" Kabyle. For instance, during her stay at activist Nadia's house, Nadia "purified" her language by teaching her Kabyle words. In fact, Nadia often suggested playing her favorite language game, in which she called out singular words in Kabyle, and asked Belabbas to produce their plural form.

Anazâr, another politically conscious Kabyle, strongly embraced the idea of language purification. In the example below, his linguistic choices are displayed in a WhatsApp message sent to the researcher in which he offered to accompany her to a Kabyle event in London. His choice of "pure" Kabyle words is remarkable. For example, he used the uncommon Amazigh word *Yellu* for God, where Kabyles routinely use the Arabic word *Rabi*. Belabbas had to check the meaning of this word with her mother. Moreover, as can be seen in Figure 1 documenting this exchange, even the spelling of the word London was integrated into Kabyle:

These situated and often partial "mother tongue" fluencies often played a role in online forums, as well as in conversations with the Kabyle researcher, wherein these language knowledges were not only addressed, but also actively performed. However, particularly in interviews as slightly more formal speech contexts, respondents' multilingual repertoires came to the fore in different ways. For instance, participants with an academic or professional background typically held the whole conversation in English, using a language that indexed learnedness and migrant success in the UK. While some who had lived in Britain for a long time also used English because it had presumably become their dominant language, in online communications, they could be found to use English and French while emphasizing the symbolic significance of Kabyle. Generally among these ethno-conscious individuals, the use of Kabyle was often particularly vibrant in informal domains of casual

conversations and mixed in with French and English. During community events and festivals, though, many made special efforts to converse in Kabyle, as if to make a point about their commitment to a shared identity. This was also illustrated by Numidia. Although British-born, she spoke mostly Kabyle and French, rarely English. She stated that she felt "more comfortable when speaking Kabyle" at home and with her in-laws, and her ability to speak Kabyle strengthened her status in front of her husband and acquaintances in Kabylia. She even claimed that "I sometimes feel that I have forgotten my English," suggesting her strong identification with Kabyle. Numidia felt "proud" when she spoke Kabyle, and explained that she had been jealous at school when she saw "other pupils who could speak other languages than English." This suggested that being a multilingual individual in a London school was a symbolic asset rather than a disadvantage, and that claiming a language "of one's own" could enhance one's confidence and sense of belonging in those spaces. Immigrants also often positioned Kabyle in opposition to Arabic. However, these claims were situational. While some explicitly praised the beauty of the Arabic language and its richness in interview conversations, others distanced themselves from the language, whilst nevertheless investing in the social and economic capital (Bourdieu 1986) Arabic could offer in a migratory setting. Although Leïla and Nadir, young Kabyles recently settled in London, resisted speaking in Arabic during interviews, both shared their experiences with teaching Arabic to children of immigrants living in London.

Figure 1. Anazar's message in Kabyle.

These differently sited multilingual practices Belabbas observed over the course of her ethnographic fieldwork in people's homes and at different meeting spaces in London offered a glimpse into Kabyles' situational language use and linguistic ideologies. In addition to Kabyle and English, they also conversed in French, which seemed to be the second-best option to avoid Arabic. The choice of French seemed often natural, but also interactionally strategic. Being conscious of his "European looks", Ramy, an undocumented migrant, explained how he intentionally spoke in French by answering or making phone-calls in public spaces. By "performing" talk in French, he intended to assume a more prestigious persona and escape the prejudice Algerian migrants suffered in France, including being stereotyped as "*l'Arabe*". While many felt that being Algerian in the UK was liberated from the racist exclusion Algerians suffered in France, there was nevertheless an awareness of the tainted image of "Arabs"/"Muslims" across Europe post-2001 (Rosello 1994; Léal 2020), an image Ramy was keen to dissociate himself from.

Table 1 below shows some examples of Nadir's dynamic multilingual practices in which he repeated the same sentences in French, knowing that Belabbas understood both Kabyle and Darija. However, it is important to note that her position as a Kabyle researcher with a limited linguistic competence in Kabyle may have influenced Nadir's and others' language behavior. For example, when Leïla spoke to Belabbas' mother, she did not mix Kabyle with French in the same way, dynamically adapting to the situation.

Table 1. Examples of Nadir's multilingual practices.

Nadir	C'est ça l'idée te3 lektab heda . . . c'est ça l'idée de ce roman-là! [here Nadir's first sentence is the Algerian *Darija*: Arabic + French, then he translates it into French] Translation: This is the idea of that book
Nadir	Oui Ighil Ali, tes3ið Ath Yenni c'est deux tribus, asmi tekhðem fransa les écoles . . . lorsque la France a implanté des écoles en Kabylie, c'était les premières places oú y avait les écoles françaises . . . [he starts in French then speaks in Kabyle, switches to French, then to Kabyle before deciding to repeat his full idea in French] Translation: Ighil Ali and Ath Yenni were the first two places where the French constructed French schools . . .
Nadir	Donc l'émigration c'est zik qu'émigran l'ghashi [He uses both French and Kabyle in the same sentence, even conjugating the French verb "emigrate" in Kabyle, 3rd person plural in the past tense] Translation: So human migration started years ago
Nadir	loukan tejma3 thwasand [He uses Arabic and puts the English word "thousand" in plural, following the morphology of Kabyle] Translation: if you collect thousands

In Belabbas' research in London, it became apparent that individuals skilfully navigated their multilingual resources to assume their activist stances situationally. Particularly in interview situations, they often assumed the persona of cultural and linguistic expert, and some also claimed in these situations to cherish Kabyle without actually speaking it. In the many conversations that Belabbas had and observed in these activist spaces, it became apparent that the assertion of a Kabyle ethnic identity and of social status positions in the UK involved not so much the display of perfect Kabyle, but the dynamic navigation of Kabyle within a range of multilingual resources, and in conversations with differently fluent interlocutors. This could include displaying "the right" cultural attitude. For instance, research participants sometimes jokingly asserted that the researcher's own insufficient fluency in Kabyle was compensated for by her dedication to conduct academic research on the Kabyles, which was seen as a contribution to the Kabyle cause.

3.2. Between Essentialists and Constructivists—Standardizing the Script

A recurring issue for language activists revolved around language standardization and the script. While some argued for the Tifinagh writing system, displayed in Figure 2, others favored the Latin script.

As an extension of the ancient writing system, Tifinagh, Kabyle intellectuals associated with the Academie Berbère developed Neo-Tifinagh, which is a modern script for transcribing Tamazight that used either the Tifinagh, Arabic, or Latin alphabet. A heated debate on the choice of the "right" alphabet emerged after the Algerian government declared Kabyle a national language in 2016. Although the official recognition of Tamazight in Algeria has given a boost to LM efforts, observers argue that more work needs to be done, such as the production of textbooks and more pro-active promotion policies.

Figure 2. Tifinagh symbols and Neo-Tifinagh alphabet. The lowercase letters represent the orthography in Latin script with diacritics indicating specific Amazigh phonemes.

This concern was also shared by the UK informants. For instance, Leïla argued that the Tamazight language "should be written in the language of the Quran and the language of the Algerian's identity", rejecting what she called the "French alphabet", in reference to the Algerian regime's Arabization rhetoric after 1962. Others, such as Ricky who has lived in London for more than 20 years, supported the idea that Tamazight "should be written in Latin alphabet, as it offers access to technology and the international market". However, there were a number of young Kabyles, such as Numidia, who passionately believed in the "authenticity" of the Tamazight language, and insisted that it had to be written in its original Tifinagh symbols. Numidia stated that "it definitely should not be written in Arabic, how can a language be officialized but written in another language . . . most shops now [in Kabylia] are written with Tifinagh anyway, so they should write it in Tifinagh". Anazâr asserted: "Our language is already in danger, it is just an oral tradition, I mean what we speak now is what is left from our ancestors and we have to maintain it. We have to write it down and transmit it over the generations". Debates around the choice of an "ideal" script mostly reflected the participants' political stances. While all agreed on the cultural superiority of the Tifinagh script and most rejected the Arabic script, their perspectives regarding the style and characters to be used varied. While some respondents saw in it a key instrument for LM that would give proper expression to the language's ancestral value and historical significance, these ambitions stood in contrast to a very small number of Kabyles who can actually read and write Tifinagh. None of Belabbas' informants wrote or read Tifinagh. However, despite their differences, they were united in their frequently expressed desire to learn, preserve and transmit the ancient script, and Tifinagh letters embodied and symbolically communicated this affective stance on t-shirts, event flyers, and in online profiles.

3.3. Online Multilingual Practices

Online platforms represented a fertile space for cultural and linguistic activism. They also provided evidence of the individuals' fluid and complex articulation of their identities. The platforms researched included the official page of the Kabyle/Amazigh Cultural Organization, other pages created by the Kabyle diaspora online, as well as participants' personal profiles. The participants' interactions and reflections on the different platforms were often framed by the social, cultural and/or political aims of the page. A plethora of language activities are documented online through the creation of websites and Facebook pages, such as Amazigh Sports Association in the UK, Amazigh Aid UK, the Kabyle/Amazigh cultural organization in London and other pages like Sais-tu? Version Kabyle and National Geographic Kabyle. In many cases, these online spaces aim to promote the Kabyle and

Tamazight language (Harris 2018). Some have dedicated much effort to the development, revitalization and "purification" of the Tamazight/Kabyle Language, while others advertise language teaching workshops in France and Canada.

Research participants actively promoted these efforts by sharing these posts or contributed their own knowledge about the etymology and meaning of words. This included sometimes heated exchanges about words being Tamazight or Arabic. A number of commonly used words both in Kabyle and *Darija* which users believed to be Amazigh or Arabic were in fact of Greek/Latin origin, such as the word *Burnus*, which is derived from the Greek word *birros*, meaning hooded cloak. Similar concerns about authenticating words are found among the Syrian Christian language renewals explored below.

Online tools were also embraced to develop language teaching. Nadia, the founder of the Kabyle/Amazigh Cultural Organization in London, had started to teach Kabyle to migrant children in her home, and swiftly created an online teaching space to respond to the pandemic. She emphasized the importance of domestic learning for LM, particularly in non-Kabyle speaking families. Anazâr was keen to find a teacher with high Kabyle fluency and writing capacity in Tifinagh for their political party in London, which was also online-based. Moreover, a Kabyle website has launched the new android application for the channel Taqvaylit TV. To promote this channel in diaspora communities its founder agreed with Nadia and her husband to organize a conference in London. Such initiatives have grown in recent years, pointing towards increasingly successful cross-border collaborations between Kabyle activists. Research participants keenly shared these efforts in their online spaces. In these contexts, they made ample use of their multilingual repertoires, which is worth addressing here. Figure 3 shows an example of an online conversation that included a dynamic switching between French, English, and Kabyle.
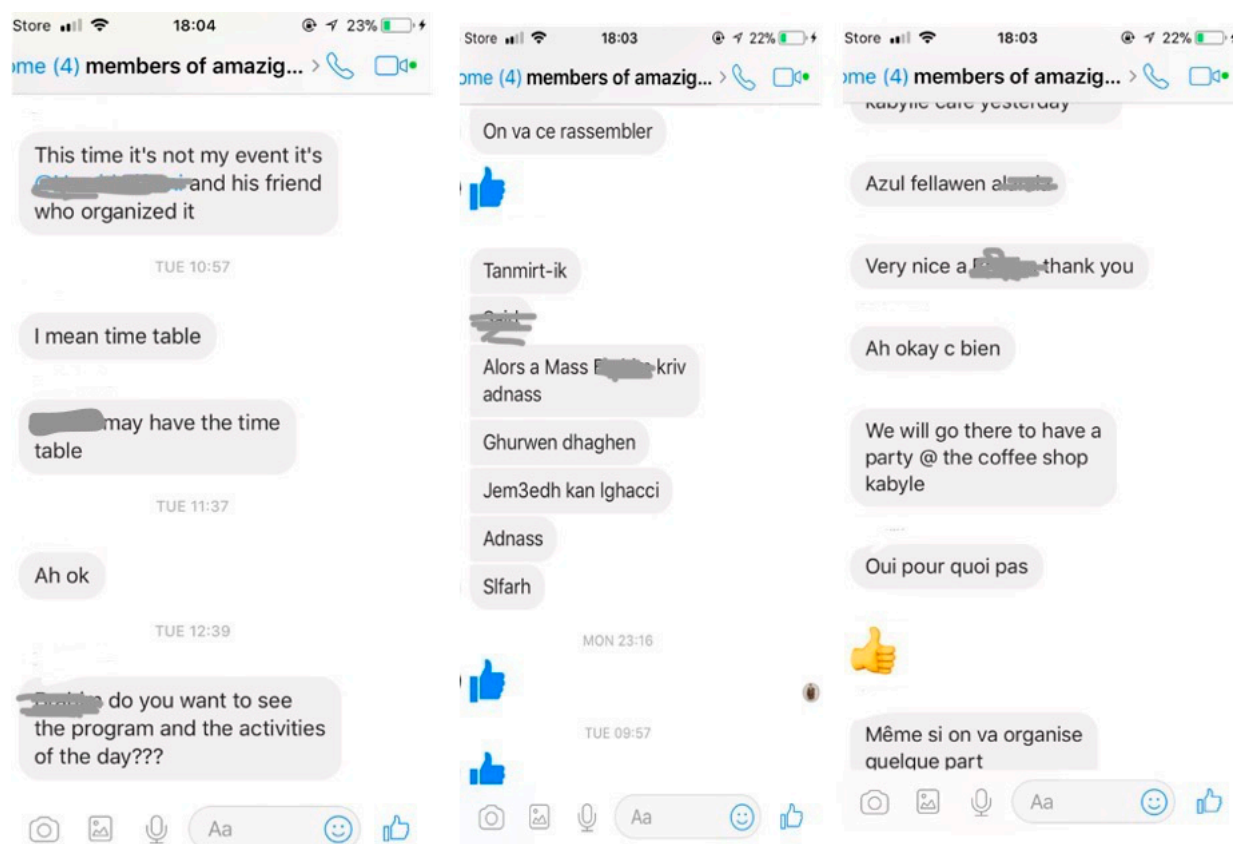

Figure 3. Multilingual conversation between members of the Kabyle/Amazigh Cultural Organization.

The individuals' engagement in these spaces and their use of different linguistic resources, particularly English, indicate the creation of a new transnational agency that

is relevant to their anglophone environment and involves changing linguistic creativities. Although the conversation in this online space seems to be spontaneous, where speakers shift between languages, they are in constant construction of specific meanings and socio-cultural identities. At the same time, their translanguaging reflects their mutually shared migration journey, additionally embodied in French, which even those participants who have lived in the UK for a long period made significant use of. The dynamism and flexibility of this multilingual speech are shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Speech displaying typical use of multilingual resources.

Speaker A	Azul Fellawen Translation: Hello everyone.
Speaker B	We will go there to have a party @ the coffee shop Kabyle. Remark: Speaker B used French structure. English: at the Kabyle coffee shop.
Speaker C	Oui pourquoi pas Translation: Yes, why not.

While Speaker A texts in Kabyle, Speaker B replies in English, and Speaker C comments in French, without blocking the flow of the conversation. The participants' use of varied linguistic resources during online meetings suggests both situated spontaneity as well as domain awareness. This type of written communication involved genres of casual informality and the "linguistic economy" (Androutsopoulos 2011, p. 149), or the truncated style of messaging typical of online media communication. In this sense it echoed face to face communication among members of the cultural organization, as well as instantiated moments of shared cultural identity. Kabyle may have been the most emblematic symbol of shared belonging in this exchange, in that it was used for greetings and relatively sparingly, yet also highlighted in-group intimacy. The use of Kabyle in these practices of online mediation allowed participants to promote its standing as an object of value (Eisenlohr 2004, p. 37), without necessarily revealing the actual levels of proficiency that speakers had. Most activist informants in this study regretted that they were not able to hold a whole conversation in "pure" Kabyle, yet also maintained that Kabyle, in whatever form, was intrinsic to a valued form of sociality, both online and offline.

4. Syrian Christians—Between Multilingualism and Salvaging the "Mother Tongue"

The often complex relationship between cultural beliefs about language on the one hand and everyday language use on the other has already been addressed above. In the case of the Suryoye, these different levels interplay with complex and sometimes contested meanings surrounding the "mother tongue". "Our language" as the Suryoye commonly put it, is Aramaic, a collective which embraces, in fact, two variants of Aramaic. A dialect of neo-Aramaic (Surayt, Turoyo or Suryoyo), which is a largely oral vernacular still spoken in the community, as well as Syriac-Aramaic, a language with roots in the early Christian period[11], which has been preserved as a liturgical language in the Syriac Churches, and in a rich written tradition of mostly religious scholarship. While the difference between both languages and their historical and symbolic relationship has been subject to debate among experts, as well as within the relevant "communities of practice", it is useful to explain at this stage that they are mutually unintelligible. In practical terms this means that some Aramaic speakers know both of these languages, whereas many others do not. The reason is as follows:

Turoyo, literally "the language of the mountain", (also called Surayt, or Suryoyo), is "Eastern Neo Aramaic" in the classificatory system of semitologists (Jastrow 1997, p. 347), and is an oral language that lacks a standard writing system. It is the first language that most Suryoye who are born in Tur Abdin, their home region in Turkey, grow up speaking. In fact, the meaning of "Surayt" is associated with being "Christian", and community discourses make strong symbolic associations between language and faith. Evidently, the

emigrants took Turoyo with them to Europe, but a strong geographical dispersal and the lack of cohesive community spaces, as well as the minor value that this language assumed in European linguistic markets, have made language preservation challenging. For decades, the Suryoye have lamented that the future for neo-Aramaic is bleak. In recent conversations, Armbruster had with language teachers and activists in Germany they agreed on their concern that the language was destined to disappear as a medium of communication in the next ("the third") generation. The "UNESCO atlas of the world languages in danger" duly lists Turoyo as "severely endangered", with 50,000 remaining speakers as estimated in 2008.[12] Turoyo stands in a diglossic (subordinate) relationship with "classical" Aramaic or Syriac-Aramaic. This is the language of the religious and philosophical tradition, and serves as the official and liturgical language of the church. The Suryoye generally refer to it as "Kthobonoyo" or the "language of the book", highlighting its significance as a literary language, and as the language of the Bible, and therefore "the book", par excellence. Traditionally, Kthobonoyo was the medium and preserve of scholars, monks and the clergy who learned the language to read and study scripture and to pass on the religious tradition. Even though Kthobonoyo is nobody's "mother tongue" or "native language", in the sense that those who know it have learned it through formal education, it was often the language that people implicitly referred to as "our language". This is closely associated with its high symbolic value. Syriac has been associated with the authentic sources and personalities of the Christian faith, the "language of Jesus" as many proudly put it, and many perceive its ongoing use as a liturgical language as expressive of the community's historic loyalty to the Christian faith. The esteemed Syriac also permeates attitudes to Syriac script, which is generally associated with holy scripture and often understood to encode sacred powers and practices. Historically, Syriac was taught to boys in monasteries and church schools to enable them to read scripture and assume roles as choir boys in church. As an anthropologist, Armbruster learned her own lessons about the different value given to both varieties of Aramaic, while staying in a Syriac monastery in the late 1990s. Her endeavor to prioritize learning the spoken vernacular was considered a waste of time by some of the male clergy and Syriac teachers, for whom Kthobonoyo was the only language of real value. Turoyo, they held, was not a proper language, but a degenerate form of "pure" Aramaic, shown by its many loans from Kurdish, Arabic, and Turkish. It was what people in the villages spoke, but was devoid of any sophistication. While these stark views are context-bound and not shared by all, it is fair to say that both languages exist in "tenuous harmony" with each other (Miller 2019, p. 88).

Outside these in-group language domains, the Suryoye routinely used other languages in the multi-ethnic region of eastern Turkey in which they were a small ethno-religious minority. Turoyo speakers were typically bi- or multilingual, as they spoke Kurdish with their Kurdish neighbors, and Turkish, the national lingua franca, from school age.[13] Switching languages was necessary for negotiating neighbourly relations and for assuming agency in a nation state, in which Turkish was not only the majority language but rooted in a monolingual ideology which was periodically directed against minority languages (Çolak 2004). While hostile language policies by the state largely targeted Kurdish, Syriac Christians have never been officially recognized as a religious and linguistic minority, and faced occasional incursions against their monastic schools. Among first generation immigrants in Germany and Austria, it was common to hear stories about their experiences of everyday language discrimination in school, the military, or in co-religious neighborhoods in Turkey.

Comparable to the Kabyles' ambivalent relationship to the more powerful languages Arabic and French, which both indexed experiences of historical conflict, the Syriacs associated Turkish and Kurdish with a difficult legacy of historical relations, and with idioms of cultural difference. While the characteristics associated with Turkish, Kurdish and Arabic differed, in a general sense, these languages were associated with Muslims as primary speakers and with Islam as a religion that was considered radically different and historically hostile. As mentioned above, Aramaic in both its variants was "Christian" and superior in prestige. These cultural framings could also be brought to bear in relation to those

Suryoye who did not have any knowledge of Aramaic. Some Christian communities in the home region were Kurdish or Arabic speaking, which was often seen as a shortcoming, even among those speakers themselves. In Germany and Austria, Armbruster met people whose first language was Kurdish, Turkish, or Arabic, and who made an effort to learn some Aramaic, or expressed their regret of not having learnt it. Being a Christian without speaking Aramaic, some suggested, was akin to a moral flaw.

So, while the symbolic mapping of these languages alongside boundaries of faith was not as irrefutable as people might have wished, multilingual practices were not seen as threatening to the maintenance of Aramaic in both its linguistic forms. Neo-Aramaic (Turoyo) remained alive and well as a lingua franca among the small (albeit dwindling) communities that remained in Turkey and the village churches, Sunday schools and monasteries preserved Kthobonoyo. Multilingualism in post-migration Europe, however, has been recognized as a serious threat to the mother tongue, particularly to spoken Aramaic. The loss of linguistic competence in Turoyo once children enter Kindergartens and schools has been a widely observed trend. However, the project of preserving Aramaic has not only grappled with a diminishing number of speakers, but with a range of ideological frictions. In what follows, three post-emigration social sites will be addressed, in which lived multilingualisms and desires for language preservation brought these frictions to the fore: education, intellectualism and the home.

4.1. Sites of Education

Communities in the German speaking context established themselves in the 1970s and 1980s in different cities and regions, typically founding one or several churches around which community life unfolded. To date, these churches represent central socio-spatial sites, in which both versions of Aramaic are still used, including in the Sunday schools, which teach classical Syriac to boys and girls. However, in line with tradition, the unequal values given to both Aramaic language varieties have been replicated in these settings and formal language teaching remained focused on classical Syriac, for usage in liturgical roles and church choirs. Priority is given to reading and writing, not to understanding meaning. During fieldwork in Berlin and Vienna, the researcher often attended these Sunday schools. While learning Kthobonoyo was generally seen as a virtuous cultural practice for children, it was also evident that many only attended for a limited period and dropped out as they grew older and/or the demands of their daily school lives grew. Frustration about learning to read a language they could not understand was a common complaint. Parents frequently conceded that Kthobonoyo could not compete with German and other foreign languages taught at school, and that success in the mainstream school system had to be prioritized.

At this point, it is important to address the prevalent language ideologies that the Suryoye encountered when settling in Germany, as immigrants and entering the school system. In line with the historic ideal of the nation state as being "mono-lingual, mono-ethnic, mono-religious and mono-ideological" (Blommaert and Verschueren 1992, p. 362), the German language has been a vital element of German national identity. As Ellis et al. put it, a "'monolingual mindset'" (Ellis et al. 2010, cited in Ellis et al. 2010, p. 440) has been firmly established in the school system, and is particularly visible in a specific hierarchization of languages. Generally speaking, German ranks at the top, followed by other European languages, most prominently English and French, and so-called community heritage languages rank at the bottom. This model typically assumes that German-speaking children will learn two additional languages as part of the regular curriculum, and acquire "multilingual" resources in English, French, or Spanish, creating cultural capital for what is seen as a good education (Ellis et al. 2010, p. 446–47). By contrast, immigrant languages have found limited entry into the school system, and linguistic resources of immigrant children have not only been devalued, but frequently seen as problematic, risking children's opportunities of becoming proficient in German. As mentioned above, the devaluation of Turkish is a case in point (Küppers and Schroeder 2017).[14] While there is a growing realization in some quarters that the suppression of immigrant linguistic resources is both

wasteful and detrimental to children's language learning, only few German states[15] have installed so-called heritage language teaching programs (Herkunftssprachlicher Unterricht) in their schools. Biographical stories from second generation individuals often suggested that knowing Aramaic (or Turkish, Kurdish, or Arabic) was not a valued cultural resource in the mainstream school system. Not only was it difficult (in domains of school or work) to capitalize on their multilingual resources, the Suryoye also faced ignorance about their Christian identities and saw themselves routinely labelled as "Turks". The strong desire not to be associated with anything "Turkish" or "Muslim" might have heightened their ambivalence towards languages that some of them spoke, but which were constructed as inferior in schools and public discourse.

Presently, the Suryoye in Germany generally agree that the balance has shifted in favor of German to a degree that seriously threatens "mother tongue" survival. Since 2019, Suryoyo children who happen to live in the state of North Rhine Westphalia have been able to take Neo-Aramaic in the regular school system as an optional subject. In a recent interview that Armbruster conducted with a teacher involved in this program, he stated frustratedly: "Maybe 5 out of 100 pupils I teach can speak with me in neo-Aramaic without any problems. Everyone else might manage two or three sentences before they switch to German. These children will never pass on Aramaic, they just don't know it anymore." As he and others observed, the dominance of German in children's lives had already created strong impacts on the morphology, phonology, lexicon, and syntax of Turoyo (also Talay 2002, pp. 70–71). Being a scholar, translator, and avid language activist himself, he blamed second generation community intellectuals for having failed to develop adequate LM programs. However, the prevailing culture of monolingualism was slow to change. Being part of an initiative which was seeking to establish an Aramaic-speaking Kindergarten, he also reported that they met resistance from the relevant state authority, which argued that such a facility would promote ethnic separatism and counteract "integration".

4.2. Linguistic Salvage through Unity—Sites of Intellectualism

Early in 2021, Armbruster attended an online discussion organized by a Syriac German youth organization, which was dedicated to the question of language survival. The organizers invited two language scholars who had ethnic roots in the community and were actively involved in LM initiatives. The young organizers had requested for the event to be held in German, and the questions that these scholars were asked were just as illuminating as the answers. Which authentic groups are part of our people? What is the name for what we speak—languages or dialects? Could we not merge our dialects to produce a common language that would unite us all?

This event can be situated in a social setting, which might be called activist intellectual, a broad arena in which individuals have sought to explore and settle questions of post-diasporic collective identity and concerns with language preservation, in ways that are comparable to the Kabyle case explained above. This has included the production of dictionaries and language learning materials by community scholars and language activists, the attempt to produce a script for Neo-Aramaic, and standardize orthographies in both Latin and Syriac letters, the translation of children's books, and other literature into Aramaic, and internet-based resources such as children's cartoons and online language courses and apps. These initiatives have grown in the past ten years.[16]

Notably, both the cultural hierarchization of the "mother tongue" as described above and the unfinished question about collective identity have been replayed in these intellectual practices. Since the 1980s, the Suryoye in Europe have engaged in a transnational conflict about a unifying ethnonym, which resulted in the formation of two distinct camps: Aramaean and Assyrian. The Assyrians situated themselves in the Assyrian national movement that has roots in the late 19th century Middle East, and aimed to unite populations associated with three main Syriac churches—Nestorian[17], Chaldean and Syrian(c) Orthodox. These were geographically spread across northern Iraq, north-western Iran, south-eastern Turkey and north-eastern Syria, regions broadly associated with the ge-

ographies of ancient Assyria and Mesopotamia (Donabed 2012, pp. 407–08). Those who identified as Assyrian stressed the politics of "unity" across denominational, linguistic, and nation state differences, and aimed to create a unifying national movement for a stateless people (Makko (2010); also Atto (2011)). Contrastingly, the Arameans claim roots in the ancient Mesopotamian Aramean heritage, yet see Arameanism as particularly strongly associated with the historic process of Christianization in the medium of the Aramaic language. The Syriac Orthodox Church largely came out in support of Arameanism, and "Aramean" has become the dominant self-identifying label among communities in Germany, and elsewhere in Europe today. The dispute also materialised in language labels: while the Assyrians call their neo-Aramaic language "Assyrian", Arameans call it "Aramaic."[18]

The event briefly addressed here was organized by an Assyrian organization, and their inquiries about linguistic strategies of achieving ethno-national unity were not surprising. They were concerned not just with Turoyo, but another neo-Aramaic language, spoken by Christians from northern Iraq, and wondered if these could be merged to create unity.[19] The discussion became heated when the two scholars disagreed about what Turoyo should be called, and both drew on science and scholarship to support their respective claims. While one of them insisted on "Aramaic" and defended "Turoyo", the other stated that Turoyo was a pejorative misnomer (connoting mountain landscapes and peasant backwardness), and that people should have a right to call their language "Assyrian". "Unity, unity, unity", he said, is what mattered for linguistic and collective ethno-national survival. The event was a lively, animated affair, and ended with many open questions.

As a language activist recently put it to Armbruster, intellectuals in the European diaspora have also struggled to contest the authority of the church in claiming cultural authority about language matters. The most visible expression of the prevailing attitude of the church, as he and others saw it, was the symbolic downgrading of Turoyo as a vernacular language and the lack of church engagement in supporting its preservation. In fact, early exercise books and literature that were produced by community scholars in the 1970s and 1980s in Sweden and elsewhere for use in church schools endeavored to teach children the use of Kthobonoyo as a vernacular language (Talay 2002, pp. 72–73; Bilgic 2018, p. 226). They did so with the blessing of the church, as well as in keeping with nationalist ambitions that saw in Kthobonoyo the ideal medium for creating a "pure" standard language (and transcending East and West Aramaic dialects in the process). While this endeavor failed, related attempts to purify Turoyo from its Kurdish, Arabic and Kurdish borrowings by replacing them with "authentic" words from Kthobonoyo have been part of a drive to re-define "norms of correctness" (Gal 2017, pp. 226–7) and to symbolically uplift Turoyo. Syriac TV stations in Europe have embraced this endeavor, and some of these "Arameanised" words have become firmly embedded in everyday conversation.[20] When Armbruster first got to know Syrian Christians in Austria and Turkey in the 1990s, it was common to hear Turkish words such as "araba" for "car" or "masa" for "table" in the Turoyo language. Today, "car" is known as the Arameanised "radhayto" and table as "tablitho". The fact that the root of "tablitho" cannot be traced to Syriac, but to the Latin word "tabula" may be ironic in terms of expunging "foreign" words from the lexicon. At the same time, it is a fitting symbol of the ambiguities that can emerge from ideologically coded linguistic revival processes.

These cultural and political contestations cannot be further explored here. As responses to a barely surviving "mother tongue", particularly in its spoken form (even if the question of how Aramaic literacies survive if spoken Aramaic disappears remains open), they could be read as cultural parochialisms, desperate efforts to rekindle organicist phantasies about the link between language, people and culture, in a context in which the globalization of cultures and languages is the norm. However, this would be a simplistic assessment. The ubiquitous concerns with language observable across the diasporic map made it clear that language was far more than a linguistic system. Aramaic in both its forms mattered to a lot of people as a medium that implicated significant social, cultural, moral,

and historical relations; or, in Joshua Fishman's terms, Aramaic mattered at the "level of doing, (. . .) knowing (. . .) and being" ([Fishman 2001](), p. 3). LM in the mother tongue was not simply about promoting the uniqueness of Aramaic as an ethno-national object, but about the desire to (re)produce and enact significant relations in and through Aramaic. Linguistic agencies often doubled as emotional, embodied, moral, and intellectual agencies in situated interactions where established cultural and linguistic norms were also subjected to debate. The many ideologized disagreements about linguistic endonyms and preservation practices spoke for, rather than against this point. They were often both culturally essentialist and essentializing yet also constructivist and engaged in cultural compromise. In a recent interview with a Suryoyo scholar who received major funding to produce a comprehensive diaspora facing (multilingual) online language learning resource for Turoyo Armbruster asked him who he would classify as a Turoyo speaker at the present time. "All those who see it as their mother tongue, even if they don't speak it", he said. His project included producing a new orthography in Syriac, as well as Latin script. While "Latinizing" Aramaic is considered cultural anathema and a risk to the survival of its integrity by some, here it was seen as opening up access to a broader user group. So rather than simply "preserving" an already existing set of linguistic norms and codes, these renewal practices also included contested creativities and cultural compromise, in an effort to create new lifelines for a linguistic culture.

4.3. Sites of Family

As demonstrated in the Kabyle case, we can look at individual speakers' homes on the smallest scale of LM agencies, and the ways in which these mediate ideological, social, or institutional pressures, as well as opportunities in situ, and in interaction with others. Our last example addresses a family space in which language preservation efforts were a conscious and shared transgenerational endeavor. Families were seen as key sites for language transmission, both practically and ideologically. Language activists were often quick to blame insufficient linguistic discipline within families for the decline of Turoyo.

The researcher has known the family addressed here for ten years. They live in Vienna, and represent a transgenerational multilingual microcosm that is typical of many Suryoye. The elderly grandparents who came to Vienna around 1980 and their three, now adult, sons and respective families lived in adjacent houses, and shared a rich and intensive everyday sociality. Morally and emotionally committed to the preservation of Turoyo as a "family language", they had to negotiate a range of practical constraints and different fluencies. The grandfather was an Arabic speaker with a good understanding of Turoyo; one daughter-in-law had grown up with another European language, another had grown up with Turkish, and the teenage grandchildren seemed most at home in German. The family had both Turoyo and Kthobonoyo experts. The grandmother was respected as an authority in Turoyo, which was her first language, and her youngest son Benjamin and his wife, Meryem, were both fluent Turoyo speakers, could read and write Kthobonoyo, and were active as language teachers in the church and community. As Meryem put it in a recent conversation with Armbruster, "I keep thinking this all the time, we don't have anything else to hold on to except for our language. There is no country in which this language is officially spoken, no school, no study books, it only lives by passing it on from mouth to mouth. We must do more to maintain it." Meryem's and Benjamin's influence on family language matters was strong, and over the years, the determination to exert some forms of linguistic discipline in Aramaic was tied to other family members in different ways. For instance, the family had removed Turkish family and personal names and taken on Aramaic ones, which required a considerable bureaucratic process in Austria; one daughter-in-law virtually "forgot" her first language (which was a struggle that she admitted), and learned Turoyo informally at home, to be able to pass it on to her children; her husband declared that he avoided speaking Turkish with his work colleagues, a language he no longer wanted to be associated with, and Meryem and Benjamin not only produced learning materials themselves, but were keen users of the many new Aramaic

online resources for children to expose their own children to as much Aramaic as possible. Family language interaction also showed that even the older individuals had absorbed new Kthobonoyo words to replace Turkish or Kurdish terms. At the same time, and this was clear from casual observations as well as interviews, the use of Turoyo also relied on intermittent uses of German for everyday "family language" conversations. Despite having grown up with Turoyo as her first language, Meryem admitted that her German lexicon was richer, and that she sometimes struggled to express herself with the desired complexity in Aramaic. In light of the strong dedication and linguistic work that family members continuously performed, their interactions nevertheless suggested that their collaboratively crafted "impure" vibrancy in Turoyo was not simply a sell-out to German, but drew on the resources of German (and other languages) to "survive".

5. Conclusions

We have shown that Kabyles and Syrian Christians have retained a significant link between identity, community and the "mother tongue", despite post-migration language shift and language loss. The LM practices we described were embedded in forms of multilingualism, which Jan Blommaert calls "truncated repertoires" (Blommaert 2010, p. 103); that is, in resources that are "derived from a variety of languages" (Blommaert 2010, p. 106), and typically include partial and incomplete heritage language competences in transgenerational migrant settings. In both cases, younger people's competences in "mother tongue" varieties were rapidly diminishing, and communication in intergenerational settings routinely relied on resources from other languages to be realized. These multilingual repertoires also included a range of ideological stances, expressed as cultural, moral, and political attitudes (see also (Woolard 2020)) to the "mother tongue", and to other, potentially more dominant, languages in their lives. We have also seen a remarkable parallel in how cultural and moral interpretations of the "mother tongue" involved a continued negotiation of collective history. Language mattered as a direct connection to the historical experience migrants had taken with them, and continued to transmit and re-constitute in their new environments and transnationally. Thus, Syrian Christians from Turkey who found themselves in close proximity to their former homeland compatriots in Berlin and Vienna maintained an ambivalent relationship to Turkish, enhanced by the ideological disparagement that the language was exposed to in these immigrant societies. Similarly, the Kabyles in the UK positioned their linguistic practices not simply in relation to English, but actively negotiated their relationship to Arabic and French, both of which had strong pre-migration and ongoing diasporic and post-colonial significance. While we could merely tap into the complex spatial and historical relations that became mediated in the desire to preserve the "mother tongue", it became evident that these were embedded in experiences of minoritization, pre-and post-migration. These include histories of cultural repression (including language rights denial) and displacement, diasporic dispersal, and the incorporation into post-migration nation states in which powerful majorities set the rules for what is culturally and linguistically normative. These experiences have not only placed the heritage language in unequal plurilingual realities historically, but also maintained (at least for the present) its strong role for creating community and identity across diasporic spaces. As Stephen May rightly suggests, minority speakers' claims to a distinct language are more usefully examined as claims to "cultural and linguistic autonomy" in spaces in which they have to contend with the cultural and linguistic dominance of majorities, rather than presumed to be about "isolationism or stasis" (May 2012, p. 139).

In using a broad notion of "activism" to give expression to mother tongue claims and practices, we were able to focus on a range of contexts to examine casual as well as event-based and intellectual "agencies", in which individuals interactively accomplished and pushed forward what can be said and done in and through the mother tongue. These agencies are best defined as "dialogic" (Ahearn 2001, p. 128) in the Bakhtinian sense of dialogue as key to the life of a language, and in which individuals navigate "a social field across which multiple voices and multiple cultural logics contend" (Ahearn 2001, p. 128). These

contending voices and logics included those of different "linguistic authorities" ((Woolard 2020, p. 12); also (Miller 2019, p. 154)), such as elites, scholars, cultural, or faith-based organizations, or knowledgeable speakers. They also included the practical and ideological barriers (as well as openings) to small minority languages in the prevailing economies of education, employment and multiculturalism in the immigration country. By drawing ethnographic attention to a variety of fluid and momentary, as well as institutional social sites, we showed the significance of personal commitments, creative energies, affective ties and socio-cultural relations in which mother tongue practices took place, and had a chance to flourish, and to which they were also largely relegated in these respective immigration contexts. While for some research participants, the "truncated" and hybrid repertoires were a sad testament to the slippery slope of irretrievable language loss, others saw in these dialogic agencies a chance of renewal, and an enduring site for identity, emotionality and sociability. In both cases, this ambivalence captured the struggles for historical recognition and diasporic belonging in which these languages and their speakers were placed.

Notes

[1] We will use this term in this paper as it was used by our informants.

[2] National Institute of Oriental Langues and Civilizations at Université Sorbonne-Paris-Cité.

[3] https://www.ethnologue.com/language/kab/view/%2A%2A%2AEDITION%2A%2A%2A (accessed on 13 February 2020).

[4] The scholarship and activism surrounding endangered languages have been similarly critiqued as promoting essentialist notions of languages as bounded, organic systems, and therefore, as reproducing nationalist ideologies of language (For this debate see, e.g., Duchêne and Heller 2008).

[5] The Black decade refers to the armed conflict between the Algerian government and the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) which lasted for 10 years (1990–2002). It "left as many as 200,000 mostly civilian casualties—a conflict referred to by many as the second Algerian war" (Silverstein 2015, p. 89).

[6] In this article, Syrian/Syriac Christians or the Aramaic self-designation Suryoye (pl.)/Suryoyo (sg.) will be used intermittently. Syrian is not to be confused with the nation state of Syria, but refers to the Syrian/c Church.

[7] In the absence of statistical figures, the estimates for European Suryoye with roots in Turkey are: Germany (95,000 to 120,000), Sweden (80,000), the Netherlands (20,000), Switzerland (8000), Belgium (8000), and Austria (3500). (Güsten 2015, p. 4). There is also a community of about 15,000 in Istanbul.

[8] For key works on the Christian massacres in eastern Anatolia, see (Gaunt 2006; Levene 1998; Üngör 2011).

[9] An example is the negative media discourses about so-called Kiezdeutsch, a 'multiethnolect' (Freywald et al. 2011), drawing prominently on Turkish and Arabic. In TV programs, it is often associated with "poorly integrated immigrants who have failed to learn German well", rather than with a dynamic multilingual practice https://www.thelocal.de/20180924/how-linguists-say-kiezdeutsch-is-enriching-rather-than-threatening-german/ (accessed on 11 March 2021).

[10] https://fr.glosbe.com/ (accessed on 22 March 2020).

11   Syriac Aramaic flourished as a literary language between the 2nd and 7th century AD and became a vehicle of the spread of Christianity in the pre-Islamic Near East. Scholars trace it to the Aramaic dialect spoken in the city of Edessa in the 2nd century AD (today Urfa, Turkey) (Talay 2002, p. 65). Language terminologies in the community are a reflection of complex linguistic cultures and ideological stances, which cannot be explored in detail here. See Miller (2019) for an insightful study on the relationship between language and identity among Syrian Christians in Istanbul and Berlin.

12   See: http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php (accessed on 20 February 2021).

13   This also depended on generation and gender. The older generations' literacy in Turkish is generally much poorer, because they might not have accessed schools when they were young, particularly women.

14   Some schools installed "German only" policies in the 2000s, requiring pupils to speak German on school grounds (Ellis et al. 2010, p. 451). As recently as 2014, the governing CSU party of Bavaria advocated for the introduction of a duty to speak German in immigrant family homes https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/einwanderung-csu-bleibt-dabei-auslaender-sollen-zuhause-deutsch-sprechen-13307495.html (accessed on 2 February 2021).

15   Education is generally governed by the federal states. Northrhine Westphalia, as well as some cities, have pioneered heritage language programs in the school system. However, it is up for debate whether these produce full equality between languages, as these courses are often optional, and not fully integrated into the regular curriculum and exam system (also Küppers and Schroeder 2017).

16   This includes, for example, the production of Neo-Aramaic translations of children's classics such as Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, or Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Little Prince*, as well as some German fairytale and picture book classics (see selection at https://www.nisibin.de/webshop) (accessed on 10 March 2021; the creation of YouTube channels for children such as Bet Kanu https://www.youtube.com/c/BETKANU or rinyo toons https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcRtCpoZnUzyegvpQfdp2AQ; (accessed on 10 March 2021) or the language learning platform 'Surayt-Aramaic online' developed by a scholar at the University of Berlin (see: http://www.surayt.com/) (accessed on 10 March 2021).

17   Today the Assyrian Church of the East.

18   For a detailed discussion of these post-migration conflicts, see Atto (2011).

19   Neo Eastern Aramaic is generally grouped into Western (e.g., Turoyo) and Eastern languages and dialects (Jastrow 1997).

20   Swedish-based Suryoyo TV pioneered these lexical innovations in the European diaspora. See also (Eisenlohr 2004) for the role of broadcasting in minority language revitalization.

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