

Aspectual systems in three Berber languages: Tetsrerret, Tamasheq and Tachelhit.
Description and comparison

Cécile Lux

University of Lyon - France

All Berber languages present the two majors forms of aspect : one which expresses the temporal limitation of the process, and the second which express the verbal predication as constant (Cohen's definition, 1989).

However each of these languages uses this concept of aspect in its own way, constructiong a complex system to express all the meanings they need.

One of the Berber languages, the Tetsrerret, spoken in Niger, in the middle of the Tamasheq domain, has never been described, and is an endangered language. It is very different from the surrounding Tamasheq, and seems more similar to the Mauritanian Berber language, the Zénaga. It also presents a lot of similarities with the northern Berber languages like, for example, Tachelhit (south of Morocco).

I'm describing this particular language, the Tetsrerret, in collaboration with a Nigerian linguist, A.K.Attayoub, using a set of first-hand data, recorded during two fieldworks sessions (2006-2008).

In this paper, I will present the different ways in which these three berber languages, Tetsrerret, Tamasheq and Tachelhit, have adapted the general concept of aspect to their own system and to their particular needs: I will show the different strategies they use, the reciprocal influences they are under (if the influences between Tamasheq and Tetsrerret can have geographical reasons, the similarities between Tetsrerret and Tachelhit can only have diachronical reasons).

The comparison of such an important part of the Berber morpho-syntactic systems gives us the possibility to make hypotheses about the history of this isolated underdescribed language, the Tetsrerret, giving at the same time a precise image of the aspect concept, which is very usefull from a typological point of view.