

2018 Winning Essay by Jewan Attallah

When beginning my history senior research project, I needed to find a topic. As I brainstormed, my mind reflected back to a five minute conversation I had with two Moroccan university students during my semester abroad in France. As I waited in the university's café line to order lunch, I overheard two students conversing behind me, code-switching between the Arabic and French language. As I turned around and made small talk with the two students, I learned they were both from Morocco and fluent in both Arabic and French. They briefly explained to me that Arabic and French are national languages in Morocco and taught in Moroccan schools. I was surprised to discover that an Arab-Muslim country adopted a western language, so I asked, "Why do Moroccans speak French?" One of the students chuckled and replied, "Because we were colonized by the French." When I returned back to Valparaiso University and I discovered that I could choose any historical topic to research for a semester, I wanted to study French colonization in Morocco to understand the emergence of the French language in modern Moroccan society.

Since I knew nothing about Moroccan and North African history, I began using the Christopher Center's Summon library tool to find general books and articles about Moroccan history to familiarize myself with the topic. As I read, tabbed, and annotated these sources, I began to see common themes, keywords, and topics used. I took these themes and ideas to my advisor Professor Ramos's office to help me better tailor my research project. By becoming aware of the general literature written about French colonization in Morocco, I saw that the Moroccan student's response to my question was much simpler than the intricacies of French colonial history. I followed Professor Ramos's advice and allowed the research to speak to me. The sources lead me to think about the influence French colonization had on Moroccan identity through the presence of the French language. When I saw a "gap" in the research between the modern Moroccan language debate and the French colonial past, which was when my project found its significance and uniqueness of my voice within the larger literature on the topic.

However, I faced some roadblocks. I was struggling to find sources specifically about French colonization in Morocco since most of the research was general to North Africa or focused on Algeria. I was struggling to find secondary sources generally looking at the importance of Moroccan colonial past on the modern Moroccan nation-state. Primary sources were difficult to find since most were available in archives abroad. I took these frustrations to Professor Robison, who showed me how to track my sources using Google Scholar or manually by following the footnotes in books and journals, and using World Cat to find sources by searching using keywords for a precise search. Tracking my sources helped me find the experts in the field by noting the frequency of their works cited in other scholars' research.

With Professor Robison's help and persistence, we found the official French treaty that permitted French colonization in Morocco from 1912-1956 reproduced in a text. This was an integral primary document to my research since it allowed me to draw directly from the treaty. The primary source alleviated concerns I had about finding my voice in my research since I was able to make my own interpretations based on a close reading of the treaty, instead of using other scholars' analyses that were

found in secondary sources. With my proficiency in the French language and the help of the French department, I was able to translate the treaty from the original French language to English. Since the majority of my sources were ordered through interlibrary loan, my research project would never have come alive without this library service.

Finally, I reached the writing stage. Sources were scattered on my bedroom floor, organized into piles that represented the group of sources I used for each section of my paper. With sources tabbed and underlined, I sat in front of my computer typing away my thesis. I looked forward to putting my sources and arguments together into a paper that were once scattered ideas. Without the library's databases, flexible book renewal policy, and supportive services, I would never been able to explore this topic with much depth and detail. I am truly appreciative of the sources and support from Professor Robison and Professor Ramos.