

Language Policy and Power Dynamics in Post-Independence Morocco: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

Morocco is a multilingual society where national, official, and foreign languages coexist and are used daily. Their functions and domains of use reveal their status and the processes by which they are classified into dominant and dominated languages. Most of the former studies on language policy in Morocco have mainly focused on policy formulation and decisions as an apolitical endeavor. The present study, however, aims to investigate the crucial role language policy plays in structuring power and inequality in the country. It argues that language policy is a political act with educational, linguistic, social, and economic ramifications. The national language policy formulated after Morocco's 1956 independence adopted the European model of 'one language, one nation' without considering the country's specific realities. The present paper involves a critical review of the literature and the legal documents, including the Moroccan New Constitution, and an extensive inquiry into the institutional reform efforts and directions in an attempt to answer the research questions related to (i) the status of mother tongues, official languages, and foreign languages in Morocco, more than six decades after its independence; (ii) the state of the Arabization process, the officialization of Amazigh, its teaching, and standardization; and (iii) what governs Moroccan language policy, and what the educational policies in Morocco reveal about the State's language policy.

Keywords: *Language policy, Educational policies, Modern Standard Arabic, Amazigh, Foreign languages*

ملخص: السياسة اللغوية وتوازنات القوة في المغرب بعد الاستقلال: تحليل نقدي

تتسم السوق اللغوية المغربية بتنوع اللغات وتنافسيتها. وتكشف مجالات استعمالها عن العلاقات التنافسية التي تحدد وضعيتها في إطار ترابعية لغوية تمارس فيها اللغات القوية ضغطاً شديداً على اللغات الوطنية. بخلاف الدراسات السابقة التي تركز على الجانب التقني والأكاديمي للسياسات اللغوية، تحاول هذه الدراسة التركيز على البعد السياسي والأيدولوجي الذي غالباً ما يكون المحدد الرئيسي للاختيارات اللغوية لاي دولة. وتهدف الدراسة إلى الكشف عن الدور المحوري الذي تؤديه السياسة اللغوية في استمرار الفوارق الاجتماعية والاقتصادية، مؤكدة أن السياسة اللغوية هي عمل سياسي يمتاز بتداعيات تعليمية، لغوية، اجتماعية واقتصادية. ففي المغرب مثلاً، اعتمدت السياسة اللغوية التي صيغت بعد الاستقلال عام 1956 النموذج الأيدولوجي الأوروبي 'لغة واحدة، وطن واحد' دون مراعاة للوضعية اللغوية المتنوعة للبلاد. وتقوم الدراسة بتحليل نقدي للأدبيات والوثائق القانونية، بما في ذلك الدستور المغربي الجديد، مستعرضة الإصلاحات المبدولة في محاولة للإجابة على الأسئلة البحثية التالية (1) ماهي وضعية اللغات الأم واللغات الرسمية واللغات الأجنبية في المغرب، بعد أكثر من ستة عقود من استقلاله؟ (2) أين وصلت عملية التعريب، وتنزيل الطابع الرسمي للغة الأمازيغية، وتعليمها، وتوحيدها؟ و(3) ما الذي يحكم السياسة اللغة المغربية، وماذا تكشفه السياسات التعليمية في المغرب عن الاتجاهات العامة للدولة؟

الكلمات المفتاحية: السياسة اللغوية، السياسات التعليمية، العربية الفصحى، الأمازيغية، اللغات الأجنبية

1 Introduction

Morocco's strategic location at the crossroads between Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and Africa encouraged interaction between various ethnolinguistic groups, languages, and cultures. The current linguistic state of the country is the result of colonial and post-colonial language and educational policies, which reflect power dynamics between the languages spoken and the impact of language on social stratification. The hierarchical relations between the different languages or varieties of languages are a reflection of historically evolved relations of domination and subjugation between speakers of relevant varieties and/or languages. This linguistic context reflects the evolution of dominance and subordination relations throughout history. The language debate in Morocco is fascinating, multifaceted (Ennaji, 2005), and reflective of various facets of society, from human rights and social justice to education, development, and democracy. The linguistic landscape includes national, official, and foreign languages, where the speakers' education, socioeconomic status, age, domain of use, and interlocutors determine their patterns of use of these languages.

Moroccan linguistic diversity cannot rival in number with some other countries in Africa; yet, the languages spoken by Moroccans are all used daily by a portion of the population and have clearly defined societal roles. The navigation between languages is not simply controlled by a desire to facilitate understanding but is driven by numerous historical, cultural, and political factors.

Moroccan linguistic diversity results in a complex sociolinguistic setting where in addition to mother tongues, namely Darija, Amazigh, and Hassania, Classical Arabic (CA) and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) are important due to their religious and official roles. Amazigh, the indigenous language of North Africa in general and Morocco in particular acquired the status of official language in July 2011. Foreign languages mainly French, English, and Spanish are commonly used, but to different degrees. Given the interactions between all these languages, Morocco is categorized as a multilingual society with citizens ranging from monolingual speakers of Amazigh, Darija and/or Hassania, to multilingual individuals proficient in up to six languages, including native, national, official, and foreign.

This section introduces the status of mother tongues, official languages, and foreign languages in Morocco and discusses their domains of use and functions to highlight the complexity of the linguistic situation. It also refers to the effect of globalization and the use of digital tools and media on Moroccan society. Each of these languages is discussed in turn.

Arabic was introduced to North Africa in general and Morocco in particular with “the arrival of Arabs in the seventh and eighth centuries” (Ennaji, 2002). It is a cover term that includes Classical Arabic (CA), Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Darija or Moroccan/Dialectal Arabic, and Middle Moroccan Arabic (MMA). CA is reserved mainly for religious domains (Ennaji, 1991, p. 2002). Its association with Islam makes it a prestigious language venerated by both Amazighs and Arabs.

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), the official language of Morocco, is mainly associated with the State-Building process and the Arabization policy is a symbol of Morocco’s cultural independence. It possesses historicity but lacks the vitality of Darija, the mother tongue of both Arabs and Amazighs. MSA is learned through formal instruction at schools. It is a codified and standardized variety that has increasingly benefited from the Arabization policy (Ennaji, 1991; Boukous, 2011). It is perceived as a high and prestigious variety of Arabic (Marley, 2005) because it is the medium of instruction according to the National Charter of Education (2000). MSA is in high competition with French (Boukous, 2011; Chakrani, 2020), which has invaded its domains of use. Despite its official and prestigious status tied to religion and cultural identity, MSA is used mainly in domains such as education, media, and political and administrative public institutions, mainly in written forms (Sadiqi, 2006). The language is rarely used in spontaneous oral communication. Though it is the official language of Morocco, a number of the State’s institutions, e.g. the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tourism, and Finance, etc, do not make use of it and rather resort to French.

Amazigh, widely known as Berber, is the indigenous language of North Africa and the mother tongue of the Amazigh people. It extends from eastern Libya and even western Egypt (Siwa) to the Atlantic Ocean, and from the Mediterranean Sea to as far south as the Sahara Desert, and northern Saharan regions of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Amazigh in Morocco is classified into three main language varieties: Tarifit, in the North and North-Eastern part and Rif area, Tamazight, in the central part and the Atlas region, and Tashelhit in the South and Souss region. This division, however, does not make unanimity among Moroccan scholars as it is geographically based and does not include some varieties that do not fall in any of these language areas (El Kirat, 2004). The language was excluded from the identity component of the independent state during the State-building process and was banned from all public domains, and marginalized, and stigmatized for decades. It is difficult to provide an exact estimate of the number and percentage of Amazighs in Morocco, particularly in urban centers, as censuses have never included this dimension.

The Moroccan authorities' attitudes towards Amazigh started to change progressively from repression to neutrality and finally to support and official recognition starting from August 1994. The Amazigh Royal Institute for the Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) was created in 2001. This was followed by the introduction of Amazigh at school in September 2003 but as an instructed language and not a language of instruction, taught in principle to both Amazigh and non-Amazigh pupils. The focus was, however, on underprivileged schools and regions. The language has been undergoing since then a standardization process to overcome the lack of mutual intelligibility between the different language varieties. Amazigh was finally recognized as a second official language alongside MSA in the New Constitution on July 1st, 2011. The real implementation of Amazigh as an official language is obstructed as the Amazigh issue in Morocco is more political than linguistic. This is discussed further in the section devoted to Amazigh language policy.

Moroccan Dialectal/Colloquial Arabic, known as Darija in Morocco, lacks formal recognition and a standardized language. Unlike CA and MSA, Darija is the mother tongue and the language of everyday communication of the majority of Moroccans. It is also the lingua franca (Sadiqi, 2006) that facilitates communication not only between Arabs and Amazighs but also among Amazighs whose varieties are not mutually intelligible. Although it is not standardized or codified, Darija has served as the vehicle of a rich tradition of oral popular literature. It is widely used on social media for texting messages in both Arabic and Latin scripts by all age groups and all levels of education. It has also been used for writing plays, texts, or informal letters. Recently, after the privatization of the Media sector, new radio stations have adopted Darija as the main language of the stations for even the presentation of the news. Darija is also increasingly used in new domains such as TV commercials and billboards (Alalou, 2017). Darija is also not much valued and is considered a corrupt form of MSA by Arabist nationalists who consider it a threat to MSA as it is being used even in the education sector, due to the learners' low proficiency in MSA (Alalou, 2017). Due to Morocco's high illiteracy rates and the lack of mastery of MSA by a large portion of the population, a new variety, Moroccan Median/Middle Arabic (MMA), has been developing, which stands between Darija and MSA. It includes the MSA lexicon and the non-vocalized spoken form of Darija. It is predominantly used by the educated elite for official and formal purposes (Youssi, 1995) and is considered more 'refined' than Darija. Darija is also considered the "killer" language of Amazigh (El Kirat, 2004) as it is invading the latter's most private domain of use, the home. It is referred to as Arabic by the majority of Amazighs and Arabs alike in Morocco. Such confusion between Darija and other Arabic varieties may in

part justify people's preference for Darija over Amazigh (Boussagui, 2019). Darija is currently viewed as the main marker of Moroccan identity on social media and popular culture, especially among those who call for the promotion of Moroccan citizenship.

Hassania, a variety of Arabic spoken by tribes in the south regions of Agadir and the Moroccan Sahara and surrounding regions, has historical ties to both Amazigh and Arabic. It is used daily in southern Morocco and has a media presence through specific TV and radio channels. Despite the constitutional recognition of Hassania¹, there is still no substantial policy that aims to promote the language and stop the shift to Darija the southern communities are undergoing, especially among the young generations as a result of the presence of large numbers of Darija speakers in the region, and under the effect of school and media. Hassania is the vehicle of a very rich cultural heritage, e.g. literature, proverbs, poetry, songs, tales, etc.

French, the most prestigious language in Morocco more than six decades after independence, was introduced in 1907 with the arrival of the French army in Casablanca, marking the beginning of its association with the colonial era. During the first years of post-independence, the masses viewed French negatively due to its colonial ties, while the elite considered it a symbol of power and prestige. French is the first foreign language in Morocco and a de facto official language which is still often preferred in diverse official domains such as commerce, finance, science, technology, tourism, and education. It is also the most prestigious language and an essential requirement in the job market, especially in the private sector. It is predominant in the private sector and transactions with Europe and Africa and is used by educated people and elites in their everyday lives. It is highly valued because it is generally associated with the upper class.

French has been viewed as the language of opening on the modern world and an essential tool for social mobility, offering more job prospects in Morocco. It is the only medium of instruction of scientific and technological subjects (e.g. Physics, Medicine, engineering, etc.) at all levels and is widely used in administration, banking, and economic sectors in general (media and official and formal speeches, etc...), though less recently. However, only elites, older generations educated before Arabization, or those educated in private systems, demonstrate fluency in French. Observations reveal that fluency in French is confined to prestigious districts, while in popular areas, French is often code-mixed with local varieties. Despite decades of Arabization, French was reinstated in 2019 as the medium of instruction for scientific subjects from primary school onwards in both public and private institutions.

¹ The 2011 Moroccan Constitution recognizes Hassania Arabic as an integral part of the unified Moroccan linguistic and cultural identity.

This change, alongside the rise of English, is detailed in the section on the return to French and the spread of English.

Spanish has historical roots in Morocco, dating back to the Spanish protectorate established in 1912. Since the independence of Morocco in 1956, Spanish lost official status as the administrative and educational language in the North and had been replaced by French. Its use declined after the independence due to the Arabization process and the integration of French as the first foreign language. It is the third foreign language taught in the school system, after French and English, but it is not popular as it competes with English. Currently, the use of Spanish is limited and has decreased significantly even in the regions formerly under Spanish control. Spanish is still offered as a degree in some Moroccan universities, but the number of students is small compared to English. Spanish media presence is minimal compared to French. Recently, an increasing number of Moroccan students have been opting to continue their studies in Spain due to its proximity to Morocco and the lower cost of living. Additionally, more parents in Morocco are opting for Spanish schools as an alternative for their children's education given the high costs of American schools and the highly selective French system.

English was first introduced in Morocco during World War II with the establishment of American bases. Unlike French and Spanish, English has no colonial connotations in Morocco. It is becoming popular, especially among the younger generations, due to the impact of globalization and social media. The status of English has evolved over the last decades, as reflected in the increasing numbers of students in the departments of English at Moroccan universities. The prominence of English is boosted by the Moroccan government's support. It is currently used in various sectors, including call centres, advertising, scientific research, and education.

The preference for English as the medium of instruction in Morocco is linked to its association with modernity and social promotion. It is essential for technology transfer, modernity, and global communication. In the early 1970s, there were only two English departments in Morocco. Currently, English is taught in all Moroccan universities and is the most popular foreign language at the secondary school level. The spread of English is detailed in the section on the return to French and the spread of English.

2 Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This paper adopts critical language policy (Henceforth CLP) which emerged as a critique of and an alternative to earlier language policy frameworks (Tollefson, 2006). The failure of corpus, status, and acquisition planning in the 1960s and 1970s to achieve their stated goals contributed to the emergence of critical applied linguistics which had as its starting point the study of language within “its social, political, and historical context” (Tollefson, 2002, p. 3). The main concern of critical applied linguistics is the investigation of inequality, linguistic discrimination, and the language rights of minorities (Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). This shift in applied linguistics gave rise to a growing interest in examining language policy in its historical context. CLP provides researchers with a framework to unravel the mechanisms by which states and government institutions shape how languages are used and learned (Tollefson, 1991).

CLP investigates how language policies in education create and sustain inequalities among learners and how they serve the interests of the dominant groups within a speech community (Tollefson, 2002, 2006). CLP comes as a response to the often-held premise that language policies in the traditional approach were devised to help minority languages integrate the prevailing socio-economic structures. Contrary to this optimistic approach, CLP approach in general “acknowledges that policies often create and sustain various forms of social inequality and that policymakers usually promote the interests of dominant social groups” (Tollefson, 2006, p. 42) and therefore seek to formulate more democratic policies to reduce these inequalities and promote minoritized languages. The Critical Language Policy (CLP) emerged from Tollefson’s (1991) historical-structural approach to language planning research. This approach distinguishes between the neoclassical approach, which views language planning as a non-political, non-ideological problem-solving exercise, and the historical-structural approach, which emphasizes the social and historical conditions that influence the formulation of language policies. Within the Critical Language Policy (CLP) framework, language policy is considered highly political and ideological. As Tollefson (1991, p. 32) asserts, language policy serves as “one mechanism through which the interests of dominant sociological groups are maintained, and the seeds of transformation are developed.” Thus, the primary goal of policy research in critical language policy is to investigate the underlying historical conditions of policy formulation and to reveal the mechanisms employed by the policymakers to “serve or undermine particular political and economic interests” (Ibid.). Neo-classical research focuses on individual factors, such as

motivation and attitudes, in making linguistic choices. In contrast, critical language policy examines a broader range of social and historical factors to understand the formulation of language policies and “discover the historical and structural pressures that [...] constrain individual choice.” (Ibid. p. 32).

This paper aims to unravel the interplay between language ideologies, structural conditions, and economic interests that govern language policy formulation, and determine the value assigned to each language variety in the constituted linguistic market in Morocco since its independence in 1956. By adopting a critical language policy approach, the paper argues that language policy formulation in Morocco has established a hierarchy of linguistic practices, elevating French as a de-facto official language while simultaneously relegating both the de-jure official languages Modern Standard Arabic and Amazigh to a lower status. The paper demonstrates that despite claims of safeguarding language rights and revitalizing local languages such as Amazigh, language policies often serve as a covert means of state control and a tool for managing internal social and political conflicts. The paper demonstrates how denying underprivileged groups access to quality French education serves as a mechanism through which the dominant elite maintain their economic and social status. To this end, document analysis – ‘a systemic procedure for reviewing and evaluating documents – both print or electronic (computer-based and internet-transmitted) material’ (Bowen, 2009, p. 27) – is adopted to investigate how covert ideological mechanisms imbedded in the newly drafted laws create and perpetuate language practices that favour MSA and foreign languages. Documents could be of different forms; they can go beyond texts to include photographs, artwork, and even TV programs (O’Leary, 2004). Nonetheless, in the context of the present paper, the focus is on texts or what Lo Bianco (2010) terms ‘Public text’, i.e. ‘official documentation issued by a state or its agencies’ (p. 157) such as a country’s constitution which embodies the highest example of public texts. The examination of these texts aims to unravel the declared official policies, and the hidden agendas embedded in the formulation of policies that regulate language use, language practices, and language acquisition in Morocco. Document analysis reveals the controlling mechanisms embedded in policy texts that aim to limit the success of the officialization of Amazigh. It demonstrates how regulations and laws can hinder revitalization efforts by translating ideology into practice.

3 Arabization policy: One Nation, One Language

Language policy is viewed here as one of the mechanisms used by the state and the ruling elites to determine who can access political power and resources (Tollefson, 1991; Shohamy, 2006). Tollefson (1991) argues that “Language policy is one mechanism by which dominant groups establish hegemony in language use” (p. 16). It is the primary arena for managing and manipulating language practices in society. Shohamy (2006) also claims that “It is through LP that decisions are made about the preferred languages that should be legitimized, used, learned and taught in terms of where, when and in which contexts” (p. 45). The inherent limitations of earlier models and frameworks coupled with disillusionment in the positivistic economic and social paradigms (Ricento, 2000) have prompted this shift towards examining issues of power, hegemony, and ideology in language policy formulation.

The fact that language policy “can hegemonically normalize particular ways of thinking, being and/or educating, while concomitantly delimiting others, [has] become an important consideration within the field” (Johnson, 2013). Earlier models failed to solve linguistic issues and instead created social stratification that benefited dominant language speakers and alienated minority language communities. This section examines Morocco’s language policies since independence to uncover the implicit and covert policies that sustain the linguistic and economic interests of the dominant elite.

After the independence, Arabic was established as the only legitimate language in the country, becoming the national and official language promoting political cohesion and a shared culture built on pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism ideologies. The Constitution of December 14, 1962 states “Le Royaume du Maroc, État musulman souverain, dont la langue officielle est l’arabe, constitue une partie du Grand Maghreb.” (The Kingdom of Morocco, a sovereign Muslim state, whose official language is Arabic is part of the Greater Maghreb).

The newly independent nation followed the Western model of “one nation, one language” ideology, viewing Arabic as a symbol of cultural independence from France and the nation’s eternal glue, due to the presence of Amazigh, seen as a threat to the national unity at the dawn of independence (Boukous, 2003; Hart, 1997). Lakhdar Ghazal (1976) argued that Arabization was by default an ongoing process of resistance to the French colonial residue in Morocco. Arabization was not just a linguistic or educational issue; it was rather ‘une notion militante (an activist notion) (ibid. p. 9) whose aim is to re-establish MSA as a unifying modern language in the country.

As an educational policy, Arabization had four goals. First, it aimed at unifying education through the elimination of the binary education system composed of the traditional and French system. Second, it envisaged the universalization and/or generalization of education, making schooling of children of all ages compulsory. Third, it targeted the Moroccanization of education by training teaching staff to replace foreign teachers and adapting the textbooks to reflect the Moroccan identity. Lastly, it prioritised the use of Modern Standard Arabic as the medium of instruction in all schools and all levels. The process started in 1956 as the first independent government began Arabizing lower primary grades, but progress was slow due to strong French ties. By the late 1960s, primary education was fully Arabized, while middle and high school science and technical classes remained in French for 20 years. In 1975, high school social subjects were Arabized, and by the late 1980s, math and science were Arabized in secondary schools without adequate preparation. By the 1990s, all courses from sixth grade onward were taught in Arabic, but university-level science and technical classes remained in French, creating challenges for students.

Unfortunately, the four goals proved to be elusive and remained lofty aspirations for the various governments that oversaw educational reforms since Morocco's independence (Errihani, 2023; El Biad, 1985; Grandguillaume, 2004; Hammoud, 1982). Generalizing education was far from a success, especially in rural areas where illiteracy continued to prevail. In 2018, it was reported that only 68.5% of Moroccans were literate, placing the country among those with the highest rates of illiteracy in North Africa (World by Map, 2018). The remaining objectives also yielded limited success (see Sections 5 and 6).

In 2019, Arabic was blamed for the failure of Morocco's education system, leading to a decision to restore French for scientific subjects starting from the primary level. Experienced teachers struggled to adapt due to their lack of fluency in French after decades of teaching in Arabic. Critics argue that Arabization failed to meet its goals and achieve the intended educational objectives. According to local and international reports, the Moroccan educational system has experienced significant deterioration due to this policy. The Arabization of the public education system deprived generations of Moroccans from mastering French, progressively placing Moroccan students, particularly those in science and technology, at a disadvantage.

In addition to the lack of political will, improvisation and haste that characterized its implementation, Arabization failed due to the double discourse of political leaders and its lack of implementation in higher education. While the policy targeted public education for the masses, elites, and nationalist leaders sent their children to French schools, creating an "Elite

Closure" strategy. This deepened the social gap, as French remained dominant and many lacked proficiency in it. The continued use of French in higher education for science, technology, and economics also contributed to its failure. As early as 1980s, Hammoud argued that the presence of French in the domains where Arabic - the official language - should have been adopted served as a major obstacle to full Arabization. He wrote:

The convenient long-term reliance on French as an advanced language of wider communication and a medium facilitating access to the modern world of science and technology has made Arabisation harder and harder to achieve. (1982, p. 228)

4 Amazigh Language Policy: What Outcomes?

Amazigh acquisition policy is a language policy act driven by political necessity. On the surface, the introduction of Amazigh in education in 2003 and its subsequent official recognition in 2011 represent a turnaround in the legal and cultural discrimination against Imazighen (Plural of Amazigh) and their culture and an attempt to reclaim Amazigh as a national heritage and a main component of the Moroccan culture (King's Ajdir speech, 2001). Yet it remains a very well-calculated political decision whereby the state "instead of imposing the Berber culture as a challenge to national unity, the king promoted embracing it as a necessary step in his project for a 'democratic and modernist society'" (Silverstein and Crawford, 2004, p. 44). The change then in the language policy in Morocco to integrate Amazigh is not indicative of a genuine linguistic concern for the revitalization of Amazigh but rather a strategic political decision. The rise of the Islamic movement in 1990s posed an existential threat to the state but its coincidence with the emergence of stronger Amazigh demands for linguistic and cultural rights presented the state with "an important mechanism by which [it can] manage the social and political conflict" (Tollefson, 2002, p. 5). The state has pragmatically approached the Amazigh issue by incorporating rather than repressing it. By recognizing Amazigh as an official language and introducing it in schools, the state aimed to maintain power and mitigate the rising Amazigh ethnic and linguistic militancy of the early 2000s, rather than genuinely reviving the language.

The state intentionally designed bureaucratic oversight to ensure the failure of integrating Amazigh in public primary schools. Due to pressure from the Amazigh Cultural Movement and the monarch, the policy was launched hastily without proper planning, sacrificing effective implementation for political purposes (Errihani, 2007; Boussagui, 2019). The policy

suffered from a lack of trained teachers, with initial recruits receiving only two weeks of training to teach Amazigh using a newly devised script². The unsound pedagogical decisions continued by hiring non-Amazigh speakers to teach a language they do not speak offering them three days to two weeks of training.

Despite the growing number of graduates with BA degrees in Amazigh Studies and the establishment of four teacher training centres, the implementation of Amazigh education remains deliberately slow. According to a 2016 Ministry of Education report, 11,000 teachers were trained to teach Amazigh, but 6,000 were reassigned to teach Arabic, French, and math instead. Effective teaching of Amazigh is hindered by a lack of supervision, with only 16 inspectors available, and the number of specialized teacher trainers dropping from 60 in 2009 to 17 in 2015 (Ministry of education, 2015/2016 report).

Bureaucratic delays have hindered the generalization of Amazigh teaching. Twenty years after its introduction, Amazigh instruction in primary schools has declined rather than increased. Despite years of promises, the Ministry of Education admitted the failure to meet the 2009–2010 goal of incorporating Amazigh in all public schools. The Ministry's recent projections aim for 50% coverage by 2025/2026 and full generalization by 2029/2030, without providing a strategic plan and measures to achieve this goal (Ministerial note 028X23, May 23rd, 2023). Additionally, 90% of students do not consistently study Amazigh across all primary school grades.

Ostensibly, the state has shifted the Moroccan linguistic landscape by introducing the teaching of Amazigh and recognizing it as an official language breaking away from past marginalization. However, conditions have been created that hinder the success of the Amazigh language policy. Bureaucratic oversight and restrictive legal mechanisms have turned Amazigh language revitalization efforts into devitalization.

4.1 Constitutional Ambiguity

The analysis of the Moroccan 2011 New Constitution reveals the unequal treatment national languages receive in the country. Article 5 of the new constitution names Arabic and Amazigh as the two official languages of Morocco. It states:

² The decision to adopt Tifinagh was not without controversy as three different scripts were debated. The Arabic script, the Latin script and Tifinagh script ultimately chosen after a royal intervention.

Arabic remains [*demeure*] **the** official language of the State. The State works for the protection and for the development of the Arabic language, as well as the promotion of its use. Likewise, Tamazight [Berber/*Amazigh*] constitutes **an** official language of the State, being common patrimony of all Moroccans without exception. (Jefri J. Ruchti Translation)

However, a textual analysis of the Article reveals a hierarchical positioning of both languages. The first notable aspect in the examination of Article 5 is the preamble “Arabic ‘demeure / remains / تبقى the official language of the state”. The use of the word ‘demeure’ could be interpreted to signify the continued privileged status conferred to Arabic since independence. The preamble clearly aims at consolidating the status of Arabic as the default official language of the state. This is evident in the use of the definite determiner ‘**the**’ to denote the official status of Arabic and the use of the indefinite article – of ‘**an**’ –for Amazigh, which, according to Boukous “*peut être interprété comme signifiant une langue parmi d’autres*” (‘*can be interpreted as meaning one language among others*’, translation mine) (2013, p. 17).

Article 5 undoubtedly confers a notion of singularity to Arabic and maintains a hierarchical status among Moroccan languages positioning Arabic as the primary official language and Amazigh as secondary. Maintaining the legal superiority of Arabic over Amazigh was certainly the reason for the changes made to the final draft of the 2011 constitution presented to the monarch. According to Lahcen Oulhaj, a member of the committee in charge of the constitutional reform, the first draft posits Arabic and Amazigh as equal declaring both languages to be the two official languages of the state. However, changes were made later to the draft by Mohamed Moatassim who headed the committee for constitutional reform in collaboration with the Istiqlal and the PJD parties to maintain the presumed superiority of Arabic over Amazigh (personal communication, February 24th, 2018).

Another important aspect of the article, which strengthens this interpretation is the state’s responsibility toward these languages. Concerning Arabic, the state “*works for its protection and its development, as well as the promotion of its use*”. This prescription of the state’s responsibilities towards Arabic contrasts sharply with its orientations towards the protection of Amazigh as it tied the fate and future of the Amazigh language to organic laws that are open to political interpretation.

Also important is the absence of any specification as to the variety of Arabic concerned. It is not clear whether the generic term refers to MSA or CA and whether

it encompasses Darija as well. This-ambiguity, created after the independence and perpetuated by the current constitution, positions Amazigh in competition not only with CA and MSA but also with Darija, the language that competes with Amazigh in its key domain, the home. The perpetuation of this ambiguity in the formulation of Article 5 legitimizes the use of Darija in domains that should have been reserved for the two official languages. It can be argued that the formulation deliberately favours Arabic and operates in a manner that preserves the perceived superiority of Arabic and its varieties and protects them at the expense of Amazigh.

Kabel (2018, p. 487) argues that the ambiguous stipulation of Article 5 allows for 'differing interpretations and improvisations on the part of politicians and policy-makers. This results in a continuous delay in passing the organic law relative to the official implementation of Amazigh.

4.2 The 2015-2030 New Vision for Education and Amazigh Exclusion

The 2015-2030 vision developed by Le Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation et de la Formation et de la Recherche Scientifique (CSEFRS) under the title 'Pour une école de l'équité, de la qualité et de la promotion' (CSEFRS, 2015) illustrates the state's negative stance towards Amazigh. It indicates that Amazigh teaching is more about appeasement than genuine revitalization.

The strategy for educational reform by 2030 is based on three principles: (1) equity and equal opportunity in language learning, (2) adherence to the Constitution's status of official languages, and (3) establishing gradual and balanced plurilingualism. This vision promotes 'l'alternance linguistique' (linguistic alternation), with Arabic as the primary medium of instruction and French and English initially taught as subjects and later used as mediums for scientific instruction.

The policy prioritizes proficiency in Arabic, French, and English, excluding Amazigh from the plurilingualism framework, designating it as 'a language taught' but not a medium of instruction. This shift reverses the 2006 Pedagogical Guidelines for the Teaching of Amazigh, which emphasized literacy and proficiency. The new vision limits Amazigh to oral communication in the first two years, with writing literacy integrated in later years. It vaguely promises 'progressive generalization' of Amazigh teaching in elementary and secondary cycles without specifics.

In conclusion, the new vision perpetuates existing linguistic hierarchies, placing Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), French, and English at the top, while relegating Amazigh to oral communication.

4.3 The Organic Laws and the Dialectization of Amazigh

The state's restrictive mechanisms to hinder the revitalization and teaching of the Amazigh language are most evident in 'Organic Law 26.16'. This law, which defines the implementation of Amazigh as an official language, was passed in 2019, nearly a decade after Amazigh's official recognition. The political elite and government's reluctance to enact promised laws from the 2011 constitution has stalled Amazigh language policy, contributing to its regression. The state's delay in passing these laws exposes a discrepancy between its rhetoric and actions, suggesting that the policy is designed to constrain rather than revive Amazigh.

The bill covertly constrains Amazigh teaching and revitalization through its return to dialectization, deviating from the standardized norm developed by IRCAM. Article 1 ambiguously defines Amazigh as all regional varieties rather than a single standardized language, thus preventing it from functioning as an official language. Article 4 of the bill further supports dialectization by promoting regional linguistic expressions in the educational system over the standard norm. This definition undermines Amazigh's constitutional recognition as a unified language, minimizing its integration into public domains. It also perpetuates the longstanding ideological assumptions that Amazigh is not a language but a 'dialect' or rather a collection of 'dialects' "*lahajat*".

5 The Return to French and the Spread of English in Morocco

To address the drawbacks of the Arabization policy, the 2000 New Charter of Education (CNEF) emphasized the importance of foreign languages, particularly French and English. Foreign languages are currently viewed as essential for social and professional advancement in Morocco. The 2015-2030 Moroccan Strategic Vision emphasizes the role of foreign languages in accessing knowledge and modern technology.

The High Council for Education and Research report highlights the detrimental effects of Arabization, particularly the low proficiency in French among younger generations educated in public schools. The Council attributes the failure of the Moroccan educational system to

Arabization, holding it responsible for the challenges Moroccan young generations experience with their proficiency in French, which is a crucial requirement for employment on the job market.

To promote French and English, Morocco initiated the "International Baccalaureate" program, which offers high school students the opportunity to study scientific subjects in French or English for the national baccalaureate exam. This initiative aimed to enhance students' foreign language skills to meet the job market requirements the Arabization policy failed to meet. King Mohammed VI also emphasized the importance of foreign languages in his speeches since 2013, highlighting their added value to employment prospects and recommending their integration at all educational levels, especially in technical and scientific tracks.

After more than six decades of Arabization, the Moroccan parliament approved in August 2019, Law 51.17, which stipulates the use of French as the medium of instruction for scientific and technical subjects in Moroccan schools, starting from the primary school level. This return to French triggered a rage in parliament, especially among members of the PJD³ party and the Istiqlal⁴ party, the fervent defenders of the Arabic language, who viewed this act as a betrayal. The decision was also criticized by those in favor of the adoption of English as a medium of instruction. French has been prioritized due to its extensive usage in administrative, economic, and educational domains, especially at the university level.

Efforts to promote English are also evident as Doctoral students in science and technology are required to publish at least two scientific papers in English in indexed journals before their defence. English language is widely used particularly among younger generations, and in scientific research, foreign embassies, and international communication. However, its usage is limited compared to French and Arabic, due to Moroccans' low proficiency, especially the old francophone generations.

The Ministry of Moroccan Education decided in the summer 2023, to introduce English starting from the 2023-2024 academic year at the level of the first year of Mid-High school with a coverage rate of 50% for the first year, and 100% for the 2024-2025 year. This can

³ The Justice and Development Party (PJD) is a conservative Islamic-democratic party that endorses the Moroccan monarchy. It explicitly rejects violence and terrorism and seeks to preserve Morocco's Islamic identity through legislative processes.

⁴ The Istiqlal (PI), founded in 1947, is Morocco's oldest political party, that played a pivotal role in the country's struggle for independence from French and Spanish colonial rule. The party maintains a strong nationalistic ideology and is notably active in Pan-Arab affairs

challenge the exclusion of the masses ‘Elite closure’ through the mastery of French. The majority of Moroccans view English positively and associate it with science, technology, and economic advancement (El Kirat & Laaraj, 2016). English has witnessed steady growth, especially in higher education over the last two decades with its expansion as the language of academic publishing and scholarships. The language is likely to become the premium foreign language and medium of instruction in Morocco at the expense of French in the coming years.

6 The Role of Language Policy in Shaping Power Structures and Inequality in Morocco

The incongruity of the formulated policies and their failure to achieve their objectives has led to the balkanization of the education system in the country and consequently, the maintenance of the structures of power and dominance fashioned after the independence in 1956. Morocco has three different education systems: a public school system, run by the government, where so “many of our young people cannot fulfil their legitimate professional, material, and social aspirations” (King Mohammed VI speech, August 20, 2013); the network of forty-two elite French *lycées de mission*, run by the French government, where the well-off maintain their economic and political dominance; and the growing conglomerate of private institutions and schools where French is the dominant language to serve the middle-class families.

The Arabization of public schools had serious ramifications on the educational standards in the country. Early in 1966, Minister of Education Mohammed Benhima (1965-1967) halted the Arabization for his concern about its pedagogical consequences. More than fifty years after his concern, the decline of educational standards still plagues the public school. In a recent report, the Ministry of Education declares that 70% of students do not achieve curriculum mastery by the time they finish primary school. Their reading literacy, both in Arabic and French, is significantly lower; only 23% of students can easily read an 80-word text in Arabic and 30% manage to read a 15-word text in French (Feuille de route Ministry of Education, 2022). The unsatisfactory results are confirmed by TIMMS and PIRLS assessments, ranking 45th out of 45 in literacy (PIRLS, 2011) and 49th out of 50 (TIMMS, 2011). The private school students, however, demonstrate improved achievement scores (Ibourk, 2016) leaving the fate of public school students unfavorable and their deficit to continue throughout the curriculum and onto the labor market.

The dominance of French through its presence in the educational field (higher education) and the economy and finance plays a crucial role in maintaining unequal educational systems

which ensure that the majority of Moroccans have little to no chance of accessing the wealth and political power available only to those who speak French fluently. An understanding of the role of the lycées de mission can be gleaned from the fact that 45% of Moroccan graduates from these schools since 1956 come from just 500 families, with 15% coming from only 20 families (Moha Hajar, *La mission Française au Maroc vs La mission de l'école marocaine*, quoted in Martin Rose, 2014). This well-trained elite makes up the core of a body of technocrats who are fashioned to run the state's economic and financial apparatus. Sociologist Ali Benhaddou argues that:

Les familles bourgeoises engendrent les technocrates. L'Etat assure leur promotion [...] Ils passent successivement par les grandes écoles, les grands corps d'Etat, la haute fonction publique. Puis sans transition, ils sont cooptés à la tête des grandes banques, des grandes sociétés industrielles, commerciales. (Ksikes, 2006)

Bourgeois families breed technocrats. The State ensures their promotion [...]. They successively pass through the Grandes écoles, the major state bodies, the senior civil service. Then without transition, they are co-opted at the head of large banks, large industrial and commercial companies. (my translation)

For young people from poor families, they should be trained well enough to work as low-ranking civil servants or in low-paying manufacturing sectors. A school director of a private school in Casablanca argued that:

Il ne faut pas forcer tout le monde à passer dans le même moule comme le veut le système actuel. Les jeunes gens issus des familles pauvres doivent apprendre un métier ou une technique. Pour cela, ils ont à leur disposition des écoles de formation professionnelle.

We must not force everyone into the same mold as the current system wants. Young people from poor families must learn a trade or technique. For this, they have professional training schools at their disposal. (my translation, ibid)

The unequal access to linguistic skills translates into unequal access to power and wealth. The Arabized public school system channels graduates from poor families into unemployment or low-paying jobs where the chances of upward mobility are almost nonexistent, while the elite private schools help sustain existing power relations. Bouziane & Rguibi (2018), for example, demonstrated how the lack of proficiency in French stands in the way of many science

students graduating with a baccalaureate from pursuing studies in faculties of sciences. The authors found that science baccalaureate holders often shift from science streams in higher education to literary ones, particularly English and Islamic studies, due to their limited mastery of French acquired in primary and high school systems. Therefore, given their intertwined nature, language policy and education policies are “inseparable from the relationships of power that divide societies” (Tollefson, 1991, p. 203). Language policy reflect the interests of groups that dominate the political and economic apparatus of the state and their ability to control policy-making mechanisms and processes.

7 Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to explore language policy and power dynamics in post-independence Morocco. The main objective was to examine the role of language policy in structuring power and inequality in Morocco. The paper presented the languages in use, their functions and domains as well as their status. It also looked into the Arabization process, the Amazigh language teaching policy and the state of its officialization, and the language and educational policies. A critical review of the literature and the legal documents, including the Moroccan New Constitution was provided. The research was conducted within the framework of critical language policy, examining how educational language policies create and sustain inequalities among learners while serving the interests of dominant groups within a speech community.

The CLP was the most convenient approach for the study as it considers language policy to be highly political and ideological. The adoption of this framework helped to unveil the underlying historical conditions of Moroccan policy formulation and revealed the mechanisms employed by policymakers to “serve or undermine particular political and economic interests.”

This study showed the interplay between language ideologies, structural conditions, and economic interests that governed language policy formulation, and determined the value assigned to each language variety in the constituted Moroccan linguistic landscape since its independence in 1956. By adopting the Critical Language Policy approach, the paper argued that the claims of safeguarding language rights and revitalizing local languages, namely Amazigh, language policies in Morocco served as a covert means of state control and a tool for managing internal social and political conflicts.

Document analysis revealed the controlling mechanisms embedded in policy texts aimed at limiting the success of the officialization of Amazigh. It also demonstrated how regulations and laws impeded the revitalization processes of Amazigh.

The overall evaluation of the Arabization policy based on its outcomes and the High Council for Education report as well as the State's decision to return to French as the medium of instruction of scientific subjects revealed the failure of the policy. It also showed that it was an instrument for "Elite Closure" that deprived generations of Moroccans of mastering French, placing generations of Moroccan students, particularly those in science and technology, at a disadvantage. The policy not only failed to replace French but also led to the devalorization of MSA among the young generations who consider themselves to be victims of the policy and view MSA as a language of no value.

The Moroccan linguistic landscape will continue to evolve under the influence of globalization and social media. Alongside the real linguistic landscape, a virtual linguistic market is emerging that promotes some languages other than those imposed by state policies. This virtual space which remains beyond state control, allows Moroccan youth to use languages they master and value. Mother tongues, i.e. Amazigh and Darija, as well as English are more present in this space than French and MSA. Investigating this trend can help to determine the motivations for their use and foresee the future of the Moroccan linguistic landscape.

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