A critical review of the sociolinguistics of the Amazigh Language in Morocco: Documentation, teaching, and officialization

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Abstract
This paper aims to contextualize the state of the art of the sociolinguistic situation of the Amazigh language following the fairly recent changes in the Moroccan language policy. It critically delves into the trajectory of the continuing attempts undertaken by the state to reinforce the de jure and de facto patterns of presence of the Amazigh language at the level of corpus planning, status planning, and the recent policies adopted to potentially guarantee its revitalization. The amount of existing fieldwork literature in regard to the sociolinguistics of Amazigh has significantly increased insofar as grasping all the credible knowledge available remains a challenge for novice researchers. Therefore, an attempt is herein made to trace back the evolution of the place of Amazigh in Morocco since the Ajdir Dahir on October 17th, 2001 all the way to the adoption of the recently passed organic law 26.16, an approach which is supposed to concisely and precisely bring to the fore the major fundamental phases the language has gone through.

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Keywords
Amazigh language; Amazigh documentation; Amazigh teaching; Amazigh officialization; IRCAM

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1. Introduction

The recognition of Amazighity as an integral component of the Moroccan national identity has contributed to the legitimization of the Amazigh language and culture, thereby paving the path for their potential protection and promotion as a common heritage to all the components of the national community. The historical legitimacy the Amazigh issue has acquired is manifested in the creation of the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture, the incorporation of the Amazigh language into the Moroccan education system, the launching of the Tamazight television channel (TV8), and most importantly the recognition of Amazigh as the second official language alongside MSA. The new de jure status Amazigh has acquired with the changes in the Moroccan language policy alongside its relative presence in the media landscape and the educational system have been instrumental in the revalorization of the language among Moroccan communities, bringing about a relative change in their negative attitudes towards the Amazigh language, culture, and identity. The officialization of Amazigh is also expected to reinforce its status within the linguistic scene by “assigning it new socio-cultural roles”, which could lead to more positive “Amazighitude” (Boukous, 2011, p. 275).

The present paper provides a critical review of the sociolinguistics the Amazigh language in Morocco with the aim of contextualizing its state of the art following the fairly recent changes in the Moroccan language policy. The assumptions herein discussed are not based on fieldwork, but rather on previous literature, document analysis, and numerical data issued by the Ministry of Education between the years 2003 and 2010. Such an approach is expected to pave the path for future fieldwork research by investigating the extent to which some of the claims advanced tend to align with the de-facto reality of Amazigh language documentation as well as its patterns of presence in a variety of priority domains of public life, governed by the recently adopted organic law 26.16, including the Moroccan educational system.

2. A Note on language policy

Prior to discussing the place of the Amazigh language in the Moroccan language policy, a definition of the latter is deemed necessary. Scholars such as Fishman, Das Gupta, Jernudd & Rubin (1971, p. 293), Mansoor (2005), as well as Carroll (2001, p. 13) define language policy as a component of the language planning process, which is composed of four different phases, i.e.,

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1 This paper revisits Idhssaine (2022) and provides a more elaborate and detailed critical review of the state of the art of the Amazigh language following the fairly recent changes in the Moroccan language policy, especially from 2003 to 2011.
fact-finding, policy determination, implementation, and evaluation. However, a considerable amount of criticism has been leveled against this definition from scholars, who argue in favor of a totally distinct approach to language policy. For example, Cooper (1989), Schiffman (1996), and Kaplan & Baldauf (2003) claim that whereas language planning is related to the implementation of policies to obtain results, language policy is concerned with decision making and goal-setting. This is further illustrated by Kaplan & Baldauf (1997), who characterize language policy in terms of the official activities undertaken by the state. The authors write:

The exercise of language planning leads to, or is directed by, the promulgation of a language policy by government (or other authoritative body or person). A language policy is a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in the societies, group or system (Kaplan & Baldauf 1997, p. xi).

Spolsky (2007a) provides a more recent conceptualization of language policy, schematized in Figure 1 below (p. 202). In this model, the structure of language policy consists of three levels, including language practice, language attitudes, and language management, a concept proposed by Neustupny in 1986 to replace ‘language planning’ (see also Orman, 2008; Spolsky, 2004). While language practice seeks to elicit information as regards language-use patterns in different domains, language attitudes aim to understand the underlying motives behind people’s choices, preferences, and attitudes towards a given variety. Language management, however, is sought to explore issues related to the status of a particular language in public life, its corpus, as well as the degree of its acquisition by the community.

![Diagram of Language Policy Structure](adapted from Kretzer 2016, p. 19)

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2 Some scholars make a distinction between overt language policy and covert language policy. While the former refers to the official rules and legislations towards a given language, the latter concerns its societal norms. For details on this issue, see Schiffman (1996, 2006)
3. A historical overview of the Amazigh language in Morocco

Amazigh, also known as Berber, is allegedly the indigenous language of the Maghreb; it is argued to have existed for almost 5000 years ago (Boukous, 1995, p. 18). The language is spoken in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Mauretania. The word Amazigh is used as an umbrella term to refer to a number of related, but not all mutually intelligible, dialects of the Hamitic-Semitic family. The official writing system in which the language is written is known as Tifinagh, an indigenous script which allegedly was used to write Amazigh varieties across North Africa. The language policy the state adopted after Morocco obtained independence has led to marginalization of the Amazigh language in a variety of intimate (i.e., home) and priority domains of public life (Idhssaine & El kirat, 2019).

The etymology of the term “Berber” derives from the Latin word Barbarous, which refers to uncultivated communities that have lived beyond the pale of the Roman empire. The debate as to whether the word Berber or Amazigh should be used to refer to the language remains an ongoing issue among researchers (Reino, 2006, p. 2). However, Boukous (1995) offers a rational account for the adoption of the word “Amazigh” when referring to the indigenous inhabitants of Morocco (p. 18). Among the arguments he proposes are (i) the term Berber has a negative connotation; (ii) the term “Tamazight” is the original name natives of the language use to refer to their mother tongue; (iii) the term Amazigh conforms to the morphology of names in other languages; (iv) its scope has enough flexibility that it allows the distinction between “Amazigh,” the mother tongue, and “Tamazight,” the variety spoken in central Morocco. Following Boukous (1995) and El Kirat (2004), the term Amazigh is hereafter used instead of Berber.

Although the Amazigh community embraced Islam as a result of the Arab conquest, they managed to maintain their language and use it for intra-community communication and everyday life, as opposed to Darija, which was used for inter-community communication with Arabophones. Morocco has also witnessed the arrival of other ethnic tribes throughout the course of its history, starting from the medieval era all the way to the post-colonial one. In this connection, Morocco witnessed the emergence of Arabic through the Arab settlements in the 7th century, resulting in its prevalence in urban areas before it subsequently reached the remote ones during the 11th century. Whereas the first wave of immigrants allegedly consisted of mixed tribes, the second one subsumed Egyptian nomads, who have exercised their power upon the Amazigh tribes, and thus contributing to the predominance of Arabic all over the country (Ennaji, 2005, p. 10). A third wave of immigrants arrived in Morocco during the 15th century, most of whom were Andalusians who fled from religious persecution in Spain (Laroui, 2011, p. 14). The fact that Standard Arabic was substantially used in religious and administrative settings has led to the
marginalization of Darija and Amazigh, whose scope of use was largely confined to daily life communication. That noted, Brunot (1950) states that:


The Amazigh themselves, and this is still true today, admit the inferiority of their dialects when compared to the Arabic language. (Translation mine)

The quote above reveals the inferiority complex members of the Amazigh communities used to have towards their language, especially during the French Protectorate. During the colonial period (1912-1956), the French allegedly attempted to segregate the Amazigh communities from the Arabs through the promulgation of what is commonly referred to as the Berber Dahir, a decree the French regarded as a means of protection against any influence that could potentially threaten the pureness of the Amazigh language. Such decree has consequently led to uproars and protests from national political parties whose purpose was to suppress any kind of differences between the Amazighs and Arabs. A rather more objective account for the establishment of the Berber Dahir stems from the fact that Amazigh regions were perceived as “Bled siba” with their own respective customary laws.

In fact, Arabic had the privilege of becoming the symbol of national unity (Wyrtzen, 2014) during the colonial period did not do justice to the Amazigh language, as it further contributed to its stigmatization and marginalization in favor of other languages spoken in Morocco (Hoffman, 2008, p. 23). Similar to the medieval era, the protectorate was characterized by prejudices held by the nationalists, who perceived the Amazigh communities as uncultivated and ignorant. In fact, Amazigh was perceived as a symbol of backwardness that should be replaced by Arabic due to its strong vitality and the religious ties associated with it (Balafrej, as cited in Segalla, 2009, p. 232).

Moreover, the implementation of the Arabization policy embraced by the state shortly after the independence assisted in reinforcing the stigma attached to the Amazigh language. This led to the complete exclusion of Amazigh from the priority domains of public life, let alone the educational system, which was substantially Arabized to maintain the national identity of the country (Ennaji, 2003). Reino (2006) argues that notwithstanding the adoption of Modern Standard Arabic as the official language, French was still prevailing in almost every aspect of public life, including higher education, administrations, and other formal settings. She writes:

Even though the constitution of independent Morocco establishes Modern Standard Arabic as the official language of the new nation, after the French rule ended in 1956, Morocco inherited the French educational and administrative systems. All subjects in the educational curriculum, apart from religion, were taught in French. (Reino, 2006, p. 9)
4. The Amazigh-Darija and Amazigh-French bilingualism

Moroccan society is qualified as a multilingual setting where a number of languages are in contact. Such complexity (Fernández, 2006, p. 109) has brought about a variety of sociolinguistic phenomena, among which are code-switching/mixing, multilingualism, diglossia, language shift, language endangerment, and language loss (Poli, 2005, p. 3; Zouhir, 2014, p. 37). The latter are all closely related that one phenomenon could potentially lead to another. The fact that Morocco is a bi/multilingual country by no means entails that all Moroccans are fluent bilinguals, an allegation often taken for granted among foreigners when addressing the Maghreb region in general and Morocco in particular. Indeed, it is common to come across people who do not speak French at all in Morocco or have a limited command of the language, a scenario that is usually observed among the unprivileged communities with low socioeconomic status.

Amazigh-Darija bilingualism is regarded as the most prevalent pattern of bilingualism in Morocco. Ennaji (2005) refers to this form as one-way bilingualism, for Amazighs are most of the time the ones obliged to learn Darija because of communicational, educational, geographical, and religious reasons (p. 125). The proficiency Amazigh speakers tend to have in Darija often depends on their degree of exposure to the language in their daily life. El Kirat (2004) argues that the most proficient Amazigh - Darija bilinguals are from the second generation (p. 29). This type of bilingualism is progressively leading to the abandonment of Amazigh in favor of Darija, a claim that has been empirically investigated in various urban and rural Amazigh language areas (see among others, Idhssaine, 2021). The interplay between multilingualism and language revitalization does not only concern the community itself, but also language-in-education policies whereby endangered languages are incorporated into the school system and other priority domains of public life to guarantee their maintenance. In fact, this is reminiscent of the Moroccan context in which the de facto promotion of Amazigh was first initiated through its introduction to primary education alongside MSA.

Abbassi (1977) draws a distinction between what he refers to as “compound bilingualism” and “coordinate bilingualism,” arguing that whereas the former is an instance of Amazigh - Darija bilingualism in urban areas, the latter is a manifestation of Amazigh - Darija bilingualism in remote areas where Darija is predominantly used in domains of public life (p. 101). It is often claimed that Amazigh and Darija are not in a diglossic situation, given that they both have the same domains of use. In this regard, El Kirat (2004) posits that had both languages been in a diglossic relationship, “the Amazigh language would still be widely used and would not have undergone any language shift and loss” (p. 34).
Another form of bilingualism which, to the best of my knowledge, has never been reported in the literature despite its long existence is French-Amazigh bilingualism (El Kirat, 2020, personal communication). This form of bilingualism concerns Amazigh activists, who seem to reject the Arabic language as a stand against the Arabs, or rather monolingual Amazighs, who have migrated to France or Belgium, where they have had no opportunity to learn Darija or Modern Standard Arabic. This type is usually common among the Amazigh educated elite that regards it as a marker of identity and prestige; it is also ideologically loaded as it implicitly reveals the indifferent attitudes Amazighs have towards Darija and other Arabic varieties, an issue which was apparent during the fieldwork trips. It could be argued that the Moroccan bilingual patterns are a direct ramification of numerous factors, including historical, political, religious, and socio-economic ones. This has brought about a variety of other sociolinguistic phenomena such as code-switching and code-mixing, which mark the beginning of attrition/shift phenomena as a result of advanced stages of bilingualism.

Such assumption has been empirically re-attested by Idhssaine (2021), who argues that Amazighophone speakers are gradually undergoing a shift process from Amazigh monolingualism to supplementary Amazigh-Darija bilingualism, and from complementary Amazigh-Darija bilingualism to residual Darija-Amazigh bilingualism, culminating finally into Darija monolingualism. That noted, Boukous (2011) formulated the model below to illustrate the historical process of shift Amazigh is undergoing:

\[
M1 \rightarrow SB (L1 > L2) \rightarrow CB (L1 = L2) \rightarrow RB (L1 < + L2) \rightarrow SM (L2)
\]

L1: Amazigh and L2: Darija
M1: Initial situation of first language monolingualism
SB: Supplementary bilingualism situation
CB: Complementary bilingualism situation
RB: Residual bilingualism situation
SM: Terminal situation of second language monolingualism

(Boukous, 2011, p. 120).

5. Amazigh language legitimization

The 1962 constitution promulgated after Morocco gained independence was instrumental in deciding the fate of the Moroccan language policy. In fact, post-independence Morocco was characterized by an ideological conflict, which was not favorable to the Amazigh language due to the prevailing pan-Arabist ideology. Although the Moroccan nationalists advocated for the unification of Morocco in the Arabo-Islamic world, they regarded Amazigh as a colonial intervention and a threat to Arab unity. During pan-Arabism in the 1970s, the Amazigh issue was regarded as a reactionary attitude one could simply be
arrested for. Such marginalization has led to the emergence of a handful of Amazigh associations to advocate for their linguistic and cultural rights, including the Association of l’Université d’été D’Agadir, founded by a new group of Soussi intellectuals in Rabat and l’Association Nouvelle de Culture et des Arts Populaires, currently known as Tamaynut. The aim of the Amazigh Cultural Movement (ACM) was not only the recognition of the Amazigh language and culture as integral components of the Moroccan national identity, but also its historical legitimacy and cultural autonomy.

The ACM had to wait until the 1990s to become effectively active thanks to the inauguration of the “Agadir Charter” in August 1991, a declaration which sought to legitimize the movement as a legal organism advocating for the democratization of linguistic and cultural rights in Morocco. In this regard, Ouazzi (2000) explains that the ACM has managed to relatively influence the authorities to take positive stands towards Amazigh; yet, the Arabist ideology (i.e., Arab nationalism) was still predominant in the Moroccan linguistic scene where the Amazigh language and culture remained marginalized. Therefore, the Amazigh community had to ultimately assimilate to the prevailing ideology as a token of embracing Islam and showing their nationalism. The beginning of the 90s was a turning point in the history of the ACM as their demands became more political and gained interest in the Moroccan media. This was initially manifested in the historical speech delivered by King Hassan II on August 20th, 1994, in which he publicly legitimized the movement.

I talked, my dear People, about dialects. Why? I estimate that the dialects are components of our authenticity. Arrived with the Koran, Arabic has not suppressed our dialects. (Translation by Lehtinen, 1996, p. 18)

The king’s speech was an immediate reaction to a group of Amazigh activists from the association Tilleli that were arrested in Errachidia, a city in southern Morocco, for allegedly disturbing public order through raising banners and slogans in Tifinagh during the celebration of the International Labour Day on 1st May, 1994. The King highlighted the importance of integrating national dialects into primary education, arguing that their teaching could potentially enhance the country’s immunity to the cultural and linguistic invasion of the colonial heritage. Of interest here is that the same argument used by the nationalists and the state to legitimize the denial of an official status to Amazigh or at least its recognition as an element of the Moroccan national identity has been adopted to advocate the teaching of national dialects. Analyzing the King’s speech, Lehtinen (1996) observed that the choice of the term “dialects” to refer to a language could be interpreted as a political mechanism to divide the ACM through pinpointing to the regional varieties of the language. By and large, despite being a political necessity, one could argue that the speech has fairly contributed to changing the officials’ attitudes towards the Amazigh issue, paving the path for other subsequent measures I shall discuss in the next subsections.
6. The creation of IRCAM

The speech delivered by the late King Hassan II on August 20th, 1994, was substantially instrumental in legitimizing the ACM agenda where the recognition and teaching of the Amazigh language were central. The politicization of the Amazigh issue and its incorporation into the media landscape have brought about a relative change in the authorities’ attitudes towards Amazigh, an act which first manifested in the promulgation of article 110 in the National Educational Charter. The latter seeks, inter alia, to accommodate the Amazigh language and culture as a reflex of Morocco's pluralism and nation-state building alongside Modern Standard Arabic. The charter is governed by the principle of the complementary distribution of languages whereby Modern Standard Arabic is perceived as the language of national and religious identity, whereas Amazigh is regarded as the vehicle of regional identity. Foreign languages were instead considered as a medium to open on the world. The integration of Amazigh into the national educational charter seems to be, at the surface, a crucial step in the recognition of the Amazigh language and identity. However, a careful analysis of the premises of articles 115-116 of the charter reveals a great ambiguity “not only in the appellation and status of Amazigh, but also in its function” (Ennaji, 2005, p. 67).

Equally important is that the function assigned to the Amazigh language in the national charter of education encourages Moroccan schools to practice a kind of “opening” on Amazigh, a term deemed problematic as it implies that the latter is not part of the Moroccan identity. Berdouzi (2000) also analyzed the premises of the charter to conclude that it does not make any explicit reference to Arabization, nor does it allude to the establishment of an Arabic Language Academy to oversee the modernization of the language (p. 21). A new declaration was subsequently issued by King Mohammed VI on July 30th, 2001, in which he ultimately recognized the Amazigh language and culture as integral constituents of the Moroccan identity that should be preserved and promoted as a national heritage of all Moroccans. In fact, the king’s initiative was rather a safety measure than a linguistic one; it was the result of the increasing pressure from the ACM and the Black Spring erupted in Algeria, which brought about violent clashes between protestors and security forces in Tizi Ouzou insofar as thousands were injured and over 120 died.

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3 Marley (2004) provides an English translation of article 110, which reads as follows: “Morocco will now be adopting a clear, coherent and constant language policy within education. This policy has three major thrusts: the reinforcement and improvement of Arabic teaching, diversification of languages for teaching science and technology and an openness to Tamazight” (p. 31).
The king also opened up about his Amazigh origins on the part of his mother, thereby contributing to the legitimacy of the demands included in the Amazigh Manifesto. According to Maddy-Weitzman & Zisenwine (2007), the Amazigh Manifesto does not differ from the Agadir Charter in terms of demands, except that “it addresses Moroccan’s more recent history in an unabashedly, revisionist, and explicit tone [and] it fairly hammered away at the denial of Morocco’s ‘Amazighes’, and the arrogation by professional politicians and most members of Morocco’s elite, since 1956, of monopolistic right to ‘patriotism’ and political action” (p. 107). This was shortly followed by the Ajdir Dahir on October 17th, 2001, a decree which marked the beginning of a new era for Amazigh through the creation of the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) to allegedly safeguard, promote, and strengthen the place of the Amazigh culture in the school system, society, and media landscape (Monahan & Severo, 2020; Boukous, 2009; Boukous, 2011; El Kirat, 2004). However, El Kirat & Boussagui (2019) assert that the creation of IRCAM seems to have “produced a row within the ACM, and many activists saw IRCAM as a domestication of the ACM and the integration of IRCAM was viewed as a betrayal to the Amazigh cause” (p. 85).

Some activists have considered IRCAM as another mechanism adopted by the state (i.e., Makhzen) to control the Amazigh issue and weaken the ACM, which has often advocated for the linguistic and cultural rights of the Amazigh community. The multiple tasks assigned to IRCAM are clearly listed in the Ajdir Dahir and include the following: (i) to safeguard, maintain, protect and diffuse the Amazigh culture; (ii) to promote and improve research on the Amazigh culture; (iii) to promote the Amazigh artistic culture; (iv) to study the written form of Amazigh to facilitate its teaching (i.e., production of didactic materials); (v) to contribute to the elaboration of training programs; (vi) to help research and training at the university level; (vii) to promote the use of Amazigh in communication; (viii) to cooperate with national and foreign centers. In pursuance of these goals, IRCAM cooperates with a handful of ministerial departments to execute public policies regarding Amazigh language teaching. Boukous (2011) also states that IRCAM regularly provides “counsel to the king on issues pertinent to the promotion of Amazigh in all its expressions” (p. 62) (see also Royal Decree n° 1-01-299, 2001).

Of the alleged achievements fulfilled by IRCAM are the ongoing standardization of the Amazigh language and the adoption of Tifinagh script as its official writing system, an initiative the king has single-handedly taken due to the increasingly ideological and political debate the issue has brought about. However, substantial criticism was leveled against such a decision from those in favor of the Arabic script, arguing that the use of Tifinagh hinders the promotion of Amazigh and, most importantly, its spread among Moroccans. A third camp rather advocated for the adoption of the Latin script as the
official writing system for the language, given its popularity and visibility at the international level. The proponents of the Arabic script argue that the latter would indeed reinforce Moroccans’ Islamic identity, and that the use of the Latin script would “endanger their attachment to their religion and alienate them from their Muslim community” (Boussagui, 2019, p. 37). Boukous (2004) argues that the codification of Amazigh was allegedly conducted within a framework wherein different regional variations were treated as synonymies, of which speakers could choose between the normalized form or the other competing forms. Yet, the aim to turn Amazigh into a full-fledged language that satisfies the needs speakers encounter in their everyday life has been challenging to pursue and demands time (Ibid. 2004).

The standardization of the Amazigh language should be done on objective and scientific grounds in an attempt to maintain the particularities of regional varieties. The state of the art of the allegedly standardized norm does not seem to epitomize the sum of all the local varieties, thus running the risks of bringing about internal conflicts among members of the Amazigh communities. This is evident in the fact that the variety projected by IRCAM is still not intelligible to a large number of Amazighs that one could simply question the manner in which the standardization process is being done, and whether it is ideologically biased. It also hinders the teaching of the Amazigh language, especially among semi-speakers who do not feel included.

Boukous (2011) argues that the mission IRCAM is entrusted with covers “a wide range of tasks, namely collecting, transcribing and studying the various manifestations of Amazigh culture; codifying the spelling; designing the necessary tools for teaching/learning Amazigh and initial and continuing training; and contributing to the consolidation of Amazigh in the media” (p. 228). About two decades after its creation, one cannot deny that IRCAM has been largely successful in establishing a solid literature in Amazigh that documents and enriches the language. The analysis of the official documents and outputs issued by IRCAM revealed that the latter has been able to produce around 378 publications in the form of educational manuals, grammar books (e.g., *Nouvelle Grammaire* and *Manuel de conjugaison*), smartphone apps, glossaries, the *Asinag* journal and its website, dictionaries (e.g., *Dictionnaire General de la Langue Amazighe*), conference proceedings, and others. The figure and table below provide quantified data with respect to the set of publications consulted, as well as a representative sample of the different works published by IRCAM between 2003 and 2019, respectively.
Figure 1. Approximation of IRCAM’s publications between 2003 and 2019

Table 1
Sample of IRCAM’s publications between 2003 and 2019

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H. Laraj &amp; A. Billouch</td>
<td>(Awal inu)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatima Agnaou</td>
<td>(Iskkiln n tfinaghe)</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Educational material</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mohamed Hamam</td>
<td>المصطلحات الأمازيغية في تاريخ المغرب وحضارته الجزء الثاني</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Studies and Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omar Ouqqa</td>
<td>لمجموع اللاتاق على مشكل الياتاق</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Documents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moha Ennaji</td>
<td>La culture populaire et les défis de la mondialisation</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Proceedings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Al Houssine Ouaazzi</td>
<td>(Asaru n umiy)</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ahmed Assid</td>
<td>(Afgan d’ulgmad d’insi)</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasmine El Baz</td>
<td>(Tiram n tmazirt)</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohamed Akoudad</td>
<td>شعرية السرد الأمازيغي</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Studies</td>
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<td>Fouad Azrual</td>
<td>Arbatn d wasif (Arbatn d wasif)</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Theatre</td>
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<td>Lahbib Fouad</td>
<td>(Tisurifin)</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Books</td>
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<tr>
<td>Omar Ammir</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>Honoring</td>
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<td>Ahmed Zahid</td>
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<td>2007</td>
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<td>Transivité et diathèse en tarifite</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Dissertations</td>
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<td>Said Kamel</td>
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<td>2007</td>
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<td>Mohamed Akoudad</td>
<td>تاريخ الأدب الأمازيغي مدخل نظري</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Round Table</td>
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The data illustrated in figure (1) and table (2) highlight the eminent efforts put by IRCAM to establish a corpus for the Amazigh language that could potentially contribute to its documentation. This is substantiated by the recently amended internal law with regards to the prizes devoted to the Amazigh language and culture, following the report issued by the advisor of king Mohammed VI in June 2019 whereby IRCAM has been granted further privileges. Expected to be implemented by July 3rd, 2020, the provisions of the new law subsume 21 articles, each of which regulating the procedural framework within which the respective prize is granted. A closer look at the official document reveals that the prizes covered by the law are diversified and include (i) the Appreciation Prize for the Amazigh Culture; (ii) the National Prize for the Amazigh Culture and Artistic Creation; (iii) the National Prize for Amazigh Literature; (iv) the National Prize for Scientific Research; (v) the National Prize for Amazigh Arts Production; (vi) the National Prize for Translation; (vii) the National Prize for Amazigh language teaching; (viii) the National Prize for Media and Communication; (ix) the National Prize for Tifinagh; and finally (x) the National Prize for Research and Informational Programs. Other achievements pursued by IRCAM and the ACM include the relative incorporation of Amazigh into the school system and media landscape through conventions signed with the respective ministries.

7. The trajectory of Amazigh teaching in Morocco

Shortly after the creation of IRCAM, Amazigh was incorporated into primary education in September 2003 as a pivotal step in the promotion of the language (Errihani, 2006, 2008; Buckner, 2006, p. 423). The ongoing regression of the Amazigh-in-education policy, however, tends to reinforce the allegation that the policy was driven by political necessity rather than linguistic or cultural concerns. The language was first introduced in 300 schools taught by approximately 1000 teachers who allegedly received pedagogical training in Amazigh teaching (Errihani, 2006). Equally important here is the script in which Amazigh should be taught, a debate which ultimately led to the proposal of three candidates, namely the Tifinagh alphabet, the Arabic alphabet, and the Latin alphabet. A political solution was ultimately offered whereby Tifinagh was adopted as the official writing system by virtue of its being the indigenous North African script used in several inscriptions across the Maghreb (see also Chabot, 1940; Marcy, 1936). The politicization of the Tifinagh alphabet could potentially be justified by the fact that the overwhelming majority of the
Abdellah Idhssaine

Amazigh community had no say in the choice of the script, which amounts to the top-down approach adopted by the state to handle the Amazigh issue. Moreover, despite being a political necessity, the majority of the ACM tend to believe that the driving factor behind the use of Tifinagh resides in the symbolic value it represents for the Amazigh community, who consider it as an identity marker through which they retain their cultural legitimacy and avoid assimilating to the Arabist ideology, which favors the Arabic script. The third camp, however, that proposed the use of the Latin script as an alternative to the Arabic and Amazigh alphabets was accused of being neocolonialist.

Prior to its integration into the Moroccan educational system, the Amazigh language has been undergoing a standardization process, which Boukous (2011) defines as “the intervention on a language to make of it a “standard” based on a linguistic norm defined in advance” (p. 150). He also argues that planning the corpus of Amazigh by its standardization and codification has several benefits. First, it allows for better communication within the community; second, it facilitates the unity of the community; thirdly, it strengthens the feelings of identity, and finally it facilitates the integration of the language into both school and university education. Sadiqi (2011) claims that the teaching of Amazigh was motivated by the necessity to allegedly safeguard the language as a token of Morocco’s ancestral identity, of which Amazigh stands as the mother tongue for a large number of Moroccans (p. 5). The call for using Amazigh as a medium of instruction as part of the Amazigh revitalization process was also among the demands of the ACM. The latter has often advocated for this proposal due to its efficacy for the eradication of illiteracy among both the youth and adults, a claim further corroborated by experts from UNESCO (1953) who recommend that “the use of the mother tongue should be extended to as late a stage in education as possible. In particular, pupils should begin their schooling through the medium of the mother tongue” (p. 3).

Unlike Algeria where the learning of Amazigh remains optional, the status of the Amazigh-in-education policy in Morocco mandates that all Moroccans learn the language (Silverstein, 2004, p. 1; Boukous, 2007, p. 83), irrespective of their ethnic or linguistic background. The politics behind such a decision could be ascribed to the fact that the Amazigh language and culture are a common heritage of all Moroccans to cherish as an integral constituent of their national identity. Errihani (2006) postulates that the elaboration of effective educational programs to teach Amazigh to Moroccans could potentially contribute to fostering its maintenance, provided that a certain congruity between policies and people’s beliefs and practices is established (pp. 143-144) (see also Iazzi, 2018, p. 158). In this connection, Fishman (1991) argues that

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4 For details regarding the arguments provided by UNESCO experts in favor of mother tongue teaching, see Boukous (2000a, 2001).
language revitalization largely depends on the extent to which the community uses the threatened variety, as well as the nature of their beliefs and perceptions towards it (p. 368). The implementation of the Amazigh-in-education policy is governed by the collaboration between IRCAM and the Ministry of Education. In 2005, 140 teachers and inspectors in around 32 centers were reportedly trained to teach Amazigh. Two years later, the number increased to 2000 and then dropped to 75 by 2018, as a result of the hectic demand to teach the language, i.e., 807 in 2003 and 1140 in 2008 (Sadiqi, 2011, pp. 9-10). The rate at which the ministry of education has introduced Amazigh to the school system revealed several shortcomings that resulted in failure to generalize the experience in all cycles by the 2009-2010 academic year.

Amazigh was recently incorporated into a few Moroccan universities with which IRCAM established partnerships (i.e., Agadir, Fes, Oujda, and Casablanca lately) so as to create departments specialized in the Amazigh language and culture. In fact, the Ministry of Education and IRCAM have maintained an optimistic tone with regard to the successful implementation of the Amazigh-in-education policy; yet, various members within IRCAM itself are concerned about the ongoing regression of Amazigh in the school system, a reality the Ministry of Education is not very explicit about. (see Ahmed Aassid, personal communication, May 16, 2016, as cited in Boussagui, 2020, p. 116; El Kirat & Boussagui, 2018, p.118). Tables 2 and 3 below demonstrate the Ministry of Education’s projections to make Amazigh part of every school curriculum by the 2009-2010 academic year. The data also highlight the Ministry’s failure to gradually generalize the Amazigh teaching experience for the 1st and 2nd grades by the same academic year.

Table 2
Percentage of primary schools expected to include Amazigh in their program by 2009/10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st grade</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IRCAM, 2003-2004. (N.B.: 5% represents roughly 330 schools)
Table 3
*Number of schools teaching Amazigh according to region*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of schools</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oued Eddahab</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laayoune</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guelmimia</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sous Massa</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gharb</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaouia</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marrakech</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oriental</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casablanca</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabat</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doukkala</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tadla Azilal</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meknes</td>
<td>1150</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fes</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taza</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangier</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,431</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IRCAM, 2010

Table 2 highlights the projected figures of the implementation of the Amazigh-in-education policy between 2003 and 2010. It seems that the academic year 2009-2010 was the period during which the Amazigh language was expected to become a subject of every first-grade student. Over a decade thereafter, one could see that the teaching of Amazigh is rather deteriorating due to, inter alia, the limited number of schools where the language is being taught. On the other hand, table (3) illustrates the extent to which Amazigh is taught in different regions across the kingdom, which in total does not exceed 26% of all elementary schools across Morocco. One could clearly observe the apparent discrepancy between these numbers and the projections of the Ministry of Education concerning the generalization of Amazigh in every school curriculum by 2010. The Ministry’s statistics further attest that only 15% of all elementary school students in Morocco study Amazigh, and only 4% of teachers teach the language (Boukous, 2011). The regression in the Amazigh teaching experience is also evident in the significant decline of the number of students who study Amazigh as a subject in school. The table below indicates the decrease in the number of students according to their respective grades during the 2008-2009 academic year.
Table 4
Number of students who study Amazigh according to level, 2008-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Grade</td>
<td>186,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Grade</td>
<td>139,433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Grade</td>
<td>92,226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Grade</td>
<td>55,822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Grade</td>
<td>31,708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade</td>
<td>15,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>521,180</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Education, 2010

The above data corroborates the failure of the projections of the Ministry of Education. In fact, out of the 3,518,753 students enrolled in primary education, only 527,025 officially learn Amazigh (14.97%), a premise which yet again reveals the de facto status of the language in school curricula where it is still marginalized (see also Boussagui, 2020). Schiffman (1996) argues that discrepancies between what is stated in official documents, and the manner in which policies are implemented remains a common attribution of language policies (Errihani, 2006, p. 144). The top-down approach the state adopted to implement the Amazigh-in-education policy has resulted in a number of shortcomings that hinder the projections assumed by the Ministry of Education. Of the major impediments confronting the teaching of Amazigh is the ongoing lack of qualified teachers; those who were first recruited to teach the language received only a two-week training in a script totally new to them. The decision to generalize the Amazigh teaching experience has pushed the Ministry of Education to start recruiting non-Amazigh teachers, who neither spoke the language nor received pedagogical training on how to teach it (Errihani, 2006, p.152). Another challenge facing the Amazigh-in-education policy concerns the beliefs and perceptions of Moroccans, who allegedly had no say in the implementation process. According to Lewis (1981), policies which do not take into account the community’s attitudes towards their language are less likely to succeed. That noted, he writes:

No policy will succeed which does not do one of three things: conform to the expressed attitudes of those involved; persuade those who express negative attitudes about the rightness of the policy; or seek to remove the causes of the disagreement. (Lewis, 1981, p. 262).

8. The officialization of Amazigh and its revitalization

The intense uprisings the MENA region has recently undergone could not have gone unnoticed without ramifications on the Moroccan political arena where a few popular protests raised slogans against the corruption underlying the Moroccan socio-economic system. The increasing tension expressed by
the 20 February movement (Rossi-Doria, 2016, p. 64) led to a new constitutional reform in 2011, a few weeks after the initial protests, whereby the head of state promised to reinforce the patterns of democratization among Moroccans both at the macro (i.e., institutional) and micro (i.e., socioeconomic/cultural) levels (Boukous, 2018, p. 185). The efforts of the Amazigh militants and groups that participated in the protests did not go unnoticed either. In fact, 2011 was an unprecedented year for the ACM since Amazigh was finally recognized as the second official language of Morocco alongside MSA. Such status is clearly governed by provisions of article five in the 2011 constitution where both Modern Standard Arabic and Amazigh are listed as the official languages of the state:

L’arabe demeure la langue officielle de l’État. L’État œuvre à la protection et au développement de la langue arabe, ainsi qu’à la promotion de son utilisation. De même, l’amazighe constitue une langue officielle de l’État, en tant que patrimoine commun à tous les Marocains sans exception. Une loi organique définit le processus de mise en œuvre du caractère officiel de cette langue, ainsi que les modalités de son intégration dans l’enseignement et aux domaines prioritaires de la vie publique, et ce afin de lui permettre de remplir à terme sa fonction de langue officielle.

Arabic remains 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, Amazigh constitutes an official language of the State, being common patrimony of all Moroccans without exception. An organic law defines the process of implementation of the official character of this language, and the modalities of its integration into the school system and the priority domains of public life, so that it may be permitted in time to fulfill its function as an official language (Moroccan Const. art. 5, 2011, Trans. by Williams S. Hein).

One of the eminent attributions of article five is the call for the promulgation of an organic law, which is expected to define the procedural protocol to implement the official character of the Amazigh language as well as the modalities of its integration into the education system and the priority domains of public life. The recently adopted organic law would grant Amazigh the institutional mechanisms necessary to fulfill its role as an official language alongside MSA. However, a substantial portion of the ACM are concerned about the manner in which the organic law will be implemented, and whether it will do justice to the Amazigh language. Such skepticism stems from the fact that the organic law regulating the implementation of the official character of the Amazigh language was promulgated in the last days of the legislative period of the ruling party (i.e., PJD) in 2016, thereby corroborating the procrastination policy the state has always adopted towards the Amazigh language. The law was harshly criticized by IRCAM and many Amazigh NGOs due to the ambiguities underlying its provisions (Personal Communication, Ahmed Assid, 2019).
Another important measure the state has recently undertaken is the validation of the other organic law regulating the National Council for Languages and Moroccan Culture on February 12, 2020, an act that has raised concerns about the future of IRCAM. In fact, a closer look at article 51 of the organic law reveals that IRCAM will be entirely restructured; the law also refers to the creation of three institutional bodies, namely a section in charge of the Hassani and other Moroccan cultural expressions; a section for the Development and Preservation of the Moroccan Heritage, and a section in charge of the development, translation, and use of foreign languages. The officialization of the Amazigh language opens substantial prospects for its revitalization and integration into the priority domains of public life. In fact, the legal character the language enjoys has led to a substantial change in social representations and attitudes towards the Amazigh language and culture. While this argument may to some extent be valid, fieldwork research yet reveals that Moroccans’ attitudes towards Amazigh range from unfavorable to indifferent, especially among the non-Amazigh communities (Idhssaine, 2020). It should be mentioned that not until recently has the Moroccan state finally validated the organic law 26.16 regulating the implementation of the official character of the Amazigh language and the law 04.16, which governs the creation of the National Council for Languages and Moroccan Culture. Another crucial issue that should be brought to the fore is the need for an Amazigh-based multilingual education that could provide indigenous Amazigh communities all the necessary means to preserve and pass on their traditional knowledge.

In this regard, the status of Amazigh in the educational system is gradually gaining ground, as evident in its recent integration into a few Moroccan universities at both the undergraduate and master levels. However, the teaching of Amazigh could only be generalized should there be genuine political will, far from any ideological discourse that could lead to negative outcomes (Boukous, 2011). Central to the revitalization of Amazigh is the relationship between its teaching and the Tifinagh writing system adopted by IRCAM to write the language, which according to Boukous (2011) has a number of advantages at different levels, including the phonological level, the orthographical level, and most importantly the historical one. Boukous (2013) offers an analysis of article five, with the aim of comparing the status and functions of Amazigh to those of Modern Standard Arabic. He pinpoints a major discrepancy underlying the provisions of article five in the 2011 constitution, indicating that while Amazigh is regarded as a linguistic heritage common to all Moroccans with no exception, there is no mention of Modern Standard Arabic being so. He further claims that the language policies adopted by the state tend to favor Modern Standard Arabic

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5 El Aissati (2005) corroborates Boukous’s argument and considers Tifinagh to be the ideal script for the Amazigh language by virtue of being not only a script, but also a symbol representing the Amazigh identity.
over Amazigh by proclaiming an organic law related to the implementation of the official character of the latter, as opposed to the former.

The present paper sought to discuss the state of the art of the Amazigh language by bringing to the fore the main changes the Moroccan language policy has undergone, namely the creation of IRCAM, the incorporation of Amazigh into the educational system, and most importantly its recognition as the second official language alongside Arabic. Official data were analyzed and discussed to highlight the progress of the Amazigh-in-Education policy and its documentation in relation to the revitalization process of endangered Amazigh varieties. One may conclude that the Amazigh teaching experience remains considerably limited in the Moroccan educational system, which could primarily be attributed to the lack of trained teachers of Amazigh, and the procrastination policy adopted by the state to implement the recently validated organic law 26.16. The paper also discussed the Moroccan bilingual situation as a ramification of language contact brought about through Islam and colonization. Reference herein was made to two of the widely-assumed bilingual patterns in the Moroccan linguistic scene, including Amazigh-Darija bilingualism and Amazigh-French bilingualism.

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A Critical Review of the Sociolinguistics of the Amazigh Language in Morocco

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Proposed law 26.16 for the implementation of the official character of Amazigh.

The 2011 Constitution of Morocco.