Abstract

Two linguistically and culturally different communities have been living in Morocco since the Arab-Islamic conquests in the seventh century AD, namely the Amazigh-speaking and the Arabic-speaking communities.

The language policies that were implemented by the Moroccan government from independence in 1956 till 2001 greatly promoted the Arabic language, which resulted in the exclusion of the Amazigh language from the educational system, the media, and public services and led to its marginalization and stigmatization. In 2003, after the official recognition of Amazigh as a basic component of the Moroccan identity and culture by a royal dahir (decree) in 2001, Amazigh was granted institutional support and was introduced in the educational system at the primary school level. The aim of this paper is to explore how the Arabic-speaking community, which has been a dominant language group in the Moroccan society for hundreds of years, views the teaching of Amazigh, which has reduced the space of the Arabic language in the educational system and has changed the status of Amazigh from a language of the home to a language of the school, granting it more value and power. The data on which the paper is based consists of interviews and questionnaires administered to a group of Arabophones in order to see whether they hold favorable or unfavorable attitudes towards the integration of Amazigh in the educational system and to what extent they are ready for this drastic change that will certainly remake the national educational space. Baker (1992, p. 9) said, “If a community is grossly unfavorable to bilingual education or the imposition of a ‘common’ national language is attempted, language policy implementation is unlikely to be successful.”

1. Introduction
Since 2001, a date considered a turning point in the history of the Amazigh community in Morocco, the government has been engaged in revitalizing Amazigh as part of a new national language policy that grants more space to this language after hundreds of years of exclusion. One of the factors deemed crucial in the revitalization process of languages, which includes both corpus planning and status planning, is education. “Certes le processus de revitalisation langagière se nourrit d’un environnement micro qui assure la transmission intergénérationnelle de la langue et de la culture, et de la prise de conscience volontariste de l’irréductibilité de l’identité communautaire, mais il doit également s’accompagner de la complétude institutionnelle par l’investissement des espaces institutionnels, sociaux, culturels et éducatifs” (Boukous, 2009, p. 13).

Education is a crucial and powerful factor in any revitalization process because it shapes and determines the value and status of languages in bilingual or multilingual contexts and hence bestows more power upon the communities which speak those languages. Public schooling guarantees the institutionalization of a minority language and its transition from the intimate family sphere to the public sphere and consequently grants it institutional support, which has an impact on the power relations between the co-existing communities. In the Moroccan society, where the Amazigh-speaking and Arabic-speaking communities have been living together since the Arabs’ conquests in the seventh century AD, a drastic change took place in the country’s educational language policy in 2003. For the first time in its history, Morocco introduced the Amazigh language in the state school system. This shift in the educational language policy was an inevitable outcome of the official recognition of Amazigh as a basic component of the national identity and culture in 2001 and is fundamental in its revitalization process. The goal of this paper is to examine how Arabophones, who have constituted a dominant and secure language group for centuries, perceive the teaching of Amazigh in contemporary Morocco. Two rationales motivated the present study. The first one is that a survey of language attitudes is crucial in the choice and the implementation of any language policy; “it provides an indicator of current community thoughts and beliefs, preference and desires. Attitude surveys provide social indicators of changing beliefs and the chances of success in policy implementation” (Baker, 1992, p. 9). Second, an investigation of attitudes towards the teaching of Amazigh is not simply a linguistic issue. It will contribute to an understanding of the mechanisms that govern multilingualism in the Moroccan society, highlighting the way space is appropriated and power is distributed. Abouzaid (2011, p. 93) argued that “à partir du moment où il existe une diversité linguistique à l’intérieur d’un territoire géopolitique, les groupes humains tendent à vouloir s’approprier l’espace social, politique et économique”, an appropriation which highlights the way power is distributed, negotiated and maintained or lost.
2. Background

2-1 Two languages, two communities

The current language situation in Morocco is the outcome of hundreds of years of language contact between Amazigh, the language of the indigenous inhabitants of Morocco, and Arabic. Amazigh belongs to the Hamito-Semitic language family (the Afro-asiatic family), and it is "la langue la plus anciennement attestée dans la region. Des documents archéologiques de l'Egypte ancienne font remonter l'histoire écrite de l'amazighe au second millénaire avant le Christ, au moins (Galand, 1966 as reported by Boukous, 2008, p. 20). It is spoken across many nations, and its geographical domain of use is "the whole of North Africa, from the Siwa oasis in the west of Egypt to the west of Morocco, and from the Mediterranean coast to the south of Niger" (Bousquet, 1967: 15-16). Today, the largest communities of Amazigh people live in Morocco and Algeria with a minority of Touaregs living in Mali, Niger, and Chad. According to the 2004 census (HCP), the Amazigh community constitutes 28.3% of the Moroccan population (14.6% of them speak Tachelhit, 8.8% Tamazight and 4.8% Tarifit) (1). This number shows that it is a numerically important minority community and that Amazigh, in spite of its institutional marginalization and exclusion from the public sphere, has managed to preserve its vitality in the face of “powerful” languages such as Standard Arabic. It has remained “une langue à valeur symbolique qui façonne l’imaginaire des berbérophones et leur identité culturelle face à l’altérité” (Boukous, 1995, p. 11).
Amazigh entered into contact with the Arabic language and culture in the seventh century AD when the Arabs conquered Morocco to introduce Islam. Phoenicians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, and later on the Spanish, the Portuguese, and recently the French all invaded Morocco due to its strategic geographical location, but it was the Arabs who influenced to a great extent its linguistic and cultural profile. Today, the Amazigh-speaking and the Arabic-speaking communities constitute the two major communities in Morocco, but it is important to note that

au cours du temps, le brassage des populations est tel que les frontières linguistiques générales sont bouleversées, et qu’il est difficile de considérer ces peuples comme des ethnies distinctes […]. De nombreuses tribus berbères sont arabisées – c’est-à-dire qu’elles adoptent l’arabe comme langue première – mais certaines restent entièrement berbérophones, notamment dans les régions montagneuses du grand Atlas et du Rif, ainsi que dans le Sud. Il arrive parfois que des tribus arabes soient berbérisées (les Aït Seghrouchen, par exemple) (Abouzaid, 2011, p. 21).

2-2 Amazigh in the educational system

During the French protectorate (1912-1956), the colonial powers, which strove to institutionalize the Arab-Amazigh linguistic and cultural differences in an attempt to “divide and conquer”, introduced Amazigh in the educational system. In 1923, a number of Amazigh-French schools were created in the Amazighophone areas to teach the Amazigh language with the political aim of downgrading the Arab element in the Moroccan society and controlling the country. Lafuente (1984, p. 85), reporting a French officer of the protectorate, summarized the goals behind the creation of those schools.
L'école franco-berbère c'est donc l'école française par l'enseignement et la vie, berbère par les élèves. Donc, pas d'intermédiaire étranger. Tout enseignement de l'arabe, toute intervention du “fquih”, toute manifestation islamique seront rigoureusement écartés… En résumé, ces écoles berbères sont autant des organismes de politique française et des instruments de propagande que des centres pédagogiques proprement dits… Les instituteurs ont été nettement invités à se considérer comme les agents et collaborateurs des commandants de cercle et à s'inspirer dans tous les cas de leurs conseils.

After independence in 1956, the government pursued a policy of arabization that theoretically targeted the dominance of the French language, but that also brought about indirectly and implicitly the marginalization and exclusion of the Amazigh language. Sadiqi (2011, pp. 34-35) observed that in the two decades that followed Morocco’s independence from France, “the state-building process of that era needed a ‘one nation, one language’ slogan to build identity and forge a place in the Arab Ummah (nation)”. This led to the promotion of Arabic and the devaluation of Amazigh. The latter was deprived of institutional support and hence was absent in the educational space, which explained the insecurity and sometimes the failure of the Amazigh monolingual child in a hostile school environment (Saib, 1995; El Kirat, 2009).

It was only in 1994 that late King Hassan II recognized, in one of his speeches, the importance of introducing the Amazigh “dialects” in the school system. However, in spite of this royal recognition, no implementation of Amazigh in schools was undertaken. In 2000, however, the language policy within the field of education knew a very important change when the National Charter for Education and Training, whose aim was to reform the Moroccan educational system, was posited. For the first time, an official document stated that the country’s education policy will be characterized by an openness to the Amazigh language. One year later, with the new political climate that was characterized by Morocco’s will to build a modernist and democratic nation, the Amazigh language was officially recognized by a royal dahir ‘decree’ as a basic component of the Moroccan culture, which facilitates its integration in the educational system in 2003. It is the IRCAM (The Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture and Language), created by the same royal decree, which is in charge of implementing Amazigh in the state school system in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. It is responsible for elaborating programs, preparing school manuals, and organizing training sessions for teachers. Amazigh is taught to both Arabophones and Amazighophones. It is an obligatory course in not all primary schools, but the government’s strategy is to generalize it progressively across Morocco.
3. Methods

The subjects who participated in the study are 108 Arabophones; 30 were interviewed and 78 were asked to fill in a questionnaire.

The interviews were conducted with a group of male and female subjects, whose age ranges between 18 and 25 years, and whose years of schooling range between 12 and 15 years.

The language attitude questionnaire was randomly administered to a sample of 78 respondents, who were given the choice between an Arabic version and a French version. Concerning the structure of the sample, 52.56% of the participants are females, 46.15% are males, and 1.28% did not mention their sex. Their age ranges between 17 and 62 years. With respect to education, the sample includes respondents with different levels of education as the following table shows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3-1 The Respondents’ Level of Education</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
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</table>
The questionnaire consists of seven sections with a total of 83 items:

1. Demographic information and language background (the aim of this section is to elicit an overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents and their language background)
2. Mastery of languages

3. Language and identity

4. The teaching of Amazigh

5. Amazigh in the media

6. Amazigh in public services

7. Attitudes towards languages (i.e. the languages that are present on the Moroccan linguistic market)

For some of the questions, the respondents were asked to choose one of the four responses “I agree”, “I strongly agree”, “I disagree”, and “I strongly disagree”. For others, they were asked to choose one statement from a list of three statements.

4. Results and discussion
The Arabic-speaking respondents seem to hold favorable attitudes towards the integration of Amazigh in the educational system. As Table 4-1 shows, 62.82% of them agree that it is good to have Amazigh at school, and 55.12% agree that the teaching of Amazigh should be generalized across Morocco. The respondents also expressed their acceptance of introducing this language in all levels of education although the primary school level obtained the highest percentage, and 71.79% of them disagree that only Amazigh children should learn Amazigh.

Table 4-1 Frequencies of Responses to the Integration of Amazigh in the Educational System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I agree</th>
<th>I disagree</th>
<th>No answer (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is good to have Amazigh in the educational system.</td>
<td>62.82%</td>
<td>37.17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Dominant Community’s Attitudes towards the Teaching of Amazigh (Berber) in Morocco

di Mina Afkir

- The teaching of Amazigh should be generalized across Morocco.

55.12%

43.58%

1.28%

- Amazigh should be taught in all primary schools.

57.69%

41.02%

1.28%

- Amazigh should be taught in high schools.

44.87%
A Dominant Community’s Attitudes towards the Teaching of Amazigh (Berber) in Morocco

Di Mina Afkir

52.56% - Amazigh should be taught in universities.

2.56%

41.02% - Amazigh should be taught to Amazigh people only. Arabophone children should not learn Amazigh.

55.12%

1.28%

28.20% - Amazigh should be taught to Amazigh people only. Arabophone children should not learn Amazigh.

71.79%

0%
This finding is also corroborated by their responses to item 43 of the questionnaire, in which they were asked:

Which school should be better for the Moroccan child?

An Arabic only school.

An Amazigh only school.

A school where there is Arabic and Amazigh.

As the results displayed in Table 4-2 show, 51.28% of them stated that a bilingual school where there is Arabic and Amazigh should be better for the Moroccan child than an Arabic only or an Amazigh only school.

Table 4-2 Which school should be better for the Moroccan child?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An Arabic only school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Amazigh only school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A school where there is Arabic and Amazigh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, these moderate attitudes expressed by the Arabophone respondents are accompanied with a covert reticence towards the growing place of Amazigh in the educational setting. The following figures provide evidence for this.

Table 4-3 The learning of Amazigh should not be obligatory. Amazigh should be taught as an optional course only.
The respondents’ reaction to item 47, which includes two statements “The learning of Amazigh should not be obligatory. Amazigh should be taught as an optional course only” revealed that they want this language to have a restricted place in comparison with the other languages; 66.66% of them agree that the learning of Amazigh should be only optional. The following testimonies (words in French are italicized) show this.

female, 20 years-old
-ahhah yəָni kimma kaynin luָa:t xָin bָhal l’anglaַis wֶbֶhal ֶלֶףאַנְסְיַיָה tahiyya mֶזֶיַיָה tkun.

-Yes, I mean as there’re other languages like English and like French, it’s also good to have it at school.

female, 19 years-old

-ahhah tkun ttֶאְםֶאְּהַּ a bָהַal swְאַיָהַ ֶעַּבָּרֶאְיָיָי:n yֶיִי ni mֶאְפָּי tkun hiyya ֶאֶאֶפָּי:siyya.

-Yes, it could be taught like supplementary hours I mean not be the main one.

Although the two interviewees are in favor of the presence of Amazigh in the institution of the school, they maintain that it is good to have it as any other foreign languages such as French and English or to teach it as supplementary hours.

In addition to this, when asked whether Amazigh should be taught as much as, less than, or more than Standard Arabic, the majority of them stated that it should be taught less than Standard Arabic.
The way Arabophones perceive the presence of Amazigh in the educational space can be explained in terms of the concept of capital and the power relations it engenders. For hundreds of years, the Arabic-speaking community has enjoyed supremacy and dominance as a consequence of the official promotion of the Arabic language and the culture it stands for, and for hundreds of years, the Amazigh-speaking community has experienced marginalization and exclusion that have led to its linguistic assimilation especially in urban space where public schooling has strongly contributed among other factors to Amazighs’ language shift (Fishman, 1991, 2001) to Arabic. Today, although there is some positiveness with respect to the presence of Amazigh at school as Table 4-1 shows, the respondents opt for a subtractive view of bilingualism (Baker, 1992) in which one language would prosper more than the other one. They still do not view the two languages as equal; they want Amazigh to be just optional in order not to reduce and creep over the space of Arabic in the educational system. They also grant it a much smaller space than Standard Arabic, which entails that the appropriation of spaces that were until very recently legitimate domains of Arabic is still contested. In the Arabophone community’s cultural imaginary, Amazighs have always been construed as occupying very restricted spaces especially in urban areas. This is why for Arabophones granting Amazigh more space means yielding some of their capital. Bourdieu (1986), who introduced the concept of non-economic capital, pointed out that cultural capital plays a determining role in societal power relations and results in a form of domination and hierarchy. This is why the respondents apprehend the ‘loss’ of some of this capital in education, which is considered a cultural product, because this will lead to a reversal of power relations.
The Arabophones’ reticence towards having Amazigh in the school system and yielding some of their cultural capital can also be seen in their attitudes to item 71. The majority of them (70.51%) do not imagine Amazigh and Standard Arabic as having the same status.

I agree

I disagree

No answer

Amazigh and Standard Arabic should have the same status.

70.51%

28.20%

1.28%
This hierarchical relation that the respondents establish between Amazigh and Standard Arabic can be partly explained by religion. For many Arabophones, Standard Arabic and religion are conflated; they see them as very connected as if Islam were not possible without Arabic (Afkir, 2011).

Conclusion

The attitudes expressed by the Arabophones who participated in the study are moderately positive; however, they reflect the latter’s reticence to social change. An attitude towards a newly implemented education policy entails an attitude towards a sociopolitical and cultural one. Present-day official discourse is for a linguistically diverse country and for a plural identity, but the Arabophone community involved in the change still finds it difficult to accept the reshuffling of language hierarchies and a balance in power relations. The respondents expressed positive attitudes towards the integration of Amazigh in the educational system, but they opted for a very restricted presence of this language in a space that will valorize it and modify the power relations that have governed the two ethnolinguistic groups throughout history.

The teaching of Amazigh should be adapted to the sociolinguistic reality of the Moroccan society. It should take account of the way cultural and symbolic capital is distributed and of the attitudes of the communities involved because the latter constitute a bridge between policy and practice and are a strong indicator of changing or resisting beliefs. When a community has been dominant for centuries, it needs a language policy that integrates Amazigh progressively and
also not mandatorily. One policy for all the population is certainly hard to implement. As Abouzaid (2011, p. 288) argued,

Différentes modalités d’enseignement pourraient alors être envisagées, comme une initiation à la langue amazighe dans les zones essentiellement arabophones, puisque, comme nous l’avons vu à travers les paroles d’enseignants, les objectifs linguistiques et communicatifs actuels s’avèrent très éloignés des possibilités et des besoins de ces élèves. D’autres démarches pédagogiques pourraient être adoptées en zones amazighophones, où la présence des variétés linguistiques effectivement pratiquées par les élèves et les enseignants serait assumée plus clairement.

Education is a central factor in any revitalization process because it is a source of power for communities, but it is also an agent of change. It can play a determining role in modifying attitudes and changing a negative frame. Curricula, for instance, should be adapted or changed to fit the dynamic linguistic and cultural realities of Morocco. They should be neutral, and they should reflect the societal changes affecting society.

References


Notes

(1) In Morocco, Amazigh shows dialectal variation. It consists of three major dialects, namely Tarifit, spoken in the Rif mountains in the north; Tamazight, spoken in the Middle Atlas mountains and the eastern part of the High Atlas mountains; and Tashelhit, spoken in the High Atlas, the Anti-Atlas mountains, and the Souss plains.
(2) Missing responses for items were very few, ranging from 1 to 3.