



Moroccans' Attitudes towards Amazigh Language Teaching: Patterns and Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to investigate Moroccans' attitudes towards the incorporation of Amazigh into the educational system, and the extent to which self-reported ethnicity could potentially impact their attitudes towards the Amazigh teaching experience. The study was couched within a mixed-methods approach whereby data were collected by means of a self-administered questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. A sample of one hundred fifty-one informants were randomly selected from the region of Rabat-Sale on grounds of several social factors, including self-reported ethnicity, sex, age and mother tongue. Data analysis revealed that while the informants' attitudes towards the Amazigh language are generally favorable; attitudes towards its incorporation into the Moroccan school system tended to significantly vary based on their self-reported ethnicity, i.e., Amazigh or Arab. The study calls for the horizontal and vertical generalization of the Amazigh teaching experience to reinforce its scope in the Moroccan educational system, and improve its social status among Moroccans.

Keywords: Amazigh Language; Language Attitudes; Endangered Languages; Language Policy; Amazigh Officialization; Amazigh Teaching.

1. Introduction

The Moroccan linguistic market is the product of intensive language contact where Arabic and French are substantially predominant in priority domains of public life. Shortly after Morocco received independence in 1956, the state embraced the policy of Arabization to allegedly reduce the scope of French in the Moroccan educational system, while expanding the patterns of presence of Arabic, the official language of the country. The policy has been relatively successful that the Moroccan school system progressively began to use Arabic as a medium of instruction, which ultimately led to the neglect of the place of Amazigh in the language planning process. This has resulted in the development of unfavorable attitudes towards the Amazigh language by virtue of its low socio-economic status (Errihani, 2008; El kirat, 2004; 2008b; El Kirat & Bennis, 2010; El kirat & Boussagui, 2017). By the end of 1996, king Hassan II delivered a speech in which he emphasized the need to teach Amazigh in Moroccan schools, thereby paving the path to other subsequent

initiatives, including the incorporation of the language into the Moroccan educational system in 2003 as well as its recognition as the second official language alongside Arabic. The language was initially incorporated into 317 primary schools scattered all across the kingdom, with the aim of generalizing the experience in the near future vertically and horizontally. However, the challenges facing the teaching of Amazigh has ignited skepticism as regards the gains of the Amazigh-in-education policy. (Errihani, 2008; El kirat & Boussagui, 2017). That noted, this paper aims to investigate the nature of attitudes Moroccans hold towards the teaching of Amazigh, and the extent to which self-reported ethnicity could potentially impact their attitudes towards the Amazigh teaching experience.

2.The Linguistic situation in Morocco

2.1.The Amazigh language

Amazigh is the indigenous language of the Maghreb; it is argued to have existed since almost 5000 years ago (Boukous, 1995b, p. 18). The language is spoken in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and parts of adjoining Sub-Saharan countries. The word Amazigh is used as an umbrella term to refer to a number of related, but not all mutually intelligible, dialects of the Hemitic-Semitic family. Morocco, for instance, counts three major varieties, namely Tarifit, spoken in the Rif Mountains in Northern Morocco, Tamazight, spoken in the Middle Atlas and Eastern half of the High Atlas Mountains in central Morocco, and Tashelhit, which is the variety of High Atlas and the Anti-Atlas Mountains in Southern Morocco. 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 priority domains of public life (Idhssaine & El kirat, 2019).

1.2.The Arabic language

Arabic is also used as an umbrella term to refer to various varieties, namely Classical Arabic (CA), Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Moroccan Arabic (MA), also known among Moroccans as Darija. CA dates back to the pre-Islamic area; it has emerged from a number of other Arabic dialects spoken in the region of Mecca (Daniel & Ball, 2009). CA is perceived as the most prestigious language in Morocco by virtue of its codification and the religious ties associated with it - language of the Holy Qur'an. The use of CA is usually limited to religious activities, including prayers, Friday sermons and religious rituals.

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the official language of Morocco; it is also referred to as Modern Literary Arabic (Abbassi, 1977), Modern Arabic (Koucha, 1996), Educated Spoken Arabic (Meiseles, 1980) and Journalistic Arabic, a term which according to (Abbassi, 1977) is used to indicate the journalistic aspect of the language. Ennaji (1991) argues that MSA is usually associated with Arabization, a policy which allegedly sought to minimize the scope of French in public life and replace it with Arabic. Unlike CA, MSA enjoys a middle status and is used in a number of formal domains such as administration, education and media outlets.

Darija, also known as Moroccan Arabic (Abbassi, 1977) or Dialectal Arabic (Ennaji, 1991), is the first language of the majority of Moroccans. Youssi (1995) argues that 90 percent of the Moroccan population tend to speak Darija, irrespective of their ethnic background, i.e., Arab or Amazigh. This variety is neither officialized nor integrated into the Moroccan educational system, despite the vitality it enjoys within the Moroccan linguistic market (Jamai, 2008). Darija is not codified due to the prevailing belief that it is a corrupt form of CA (Idhssaine & El kirat, 2019).

2.3. Foreign languages

There are three foreign languages used in Morocco, namely French, Spanish and English. The existence of French is the result of the French colonization, which took place in the beginning of the twentieth century. French was the official language in Morocco used in formal domains

such as education, government and administration. By the time Morocco received independence in 1956, French was still used among the educated elite by virtue of its prestigious status, let alone the significant socio-economic role it hitherto plays. Nowadays, French is used as the language of instruction of the scientific subjects in higher education; it is also present in different media outlets.

Spanish is another foreign language spoken in Morocco. It dates back to 1912 when the Spanish protectorate was first established. The influence of the Spanish language and culture is substantially apparent in Northern and Southern Morocco where Spanish was the official language used in a range of administrative domains. However, the language has gradually lost its vitality as a result of the policy of Arabization embraced by the state after independence. This manifests in the decline in the number of students studying Spanish compared to that of French and English. A similar scenario is revealed in media landscape where the timeframe allotted to the Spanish language on television does not exceed 30 min.

The presence of English in Morocco goes back to the aftermath of World War II during which American bases were first established in a number of Moroccan cities. Interestingly, English is the only foreign language, which has no colonial ties. It is quickly gaining ground in the Moroccan linguistic landscape because of its international status and the future prospects it opens for its speakers (Sadiqi, 1991). English is strongly present in Moroccan higher education where there are over twelve English departments by far. It is also used in various media outlets, including newspapers, magazines and sometimes television. Presumably, the authorities' attitudes towards English are considerably favorable, given its significance in academia and the job market (Idhssaine & El kirat, 2019).

3. Language policy in Morocco

The marginalization Amazigh has undergone since Morocco gained independence could not have gone unnoticed without ramifications on its status within the Moroccan linguistic scene. This was partly embodied in the unfavorable attitudes Moroccans have developed, especially in urban areas, towards the Amazigh language and culture due to its low socioeconomic status and the stigma attached to it (Bouzidi, 1989; Marley, 2004; Ennaji, 2005; El kirat, 2004; 2005b; El kirat & Bennis, 2010). The Arabization policy the state adopted shortly after the independence was extremely instrumental in the regression of the status of Amazigh in several priority domains of public life. However, the democratization process Morocco has recently embraced brought about a novel conceptualization of the Moroccan language policy whereby Amazigh was for the first time incorporated into the Moroccan education system. The state initially introduced the language to a number of primary schools in an attempt to generalize the experience in the near future vertically and horizontally, i.e., throughout the country and at all levels of the curriculum. Such initiative has attracted a substantial amount of criticism due to the top-down character of the Amazigh-in-education policy, which presumably grants Amazigh the status of a mandatory subject for all Moroccans. The Royal Institute for the Amazigh Culture embraced such policy, arguing that Amazighity is indeed a heritage common to all Moroccans (i.e., Amazighs and non-Amazighs). In fact, the implementation of the Amazigh-in-education policy has not fared well due to numerous challenges related primarily to lack of human resources and teaching manuals, and, therefore, contributing to retaining unfavorable attitudes towards the Amazigh language, especially among the non-Amazigh community.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research questions

The present study puts forward three major research questions:

1. What are Moroccans' attitudes towards the Amazigh language and culture?
2. What are Moroccans' attitudes towards Amazigh language teaching?
3. What impact, if any, does self-reported ethnicity have on Moroccans' attitude towards the Amazigh-in-education policy?

4.2. Research approach

The study is couched within a mixed-methods approach whereby data were collected by means of a self-administered questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. In fact, recourse to methodological triangulation, as conceptualized in Denzin (1978), was motivated by the fairly thorough treatment the study aimed to pursue, one in which the research tools herein mobilized were devised such that they compensate for the shortcomings of one another. While survey data assisted in developing a panoramic and comparative perspective with respect to Amazigh language attitudes, the interview helped understand the underlying motives behind the informants' attitudes towards Amazigh in general and its incorporation into the Moroccan school system in particular, a privilege the questionnaire failed to fulfil by virtue of its descriptive scope.

4.3. Participants

To limit the scope of the present study, a hundred and fifty-one informants were randomly selected from the region of Rabat-Sale. Given the comparative analysis the study sought to undertake between both Amazighs and non-Amazighs, recourse to this region was deemed appropriate due to its bilingual nature. The choice of Rabat-Sale was also motivated by the researcher's familiarity with the region, not to mention his acquaintance with colleagues who made themselves available to either help administer the questionnaire or be interviewed. In an attempt to increase the validity of the study, the informants were selected in light of the social factors illustrated in Table 1 below. It should be noted that the data was collected from several places the researcher has to visit, including public places, schools and homes.

Table 1. Distribution of the informants

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Sex	Male	71	47%	47%
	Female	80	53%	53%
	Total	151	100%	100%
Age	<20	55	36.4%	37.2%
	21-25	50	33.1%	33.8%
	26-30	34	22.5%	23%
	>31	9	6%	6.1%
	Total	148	98%	100%
	Missing	3	2%	
Ethnic group	Amazigh	69	45.7%	46.6%
	Arab	79	52.3%	53.4%
	Total	148	98%	100%
	Missing	3	2%	
Mother tongue	Darija	98	64.9%	64.9%
	Amazigh	21	13.9%	13.9%
	Both	32	21.2%	21.2%
	Total	151	100%	100%

4.4. Research instruments

4.4.1. The questionnaire

The quantitative data was collected by means of a 5-point Likert scale coded such that the value (5) denotes total agreement, whereas the value (0) denotes total disagreement. The questionnaire was divided into three different but complementary parts, i.e., a section eliciting demographic information of the informants; a section exploring attitudes towards the Amazigh language and

culture, and finally a section eliciting attitudinal data underlying the Amazigh-in-education policy. The questionnaire was prepared in Middle Moroccan Arabic, being the variety the overwhelming majority understands and speaks. Prior to its administration to the target sample, the questionnaire was first piloted to check its reliability.

4.4.2. The interview

The interview was also used in the present study to collect qualitative input related to Amazigh language attitudes. As is the case for any other data collection tool, the questionnaire revealed a major shortcoming, which manifests in the descriptive nature of the data collected due to the structured layout of the survey. In an attempt to compensate for that and relatively increase the validity of the study, recourse to the interview was necessary. In fact, the interview was not only instrumental in gaining vivid insights pertinent to Moroccans' attitudes towards the Amazigh teaching experience, but it also contributed to increasing the validity of the study by checking the extent to which the quantitative data tend to align with the qualitative one. Similar to the questionnaire, the interview guide was designed in Middle Moroccan Arabic, and incorporated two major sections, each of which seeking different but complementary information. While section I elicited background information of the informants, section II sought qualitative input regarding attitudes towards the Amazigh language and culture, as well as towards its incorporation into the Moroccan school system.

4.5. Procedures and analysis

The quantitative data was coded and analyzed by means of the statistical package SPSS. Of the statistical procedures herein mobilized to analyze the quantitative data are Frequency of Distribution and the Independent Samples t-test, otherwise known as Student's t-test. While the former assisted in identifying attitudinal patterns towards the Amazigh language and its teaching, the latter was run to determine the potential effect self-reported ethnicity could have on attitudes towards the Amazigh teaching experience. Prior to testing this hypothesis, the data was reverse-coded then scored by calculating the sums of the Likert-scale items concerned, thereby converting our scale of measurement from ordinal to continuous.

It is worth noting that despite the non-normally distributed nature of the data, recourse to parametric procedures (i.e., the Independent Samples t-test), instead of its non-parametric equivalent, was still legitimate thanks to their robustness to tolerate such violations, let alone their accuracy to detect statistically significant differences (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991; Boone Jr & Boone, 2012). Among the studies in which parametric statistics was utilized to analyze categorical data (i.e., Likert-scale data and/or Nominal data) are Ali, Rose & Loubna, 2014; Lanos, 2014; Bernadette, 2005; Abidin, Mohammed & Alzwari, 2012. The final prerequisite the data had to meet before running the t-test was the Homogeneity of Variance assumption, a claim according to which the sample variances have to be equal. This was checked by means of Levene's Test, as will be illustrated when reporting findings for the Independent Samples t-test. On the other hand, the qualitative data was transcribed and presented in the form of vivid testimonies to better understand the quantitative patterns.

5. Results and discussion

5.1. Attitudes towards the Amazigh language and culture

The sections that follow discuss findings with respect to the informants' attitudes towards the Amazigh language and its incorporation into the Moroccan educational system. They also report results for an Independent Samples t-test in an attempt to determine whether self-reported ethnicity tend to affect the informants' attitudes towards Amazigh language teaching. To avoid ambiguity and ensure clarity of the findings, only the statistical patterns central to the scope of the study are discussed in text. It should be noted that the attitudinal data herein discussed entails any of the three Amazigh dialects, namely Tashelhit, Tarifit or Tamazight.

One of the questions addressed to elicit the informants' attitudes towards the Amazigh language and culture concerns whether the latter are part of the Moroccan identity. In this connection, over half of the informants (64.8%) either strongly agreed or agreed that Amazigh constitutes an integral component of the Moroccan identity, (18.6%) disagreed with that, whereas (16.7%) preferred to remain neutral, a point which could be interpreted as political correctness expressed by the informants to avoid revealing their unfavorable attitudes (see Table 2) (see also Errihani, 2008). Moreover, almost half of the informants (49.7%) expressed their agreement with the adoption of Tifinagh as the writing system for Amazigh, (25.5%) strongly disagreed with that, while (24.8%) decided to remain neutral (see Table 2). Endorsing the use of Tifinagh as the official script for Amazigh could potentially be attributed to its status as an identity marker members of the Amazigh community are not willing to abandon in favor of the other alternative scripts, i.e., the Arabic or Latin scripts. Yet, the patterns of disagreement and neutrality herein reported could be either due to the informants' non-Amazigh origins or their unfamiliarity with the script, which renders the learning of the language challenging for both Amazighs and non-Amazighs.

In the same vein, when asked whether Amazigh is a dialect or a full-fledged language, a 24-year-old male interviewee stated that '*ʔana ʔajər mutafiq liʔana ʔəluʔa ləʔamaziyija laħa taqafa wa laħa rumuz, law kanat ləħiza lastəsməlna rumuz ʔuxra ʔajər rumuz lati taxuSuhia li ħija ħuruf tiffinay.*' [I do not agree because the Amazigh language has a culture and its own symbols to write it. If it were a dialect, we would use other scripts to write it rather than Tifinagh]. Another 28-year-old male interviewee claimed that '*la la luʔa ʔu ʔəndħa laħazət dəjalħa ʔu ʔəndħa ləqawaʔid dəjalħa li ba ʔiqra luʔa ləʔamaziyija ra ʔəndħa qawaʔid dəjalħa ʔu ʔəndħa ħuruf dəjalħa ʔu kajən kifaf katqəra ʔila ʔaxiriħi, kasaʔir luʔat.*' [no, it is a language with its own rules and dialects. If you want to learn Amazigh, it has its rules, its writing system as well as its syllabus like any other language, etc.]. This finding seems to resonate with a study conducted by Ennaji (2005) in which the majority of his Berberophone informants (69%) expressed their agreement that Amazigh is a full-fledged language rather than a dialect.

Table 2. Attitudes towards the Amazigh language and culture

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
	%	%	%	%	%
The Amazigh language and culture constitute an integral constituent of the Moroccan Identity	7,1%	11,5%	16,7%	18,6%	46,2%
The Tifinagh script should be used to write Amazigh	10,7%	14,8%	24,8%	24,2%	25,5%
I would like my children to communicate fluently in Amazigh	19,0%	11,8%	24,2%	19,6%	25,5%
Amazigh is a useful language	14,3%	14,9%	20,8%	21,4%	28,6%
Amazigh is a threat to Arabic	43,0%	32,2%	15,4%	3,4%	6,0%
Maintaining Amazigh is a waste of time and money	41,1%	25,8%	18,5%	9,3%	5,3%
Amazigh is an old-fashioned language	31,8%	20,9%	22,3%	14,9%	10,1%
Amazigh is not a language but a dialect	32,9%	18,1%	18,7%	17,4%	12,9%

Table 2 also shows that over one third of the informants (45.1%) agreed that they would like their children to fluently communicate in the Amazigh language, (30.8%) conveyed their disagreement with that, whereas (24.2%) chose to remain neutral. This is a substantially interesting finding for it not only reveals whether the informants have favorable attitudes towards Amazigh, but it also provides insights as to whether parents are willing to pass on the language to their offspring, a decision oftentimes incumbent upon the socio-economic utility of a given language. In this

regard, half of the informants (50%) agreed that Amazigh is a useful language, (29.2%) disagreed with that, and (20.8%) expressed no standpoint, which yet again could be perceived as being politically correct to reveal their unfavorable attitudes (see Table 2). Given the data discussed by far, it seems that the informants' attitudes towards the Amazigh language and culture are generally favorable; however, their attitudes begin to relatively change when addressing the usefulness and transmission of the language. This could potentially follow from the pragmatic attitude a portion of the informants tend to have towards the Moroccan linguistic scene wherein foreign languages are highly appreciated by virtue of their eminent socioeconomic status.

Informants were also asked to rate their extent of agreement as to whether Amazigh is a threat to SA. Results displayed in Table 2 show that over two thirds (75.2%) expressed their disagreement with the statement, thereby lending further support to the favorable attitudes the informants tend to generally have towards Amazigh. In the same vein, (9.4%) of the informants agreed that Amazigh is a threat to SA against (18.5%) who preferred to remain neutral. Endorsing the allegation that Amazigh poses a threat to SA could be ascribed to the Islamist ideology embraced by some informants where Arabic is prioritized over any other language due to the religious ties associated with it. Granted that Amazigh is constitutionally recognized as the second official language of Morocco, the state is expected to allocate the facilities and support necessary for its promotion. Table 2 demonstrates that two thirds of the informants (66.9%) believed that maintaining Amazigh is a waste of time and money, (14.6%) did not agree with that, and (18.5%) remained neutral. Finally, when asked whether Amazigh is an old-fashioned language, over half of the informants (52.7%) expressed their disagreement with the statement, (25%) agreed with that, while (22.3%) favored to remain neutral (see Table 2).

5.2. Attitudes towards Amazigh language teaching

Having looked at attitudes towards the Amazigh language, this section discusses attitudinal data with respect to its incorporation into the Moroccan educational system. It is worth noting that the scope of Amazigh here refers to the standardized variety taught in Moroccan schools. Findings illustrated in Table 3 show that over half of the informants (52.3%) conveyed their agreement that introducing Amazigh to schools could be an added value, (26.5%) disagreed with the idea, and (21.2%) preferred to remain neutral. This finding is further corroborated by the fact that over half of the informants (62.4%) disagreed that learning Amazigh is a waste of time (see Table 3). When asked about their perceptions of the Amazigh teaching experience, a 36-year-old female interviewee argued that ‘wa fiuwa kanDən biZəna ?ila təm ?əl ?iDraz dəjalħa yađi ?ikun ?ahsən ?u yađi təħasan ləwaDħija dəl ?amaziyija bəl mayrib ?u yađi ?iwali lə?iftimam biħa ?aktar li?ana kima kəjgulu ?ila matfərDatħ ?əlina mayadiħ nə?əTiwħa lə?ahamija, xaSha təfraD.’ [Indeed, I think that the integration of the Amazigh language into the educational system will improve its status in Morocco. People will also be more interested in the language because, as they say, unless the language is compulsory, it will not be granted its importance - it must be compulsory]. Another 23-year-old male interviewee said that ‘?ana mħa ?iDraz luħa lə?amaziyija fəl mənDuma tərbawija, kifma qulna ħada kiħakəl taħziħ lə luħa lə?amaziyija ?utisahəm fə nuħuD bə luħa lə?amaziyija ?u bənsba lətaħlim bəSifa ħama.’ [I am in favor of the integration of Amazigh into the Moroccan school system. As we said, this is a source of encouragement for the Amazigh language; it also contributes to the promotion of the language and Education in general].

Informants were also asked about the compulsory nature of the Amazigh-in-education policy, which requires all Moroccans to learn Amazigh during primary education (Errihani, 2006). In this connection, Table 3 reveals that (45.1%) of the informants disagreed with mandating Amazigh language learning against only (24.2%) who tend to agree with that, believing that Amazigh must be on a par with the other languages taught in Morocco, especially French and Arabic. The patterns herein reported are consistent with those discussed by Errihani (2008) where the overwhelming majority of his informants were against the mandatory character of the Amazigh-in-education policy, regardless of their ethnic or linguistic affiliation, a claim which will be statistically attested in the next section.

Table 3. Attitudes towards Amazigh language teaching

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
	%	%	%	%	%
Learning Amazigh is a waste of time	37,6%	24,8%	21,5%	6,7%	9,4%
Introducing Amazigh at schools is an added value	13,9%	12,6%	21,2%	26,5%	25,8%
All Moroccans are required to learn Amazigh	20,3%	24,8%	30,7%	9,2%	15,0%
The teaching of Amazigh should be generalized	18,5%	19,9%	26,5%	18,5%	16,6%
Amazigh should be taught at universities	23,5%	16,8%	32,2%	10,1%	17,4%
Amazigh should be taught only to Amazigh people	35,5%	24,3%	15,8%	12,5%	11,8%
Teaching Amazigh is an obstacle to social mobility	34,2%	23,0%	25,0%	8,6%	9,2%

In their response as to whether the Amazigh teaching experience should be generalized, over one third of the informants (35.1%) conveyed their agreement with the idea, (38.4%) disagreed with that, whereas (26.5%) chose to remain neutral (see Table 3). Such reaction was also evident when eliciting the informants' attitudes towards the teaching of Amazigh in higher education. Findings revealed that only (27.5%) expressed their agreement with the integration of Amazigh into Moroccan universities, (40.3%) disagreed with that, and (32.2%) remained neutral. When asked whether Amazigh is an obstacle to social mobility, only (17.8%) of the informants agreed with the statement, (57.2%) did not agree with that, while (25%) of the informants decided to remain neutral, a reaction which fairly highlights the pragmatic attitude a portion of the informants tend to have towards Moroccan languages, despite their ethnic background. When asked about their extent of agreement with the use of Amazigh as a medium of instruction, the majority of the interviewees embraced the idea. For instance, a 22-year-old interviewee reported that 'ʔijjiɛn, mətəfəq mətək hit matalən fə duwal lə mutaɔadima matalən bħal SSen ʔu bħal ləjaBan, kiqraw bəluɔətfum, kiqraw lɔsulum bəluɔətfum huma, Fəħamti walakin raf tħamlat ħada ħuwa lʔifkal.' [yes, I agree with that. For example in developed countries such as China and Japan, they use their mother tongue as medium of instruction. However, the Amazigh language has been marginalized - that is the problem].

It could be argued that Moroccans' attitudes towards the Amazigh language and culture are generally favorable. This could potentially stem from the recent changes in the Moroccan language policy where Amazigh was finally recognized as the second official language of Morocco alongside Arabic. However, the increasing patterns of disagreement and neutrality with regard to the Amazigh teaching experience were shown to be fairly more apparent, a premise which could be ascribed to the heterogeneous nature of the data where both Amazighs and non-Amazighs are concerned. With that in mind, the next section aims to statistically test the validity of this assumption by investigating the potential effect self-reported ethnicity could have on attitudes towards Amazigh language teaching.

5.3. The impact of self-reported ethnicity on attitudes towards Amazigh teaching

Data discussed so far revealed that the majority of the informants tend to have favorable attitudes towards the Amazigh language. However, as mentioned earlier, the fairly increasing patterns of disagreement and neutrality towards the incorporation of Amazigh into the Moroccan educational system could be attributed to various social factors, including primarily the informants' ethnic background. It should be recalled that any other variables/social factors are beyond the scope of the present study. This section reports results for an Independent Samples t-test to determine the

potential effect self-reported ethnicity could have on the informants' attitudes towards Amazigh language teaching.

Prior to calculating the overall mean scores of both groups (i.e., Amazighs and non-Amazighs), thereby converting the measurement scale from ordinal to continuous (see section 4.5), the reliability of the Likert-scale items herein considered was statistically assessed to check the extent to which the latter are internally consistent and measure the same latent construct, i.e., attitudes towards Amazigh language teaching. In pursuance of that, the statistic for Cronbach's Alpha was computed, as displayed in Table 4 and 5 accordingly.

Table 4. Cronbach's Alpha: descriptives

		N	%
Cases	Valid	127	84.1
	Excluded ^a	24	15.9
	Total	151	100.0

Likewise deletion based on all variables in the procedure

Table 5. Cronbach's Alpha: reliability test

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
	.870	6

Before interpreting the value for Cronbach's Alpha, descriptive statistics as regards the overall sample are presented. As illustrated in Table 4 above, only (84.1%) of the informants were considered for the test; the remaining (15.9%) were excluded due to missing data encountered when coding and entering the data onto SPSS. It should be pointed out that only the informants who responded to all the Likert-scale questions were taken into consideration when assessing the internal consistency of the data (i.e., 144 informants).

Having accounted for the negatively-worded items, the reliability test yielded an α coefficient of (.870) as reported in Table 5. The interpretation for Cronbach's statistic generally ranges from 0 to 1 where the closer α is to 1.0, the stronger the internal consistency between the Likert-scale items. That noted, a Cronbach's α of (.870) is deemed appropriate for most analyses (see among others Tavakol & Dennick, 2011; Sekaran, 2006; Field, 2000). Now that the Likert-scale items have proved to be reliable, the t-test could be performed safely. To check whether attitudes towards Amazigh language teaching are incumbent upon the informants' ethnic background, recourse to the Independent Samples t-test was necessary. It is worth noting that the Homogeneity of Variance assumption, also known as Homoscedasticity, was first warranted by means of Levene's Test reported in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Results of Levene's Test

Levene's Statistic	Sig.
.014	.907

p < .05.

As demonstrated in the table above, Levene's statistic was found to be highly insignificant at (.907), leading us to retain the Null Hypothesis that the variances are totally homogeneous. To this end, Table 7 below reports descriptive statistics with respect to the distribution of the mean scores of both Amazighs and Arabs (i.e., non-Amazighs).

Table 7. The mean scores of the informants' attitudes towards Amazigh teaching

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Amazigh	66	3.9336	.99406
Arab	78	2.8199	.86262

The descriptive statistics reported above exhibit preliminary mean score differences of the informants' attitudes towards Amazigh language teaching. While those descending from Amazigh origins obtained a mean of (3.93), the Arab informants scored a lower mean of (2.81). However, these patterns should not be taken for granted to assume statistically significant differences between the groups, thereby recourse to the Independent Samples t-test procedure. Granted that the dependent variable (i.e., attitudes towards Amazigh language teaching) is measured on a continuous scale and meets the conditions for Homogeneity (see Table 6), the Independent Samples t-test was run safely, as illustrated in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Results of the effect of self-reported ethnicity on Amazigh teaching

t-Test for Equality of Means			
t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
7.198	142	.000	1.11371

p < .05.

The results yielded by the Independent Samples t-test point to a t-value of 7.198, suggesting that the attitudinal differences between the two groups are extremely significant at .00, with an obtained mean difference of 1.11. This leads us to reject the Null Hypothesis, stating that there is no statistically significant difference between both Amazighs and non-Amazighs in favor of the alternative hypothesis embracing such differences. The *p*-value of .00 is indication of a highly significant difference, oftentimes interpreted as ($p < .001$) instead of absence of differences. Since the independent variable (i.e., self-reported ethnicity) involves only two levels, recourse to a Post Hoc procedure was unnecessary.

Interestingly, a relatively similar pattern was observed in a study conducted by Ennaji (2005) where he investigated students' attitudes towards the teaching of Amazigh. Findings revealed that while the overwhelming majority of his Berberophone informants (83%) tend to welcome the teaching of Amazigh as an essential measure to preserve the language, only (58%) of his Arabophone informants endorsed the initiative. However, Ennaji's account remains fairly limited because of the descriptive nature of his analysis (i.e., frequency of distribution). Findings underlying the present study are also consistent with those reported by Reino (2007) in which her Amazigh informants expressed more favorable attitudes towards the Amazigh language than their non-Amazigh counterpart (i.e., Arabs). Moreover, in an attempt to analyze Moroccans' attitudes in light of the recent changes in the language policy, Marley (2004) found out that while two thirds of the informants endorsed the claim that Amazigh constitutes an integral constituent of the Moroccan identity, the majority considered the teaching of the language to be problematic, a point she attributed to the pragmatic attitude the non-Amazighs have towards the Moroccan linguistic market where Amazigh is still perceived as a stigmatized language by virtue of its low socio-economic status.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

The aim of this paper was to investigate Moroccans' attitudes towards the incorporation of Amazigh into the educational system, and the extent to which self-reported ethnicity impacts their attitudes towards the Amazigh teaching experience. The study revealed that the majority of the informants tend to have favorable attitudes towards the Amazigh language, which they consider an integral constituent of the Moroccan society that should be preserved. Nonetheless, attitudinal patterns towards Amazigh language teaching do not seem to be as favorable, a finding which was ascribed to the pragmatic attitude the non-Amazigh informants (i.e., Arabs) hold towards the Moroccan linguistic scene. It should be recalled that patterns of neutrality herein reported were interpreted as political correctness expressed by the informants to implicitly hide their unfavorable attitudes towards a given issue. The study also sought to investigate the potential effect self-reported ethnicity has on the informants' attitudes towards Amazigh language teaching.

In this connection, results for an Independent Samples' t-test demonstrated that the attitudinal differences between Amazighs and non-Amazighs are statistically significant at ($p < .001$). While informants descending from Amazigh origins obtained a mean of 3.93, the non-Amazighs scored a mean of 2.81.

In light of the findings discussed by far, it could be argued that Moroccans' attitudes towards the incorporation of Amazigh into the Moroccan educational system are generally the ramifications of the ongoing regression of the Amazigh-in-education policy, thereby gradually contributing to the development of unfavorable attitudes towards the language, especially among the non-Amazigh community. That noted, there is need for genuine political will to reinforce the status of Amazigh in the Moroccan school system through the vertical and horizontal generalization of the language, as well as providing sufficient qualified teachers and materials in close collaboration with IRCAM. The study also calls for a clear status of the place of the Amazigh language in the state's strategic vision for reforming education and training (2015-2030). All of this could potentially contribute to enhancing the visibility of Amazigh in the Moroccan school system.

Notes

The present article is part of a larger project investigating the status of Amazigh in light of the recent changes in the Moroccan language policy. Therefore, it should be noted that some background information herein reviewed and appropriately cited is derived in part from another article I have recently published in *The Journal of North African Studies* on 10 November 2019, available online: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13629387.2019.1690996>.

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