



Linguistics

From Constitution to Conversation: Amazigh and the Delayed Dream of Full Recognition

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ABSTRACT

This study explores attitudes toward the Amazigh language among a diverse sample of 150 Moroccan participants, focusing on perceptions of its preservation, maintenance, and integration into public life. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward Amazigh, with the vast majority of respondents emphasizing the importance of preserving and maintaining the language. Most participants identified integration into priority domains of public life as the most effective strategy for achieving this goal. While many participants expressed great satisfaction with the constitutionalization of Amazigh, a notable proportion considered the step ineffective and inadequate, highlighting the lack of activation of its official status. These findings underscore the necessity of implementing tangible measures to elevate Amazigh's presence in Morocco's sociopolitical and cultural landscape.

INTRODUCTION

Language attitudes contribute to language revitalization and maintenance in multilingual environments (Errihani, 2008). The fact that these attitudes are subject to change all the time is concretely what sustains the dynamism and livelihood of a language (Jamai, 2008). The permanence or otherwise attrition of a language could thus be decided by the views of its speakers or other members of the community.

Positive attitudes towards a language are often a key factor in revitalizing that language, and Hebrew stands as the prime example usually given to illustrate how attitudes can lead to the revival of a dead language and a change in its status as well as its functions. (Errihani, 2008, p. 411)

The same scenario applies to the Amazigh language; it would be delusional to expect the language's revival and development without the positive attitudes of the different linguistic groups, especially Amazigh speakers, given the belief that favorable perceptions often motivate people to learn a language, seeking to belong to the related linguistic group or owing to its instrumental value (Errihani, 2008; Paulston, 1994).

It should however be noted that language attitudes are not easy to measure and no methodology has been proven effective and accurate to reveal them (Fasold, 1984). The researcher argues that critical discourse analysis could be a new venture through which such attitudes can be studied, given the wide range of analytical tools the discipline provides to uncover the implicit beliefs, ideologies, and social representations of the discourse producer(s).

There is an abundance of research on attitudes towards languages, local and foreign, in Morocco. Since the launching of the Arabization policy, this research area has attracted many researchers' attention (Ennaji, 2005). The core motivation for such studies has been the multilingual character of Morocco (Bouziane, 2020).

Besides the historical background which has contributed to Amazigh's current sociolinguistic state, it has also been suggested that the ongoing issues of nationalism and religion affect Moroccans' language attitudes (Reino, 2007). There is a tendency among Moroccans to disregard linguistic and ethnic affiliations in favor of the religious one (Errihani, 2008; Marley, 2004; Hart, 2000). To most Moroccans, the Islamic identity is more important than any other identity as it unifies both groups, Arabs, and Amazighs. Religion is therefore the crucial feature that determines the basis for belonging to Moroccan society (Gellner & Micaud, 1972).

Arabic has been associated with sacredness and uniqueness as a religious symbol since it is the language of the Qur'an. In this light, Errihani (2008) has discovered that Arabic is held as a useful language "if not in the linguistic market, then at least emotionally" (p. 423). Contrary to Arabic whose value is mainly symbolic, by dint of its religious power, and French which is lent an instrumental value, thanks to its socioeconomic advantages, Amazigh is considered neither a useful nor a prestigious language (Errihani, 2008).

Attitudes towards Amazigh are yet affected by migration and urbanization as aspects of economic development (El Aissati, 1993; Reino, 2007); Amazighs experience a gradual loss of their mother tongue propelled by their movement to urban centers and Amazigh's intense contact with other languages, especially Moroccan Darija. Remarkably, most of the relevant attitudinal studies have taken into account the aforementioned prominent factors.

Among the influential studies that invite reflective discussion is Errihani's (2008). This study investigates Moroccans' attitudes towards the languages used and the effects these attitudes have on the implementation of the language policy requiring all Moroccans to learn Amazigh. The study, specifically, examines Moroccans' perceptions of the inclusion of Amazigh in education. The researcher suggests factors essential to guarantee the success of incorporating the Amazigh language into the educational system. These are the attitudes of teachers, parents, students, and policy-makers.

Other than interviews with members of the IRCAM and the Ministry of Education and participant observation in the classroom setting as methods of analysis, Errihani (2008) adopts a survey to explore the attitudes of different groups of respondents, including Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane students, University of Fez students, and students of Amazigh in the University of Fez. The overall number of respondents is 531. The purpose is to compare attitudes based on social class and draw comparisons between the students who claim connections to Amazigh and other groups with an Arabic background.

In addition to learners' motivation, there should also be parents' approval and support, the government's will to provide the prerequisites, and teachers' commitment to the project no matter the conditions (Errihani, 2008). It has however been established that learning another language is not necessarily an effect of positive language attitudes (Errihani, 2008), and parents are less motivated about their children's learning of Amazigh due to their sense of pragmatism (Errihani, 2006).

The fact that even people who have self-identified themselves as Amazighs have not demonstrated positive attitudes toward their language proves that the presence of Amazigh poses structural considerations; such an anomaly between what the respondents (Amazigh students) do (learning Amazigh) and how they reflect on what they are doing is illustrative of profound socio-historical dynamics. As a further explanation, Errihani (2008) proposes that:

These negative attitudes towards Berber could be a direct result of the long policy of neglect and marginalisation that Berber has been subjected to, so much so that even the Berbers themselves have become convinced that their language is worthless when compared with the other languages in Morocco. (p. 425)

Since Amazigh is linked to backwardness and rurality, it is barely spoken in primary social settings, which encumbers the transmission of the language to children. This finding resonates with Marley's

(2004) and Chakrani's (2013) conclusions.

Chakrani (2013), through a Matched Guise Test administered to 454 university students selected from four institutions in two large cities, postulates that the study's findings are bound to 'an ideology of modernity' embraced by the elites and then the wider society. The study concludes that the linguistic hierarchies established in Morocco ever since the colonial time have perpetuated up until today and the powerful groups have given the utmost priority to French and English as languages of modernity (Quinn, 2020).

Errihani (2008) concludes that attitudes towards Amazigh are generally unfavorable, which makes the implementation of the Amazigh-in-education policy, aiming at maintaining and promoting the language, challenging. Yet, since there is a lack of positive attitudes on the part of both the average Moroccan and the governmental institutions, "it would be unrealistic to predict a rosy future for the language policy that requires all Moroccans to learn Berber" (Errihani, 2008, p. 426).

In the same vein, Marley (2004) further settles the premise that in non-speaking Amazigh areas, the city of Khouribga as a case study, attitudes towards Amazigh language use are entirely negative. This finding shows that there is little respect for Amazigh as it is regarded as insignificant by most of the students. Quite the reverse, Modern Standard Arabic and French are viewed as incomparable and highly instrumental. Even Darija is preferred over Amazigh, believing that it represents the Moroccan national identity. This choice is ascribed to the manifestation of "a high degree of 'covert prestige' in the only language in which these young people can feel confident and able to express themselves adequately" (Marley, 2004, p. 39).

As to the integration of Amazigh into education, the majority of informants thought that it would be problematic, provided that there is a shortage of trained teachers, the predominant oral nature of the language, and the restricted use and interest in the three varieties. Even more, the teaching of Amazigh is considered a waste of time and a potential threat to the acquisition of Arabic and the fragmentation of society (Marley, 2004).

The study also reveals a remarkable finding concerning the representation of Amazigh as an integral part of the Moroccan cultural heritage. This particular reflection has been discovered to be related to the folkloric presence of the culture. The Amazigh language is thus perceived as separate from the Amazigh culture.

Reino (2007), on the other hand, contends that Moroccans' positive attitudes toward Amazigh began to rise to the surface after the decolonization of Morocco; the French educational and administrative system encouraged the Amazigh community to fully appreciate their language and culture. The dominance of the French language has changed Amazighs' perceptions of Arabic, which has been viewed as the richest, most eloquent, and most beautiful language (Errihani 2008; Reino, 2007).

In addition to that, the researcher claims that the study of Modern Linguistics and the structural analysis of language has legitimized the status of Amazigh as a natural language and gave it a prestigious position among Amazighs. This is rather clear in the body of academic papers available on topics related to the Amazigh language and identity.

Reino (2007) also indicates that there has been a radical positive shift in the social attitudes towards Amazigh thanks to the maintenance of official policies in Morocco, which further shows the drastic change of official attitudes towards the Amazigh language and identity.

She reveals that Amazigh language attitudes are generally favorable. She specifically reports that some of the participants perceived Amazigh teaching as important but not as indispensable. Extensively, she also states that "for most Moroccans, it is more useful to learn French than to learn Berber [Amazigh] at school since French would give them practical advantages in their professional lives" (Reino, 2007, p. 27). This perception is justified by the foreign languages' functional presence and the economic opportunities they provide. The study's findings generally confirm that Amazigh has a less prominent status and is solely limited to tradition and heritage.

Reino (2007) concludes that Moroccans have surprisingly become more aware of Amazigh's

presence. The processes of promoting the language have contributed to the aspiration of establishing an Amazigh functional language. Current official efforts have also been found to have a positive impact on how Moroccans perceive Amazigh.

In their investigation of patterns of Amazigh language use in priority domains of public life, Idhssaine and El Kirat (2019) show that the language is only relatively used in people's everyday life, particularly among family, friends, colleagues, and others. This limited use, exclusively by informants from Amazigh origins, is connected to interjected language transmission and the ongoing language shift, resulting from the present rigorous language contact that Amazigh people experience in the region of Rabat-Sale.

The study also confirms the challenges restraining Amazigh language use, comprising the lack of human resources, the inadequate timeframe dedicated to Amazigh in the Moroccan media, "as well as lack of genuine political will to implement the official character of the Amazigh language" (Idhssaine & El Kirat, 2019, p. 13).

In his brilliant study, Idhssaine (2020) affirms his informants' favorable attitudes towards the Amazigh language and culture. He, alongside Reino (2007), demonstrates that over half of the participants regarded Amazigh as an integral part of the Moroccan identity and almost half of them approved of the adoption of Tifinagh as the official writing system for Amazigh. This is argued to be driven by the status of Tifinagh as an identity marker of the Amazigh community. In this context, Belhiah et al (2020) conversely claim that much more time is needed for the Amazigh official script to be accepted by the different actors in society.

Idhssaine (2020), in the same line with Ennaji (2005), further confirms the informants' positive perspective on Amazigh as a full-fledged language rather than a dialect. The study has nonetheless found a relative change in attitudes towards the usefulness and transmission of the Amazigh language to the next generations. The researcher associates this with the pragmatic attitude the participants have towards the Moroccan sociolinguistic situation in which foreign languages enjoy a distinguished socioeconomic status.

Idhssaine (2020) also reveals that the majority of respondents disagreed with the statement that Amazigh poses a threat to Standard Arabic. The study however argues that the reason behind other participants' agreement lies in their embracement of the Islamist ideology which prioritizes Arabic over other languages for its religious supremacy. Even though it is the second official language in Morocco, following Marley (2004), it was furthermore believed that maintaining Amazigh is a waste of time and money. Yet, strangely, most of the participants did not consider Amazigh an old-fashioned language.

In particular, the study addresses the respondents' attitudes towards Amazigh teaching, which the findings show to be negative given the heterogenous nature of the data where both Amazighs and non-Amazighs are regarded. These findings are consistent with Ennaji (2005), Marley (2004), and Reino (2007).

Idhssaine (2020) concludes that the unfavorable attitudes towards the incorporation of Amazigh into the Moroccan educational system are the result of the ongoing regression in the teaching of the language, especially among non-Amazighs.

Overall, the cited studies are not comprehensive, as they are limited in terms of sample size and demographic scope. Moreover, the status of Amazigh in Morocco keeps on changing, regardless of its pace. The issue of representativeness is therefore raised; as to Reino's (2007), for example, the findings of 16 interviews in Rabat are said to be representative of the different opinions of Moroccans. Methodologically, there is a mismatch between the sought objective and the selected sample. The latter is quite inadequate to assert the claim of generalizability. Regarding the scope, the same remark applies to Idhssaine (2020); the study was conducted in the region of Rabat-Sale. This place has its peculiarities, among which is the fact that it is not densely inhabited by Amazighs. Hence, how about other regions? How can one safely generalize the reached outcomes to the rest of the country?

Concerning the setting, the classroom environment or the 'test-like situation' is believed to make language attitudes adopt a rational and pragmatic standpoint instead of an ideological one (Canagarajah, 2006; Errihani, 2008).

METHOD

Research Design and Approach

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to explore attitudes toward the Amazigh language. While structured, closed-ended questionnaire responses were collected to identify general trends, the primary focus of analysis was on qualitative data. Thematic analysis was applied to open-ended responses, offering in-depth insights into participants' perspectives. This qualitative approach was chosen to provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the research problem, emphasizing the complexities of individual and collective attitudes.

Objectives

The present paper sought:

1. To examine the attitudes of Moroccan participants toward the preservation and maintenance of the Amazigh language;
2. To evaluate participants' perceptions of the constitutionalization of Amazigh and its effectiveness in promoting its official status; and
3. To explore the challenges associated with integrating and activating the Amazigh language in public life.

Participants and Sampling

The sample comprised 150 respondents, including 106 males (70.70%) and 44 females (29.30%). The majority of participants fell within two primary age groups: 18-25 and 25-35 years old, collectively representing 86.60% of the total sample. Educationally, a significant portion of the respondents, 136 participants (90.70%), possessed higher education qualifications, among whom 40 individuals (26.7%) held postgraduate degrees. Regarding employment status, 97 respondents (64.70%) were employed, 34 (22.70%) were students, and the remaining 19 participants (12.60%) were engaged in other professions.

Geographically, the participants represented ten different regions of Morocco, with a dominant proportion hailing from the Souss-Massa region (64.66%, or 97 respondents). Ethnic identity was another crucial aspect of the demographic profile, with 128 participants (85.4%) identifying as Amazigh and 14 individuals (9.3%) reporting Arab origins.

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire, which was designed to capture both demographic information and attitudinal responses related to the research objectives. Questionnaires are a widely used tool in attitudinal research due to their efficiency in gathering data from a large number of participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The instrument included a combination of closed-ended questions, which allowed for quantitative analysis, and open-ended questions to elicit more nuanced qualitative responses. The questionnaire was distributed to 150 participants across ten regions of Morocco, ensuring a geographically diverse sample. This approach was instrumental in obtaining rich, varied data while maintaining standardization and consistency in data collection (Bryman, 2016).

Research Questions

This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Moroccan participants toward the preservation and maintenance of the Amazigh language?
2. How do participants perceive the constitutionalization of Amazigh and its effectiveness in promoting its official status?
3. What are the challenges and strategies for integrating and activating the Amazigh language in public life?

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method that is particularly effective in identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns or themes within qualitative datasets (Braun

& Clarke, 2006). This approach involves a systematic process of familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, and categorizing these codes into overarching themes. Thematic analysis was chosen for its flexibility and its capacity to provide a detailed, nuanced understanding of participants' attitudes and experiences. In this study, the thematic analysis was applied to the open-ended responses, while descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data from the closed-ended questions, providing a comprehensive view of the findings. This dual approach ensured that the research captured both broad trends and deeper insights, enhancing the overall rigor and reliability of the analysis (Nowell et al., 2017).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Amazigh as a Language, Culture, and Identity

Amazigh Maintenance and Presence in the Priority Domains of Public Life

In search of comprehending the general perspective on Amazigh in Morocco, the questionnaire began with a statement on the necessity to preserve Amazigh as a language, culture, and identity. Out of 150 participants, 117 (78%) strongly agreed with the statement, 5 (3.33%) somewhat disagreed, and 23 (18.40%) agreed, while only one person (0.66%) somewhat disagreed and four others (2.66%) chose to remain neutral (refer to Figure 1).

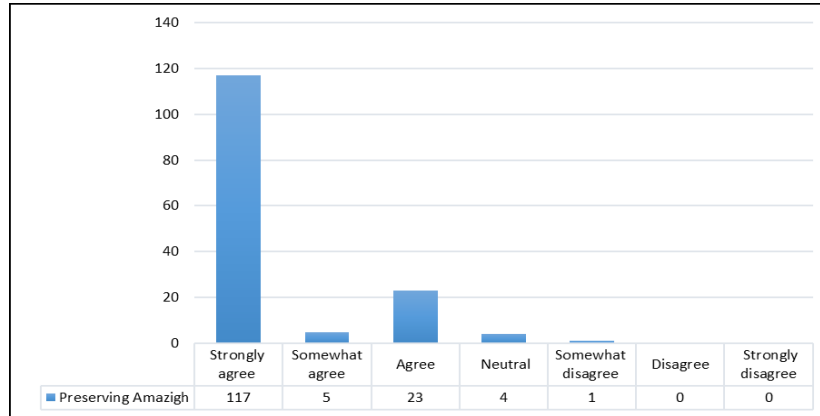


Figure 1. Maintaining Amazigh as a Language, Culture, and Identity

In total, 96.66% could be said to have shown a positive attitude towards the need to maintain Amazigh in Morocco. This illustrates that Moroccans do not feel threatened by the existence of Amazigh, but instead see that its safeguarding and continuity are an indisputable need. It is more probable that they see Amazigh as inseparable from the Moroccan identity, or even as the core of it.

The most evident way to preserve Amazigh is through its integration into the domains of education, media, administration, and else. This practical consideration has been relatively in effect since Amazigh has first been institutionalized in 2001. To further explore the respondents' attitudes towards the preservation of Amazigh, their agreement and disagreement patterns on the importance of Amazigh's presence in the priority domains of public life were measured.

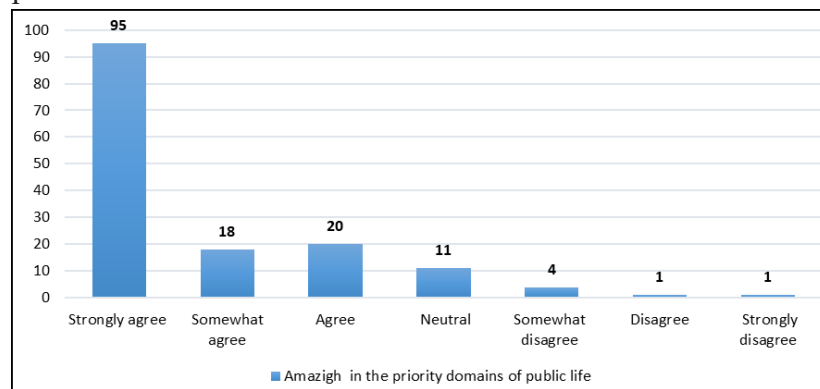


Figure 2. Amazigh's Presence in the Priority Domains of Public Life

Over half of the participants (63.33%) strongly agreed that Amazigh's presence is important, 12% somewhat disagreed, and 13.33% agreed. While 7.33% preferred the neutral side, 2.66% somewhat disagreed, 0.66% disagreed, and another 0.66% strongly disagreed. The participants whose attitude was positive (88.66%) outnumbered those whose attitude was negative (4%) (Refer to Figure 2). This conceivably stresses Moroccans' belief that Amazigh is indispensable and should be given due attention to be actively involved in public life.

The Constitutionalization of Amazigh

The sample's opinions on the recognition of Amazigh as an official language, along with Arabic, in the 2011 constitution could be categorized into six recurring themes. It should be noted that in certain cases more than one opinion, thus multiple patterns could be detected in one single participant's statement, as is numerically represented in Table 1.

Table 1. Recognizing Amazigh as an Official Language

Categories	Themes	Frequency
1	A favorable and good step	94
2	Ineffective and inadequate	51
3	Amazigh has only historical and cultural significance	2
4	Normal and a given	4
5	Late recognition demanding time to be socially accepted	5
6	To stop the Amazigh struggle	2

The great majority of respondents seemed to be satisfied with the recognition of Amazigh as an official language. The reasons for feeling so were found to be varied. These were fundamentally three, constituting accordingly four subthemes, as manifested in Figure 3.

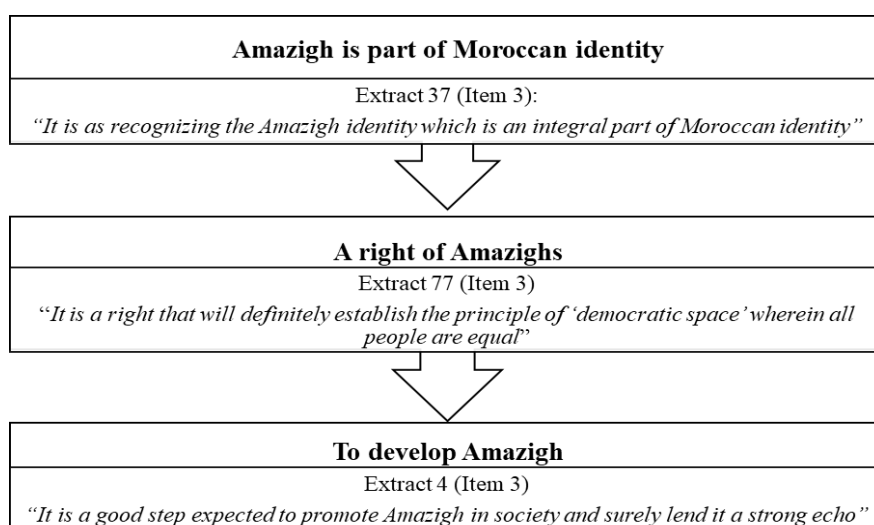


Figure 3. The Grounds for Supporting Amazigh's Constitutional Recognition

In addition to the fact that it is an integral part of the Moroccan identity, recognizing Amazigh was also believed to be important to sustain the values of democracy and difference in Morocco. It was moreover stated that recognition is the way to promote the language and make it socially approved. This may be the general belief amongst the participants insofar as the revitalization and development of Amazigh are closely related to the political arena.

A significant set of participants were, however, dissatisfied with the implemented decision, emphasizing its uselessness and insufficiency. This group criticized the paradoxical situation of the Amazigh language being official in theory and secondary in reality (refer to Table 2).

Table 2. The Ineffectiveness and Inadequacy of Amazigh's Constitutionalization

	Extract 28 (Item 3)	Extract 29 (Item 3)
Examples	“Since the Amazigh language is an official language in the country, it should be substantially official, on the ground, as it is in the constitution, and any deviation from the constitution as the most sublime law is a strike against its credibility”	“It is an important theoretical recognition, but at the level of application, there are many challenges, essentially the lack of an integrated legal arsenal”

Two participants, one of them stated that she was Amazigh, associated Amazigh exclusively with historical and cultural heritage, denying thus the constitutional importance of the language, which is considered unparalleled to Arabic. Amazigh is more likely not seen as a language per se, enjoying its various idiosyncratic components, such as syntax and semantics. The two respondents' knowledge of Amazigh is related to visual features, namely the cultural and historical representations of Amazigh. This is further displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Amazigh as Part of Moroccan Historical and Cultural Heritage

	Extract 33 (Item 3)	Extract 19 (Item 3)
Examples	“I don't think that regarding Amazigh as an official language is important to some extent; Arabic remains our mother tongue and the language we use in our daily and public conversations. Concerning this fuss over the Amazigh language as an official language, I don't care, even though, in my opinion, English is enough to deal with foreigners and professional life. I am an Amazigh and proud, but that's only for those who want to master it, and it's not necessary”	“I don't agree. The Amazigh language remains a historical language, related to cultural heritage. For me, Arabic is the only official language and mother tongue”

The fourth group of respondents regarded the constitutionalization of Amazigh as a foregone conclusion, whereas it was considered a late decision by the fifth category. The latter stressed that “the officialization step should have been taken since a long time ago” (extract 8, item 3), while the former had two reasons for their belief. First, “history testifies that the Moroccan geographical space is Amazigh”. Second, “it's normal that Amazigh is recognized since it is spoken by a large group of people” (extract 26, item 3).

There is yet another group of participants that viewed the constitutional recognition as purely political, seeking to “curb the Amazigh struggle” (extract 79, item 3) and calm down people, referring seemingly to the political transformations and social dynamism during the so-called Arab Spring.

The Deceleration in Activating the Official Character of Amazigh

As voiced out by the second category above, the current form of the concerned ‘officialization’ is not sufficient as long as the official character of the language is not activated by integrating it into the different priority domains of public life, in a way that it is treated equally to Arabic, the first official language.

The surveyed sample presented seven different reasons for the deceleration in question (refer to Table 4).

Table 4. Reasons behind the Deceleration in Activating the Official Character of Amazigh

Categories	Themes	Frequency	
1	The lack of political will	58	Extract 31 (Item 4): “Originally, there is a lack of will to activate it (Amazigh) and recognize it as a language”
2	The difficulty of managing the situation, financially and functionally	16	Extract 77 (item 4) “Perhaps because it doesn’t have effective mechanisms to do that on the ground”
3	Colonialism and French	11	Extract 129 (item 4) “We are still primarily subordinate to French”
4	Negative representations of Amazigh	8	Extract 18 (item 4) “Perhaps due to not being convinced so far that Amazigh is actually official besides Arabic”
5	The uselessness of Amazigh in light of globalization	6	Extract 118 (item 4) “Its inability to go well with rapid development of the world, especially the domains of science and technology”
6	The superiority of the pan-Arabism ideology	7	Extract 111 (item 4) “Because it is still holding on to some Arabo-Islamic thought”
7	The lack of a strong Amazigh socio-political movement	5	Extract 53 (item 4) “The absence of the Amazigh voice during the period of elections and giving the chance to some of those who have an inferior look on Amazigh to manage the previous governments”

The seven categories are classified in Table 4 based on the frequency level of each theme, i.e. reason. The most recurrent one, observably, was the lack of political will to seriously activate the official character of Amazigh. Various motives were expressed by the respondents for believing that certain political considerations were the essential reason behind the related deceleration. These included “the presence of some groups that are standing against that (implementing the activation process) to protect their positions” (extract 57, item 4) and “avoiding the conflicts between Arabs and Amazighs” (extract 66, item 4).

The concerned reluctance on the issue was also believed to be due to the challenges encountered to properly manage the situation. This was stated 16 times in the collected responses. The participants contended that the lack of human, financial, and logistic resources has slowed down the process of activating the official character of Amazigh.

Pointed out 11 times, the effects of colonialism, including the persistent dominance of the French language, were held to be another key reason. Interestingly enough, the fourth category of participants highlighted the very core of this thesis as the central foundation of the issue: Moroccans’ representations of Amazigh.

It was viewed that the unfavorable attitudes Amazighs themselves have towards their language have contributed to the current state of slackness. They were faulted for “not speaking Amazigh in all domains” (extract 14, item 4). Such behaviors that manifest the insignificance of a language are in all probability somewhat believed by some participants to encourage those responsible for managing the linguistic situation to regard the second official language of Morocco as inferior.

A recurrent instance of such negative representations constituted the reason believed by the fifth category to not accelerate the related process. This was the perception that “Amazigh is a language that

is dead and lacking in the fields of scientific and literary research” (extract 76, item 4) and therefore “useless in light of globalization” (extract 38, item 4).

This results from comparing Amazigh to other competing languages, such as English which dominates almost all the aspects of modern life, most essentially media. Amazigh is hence regarded as incapable of developing and gaining a prestigious status among the powerful presence of other languages, especially with the ongoing changes and demands of today’s world.

The power of ideology was also confirmed to be a strong reason for the examined case, namely pan-Arabism, which places Arabic in the center of every project, sociolinguistic, or otherwise. It was believed that pan-Arabism is the essence of thought representing Morocco. It would consequently be challenging for Amazigh to be prominent or treated equally to Arabic.

In spite of the fact that there is an Amazigh civil society working to promote the Amazigh language and culture, a group of participants strongly believed that the shy engagement of Amazighs in social initiatives and political work has led to the current stagnant situation, stressing that without “moving in the right way” (extract 39, item 4) to get hold of supreme “decision-making statuses” (extract 50, item 4) instead of “keeping slogans and two-sided matters” (extract 75, item 4) no change will occur. This is a call for the need to approach political power as Amazighs have tried other influential areas such as culture and intellectuality, but Amazigh still lags behind. This very particular response was nevertheless expected as it has been a great part of the public discussion on Amazigh.

These were the reasons identified, in the corpus of gathered responses to the second item in the questionnaire, to be instigating Amazigh’s present status of regression. The questions that followed the latter were then intended to discover the participants’ opinions and beliefs about the current presence of Amazigh in very specific areas of public life.

Among the aspects that the current study investigated was Moroccans’ attitudes towards the maintenance of Amazigh as a language, culture, and identity. It has been found that the vast majority of the survey respondents have shown a positive attitude towards the need to safeguard Amazigh in Morocco. This finding corroborates previous research results (Afkir, 2012; Idhssaine, 2020; Reino, 2007) which showed that Moroccans’ attitudes towards the Amazigh language and culture are generally favorable, ensuring consensus on the importance of protecting Amazigh. This is derived from the participants’ awareness that Amazigh is an indispensable component of the Moroccan identity.

Regarding the 2011 constitutionalization of Amazigh, over two-thirds of the participants were satisfied with the undertaken step for three reasons, namely Amazigh being part of the Moroccan identity, officializing the language as it is Amazighs’ right, and the expectation that it would promote and develop Amazigh. These respondents’ attitudes showed that the very constitutional status of Amazigh has had a positive effect on Moroccans. This finding confirms the conclusion arrived at by Reino (2007) who put forward that Moroccans have become more aware of Amazigh’s presence especially after the language has become official along with Arabic in the constitution.

It is worth bringing into the discussion, however, that a significant set of the participants demonstrated dissatisfaction believing essentially that the constitutionalization of Amazigh is useless and insufficient and that it is a political maneuver seeking to curb the Amazigh activism. This view appears to be motivated by the political context of the MENA (the Middle East and North Africa) region uprisings started in 2011, also known as the Arab Spring; it has been held that one way to calm down the Amazigh movement was by fulfilling a couple of its demands (Abdelhay, A. et al., 2020; Collado, 2013).

Although Amazigh has become the second official language in the constitution, its official character has not quite been activated. The liable institutions have decelerated the concerned process to the point that the constitutionalization in question has seemed to be of no use, endorsing therefore the previously stated negative opinion on the issue.

The study revealed that Moroccans’ opinions on the deceleration in activating the official character were entirely negative. The dominant perception was found to be the lack of genuine political will. This finding affirms the results of previous studies (El Kirat & Boussagui, 2018; Errihani, 2006; Idhssaine & El Kirat, 2019; Idhssaine, 2020; Marley, 2004) which suggested that the provisions of Article five in the

2011 constitution have not been implemented due to the lack of concern in the Amazigh issue.

Surprisingly, among other opinions shared by the participants was that the related deceleration is caused by Moroccans' negative representations of Amazigh: "Perhaps due to not being convinced so far that Amazigh is actually official besides Arabic" (Extract 18, item 4). In other words, it was alleged that the unfavorable attitudes Amazighs themselves have towards their language have contributed to the current state of slackness. This finding approves the results of previously conducted research (Errihani, 2008; Loutfi, 2020; Loutfi & Noamane, 2020) which asserted that Moroccans' negative attitudes towards Amazigh should necessarily change so that the language could be fully embraced and promoted.

CONCLUSION

There are different impediments forcing Amazigh language and identity to fall behind, some of which are discussed in this paper. These are fundamentally political; the vitality of a language is principally the outcome of fair management of linguistic diversity and an extensively well-studied language policy and planning. In conclusion, I will propose a set of solutions to expedite the activation of the Amazigh language's official status.

The drafted organic law 26.16 (Art. 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) has been officially adopted since 2019. This law defines the stages of Amazigh language activation and the modalities of its integration into public life. The present situation thus requires serious work and political will from all the parties involved in the issue to revitalize the language (Boukous, 2015).

On the educational level, Amazigh education is supposed to develop given the recent changes in Morocco's educational policy. The new framework Law 51.17 that has been approved by the Moroccan parliamentary commission for teaching, culture, and communication in 2019 and the establishment of the National Council for Languages and Moroccan Culture in 2020 are expected to improve the quality of Amazigh education by making it compulsory and attaining its generalization.

The adopted strategic vision (2015-2030), as an ongoing educational reform, is also awaited to tangibly contribute to the management of the Amazigh situation in the educational sector. For instance, units of specialized research in the Amazigh language and identity should be established in universities. Amazigh should also be included in literacy programs and informal education.

However, the strategic implementation of the new policy of Advanced Regionalization can momentarily contribute to the expansion of the Amazigh teaching process; the supposedly independent regional academies can devise their strategies, with respect to the particularities of each region and following the implementation patterns of the educational strategic vision, specifically devoted to teaching Amazigh. These strategies need to address the previously discussed issues. For example, each academy is required to train qualified teachers and provide schools with the necessary teaching and learning materials.

Relating to Media, the improvement of the Amazigh situation in the media scene requires intensive efforts on all levels. Primarily, the timeframe allotted to the Amazigh language in the national media outlets, audiovisual, and the written press is to be increased, while simultaneously, the principal Moroccan TV channels have to commit to the specifications book so that the language can enjoy its full-time range.

As an essential condition for its continuity and high performance, Amazigh media is to be provided with motivating financial support. The government and IRCAM on the other hand should appoint qualified human resources and sustain their professional development through regular training.

The government has to fundamentally discourage the dominant approach that confines the Amazigh dimension in all its cultural and artistic depths to folklore and superficial representations. The presence of diverse and quality programs is vital to the smooth transition to representing Amazigh as a national language that can fulfill intellectual, cultural, political, and economic functions.

Following the adopted decentralization policy as a realistic implementation of the Advanced Regionalization project, public media has to constantly and objectively cover the local and regional concerns, especially in the distant areas where Amazighs are hard to reach.

As regards Amazigh in the other domains of public life, it is a must that human resources are trained

on the use of Tifinagh and communication in the Amazigh language. More importantly, there should be free translation to Amazighophones in institutional contexts, including courts, hospitals, and schools.

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