



Towards the Diagnosis of Moroccan Education Reforms: An Analytical Approach to the Incoherent Linguistic Bilingualism

Bounouche Masser

*Teacher of English in Public Secondary School – Khemisset City -Morocco
Master holder in Teaching English as a Foreign Language - Ibn Tofail University,
Doctoral Studies at Moulay Ismail University - English Department*

m.bounouche@edu.umi.ac.ma

bounouche@gmail.com

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Abstract

Since independence, the Moroccan education reforms have failed to establish a coherent linguistic policy and reach a consensus over it. This paper examines the historical, political, and socio-cultural considerations underlying the inconsistency in the language of instruction in Moroccan classrooms, with a focus on the latest reforms. The first part provides a chronology of the improvisation marking the education reforms marking the postcolonial linguistic policies. The second part adopts an analytical approach to reveal the inexpressible reasons underlying such policy of incoherence and imbalanced bilingual policies between Arabization and 'Francisation'. The analysis shows that the incoherence marking the language of instruction is not purely linguistic but rather politically, economically, and culturally driven. The linguistic policy is one of assimilation, not complementarity. The paper critically highlights the attempt in the current education reform to shift from this imbalance to bilingual policies to more multilingual ones via a policy of language rotation in the classroom.

1. INTRODUCTION

The language of instruction a country decides to adopt is instrumental in achieving quality and equitable learning outcomes. In Morocco, however, reaching a consensus about the appropriate language(s) of instruction has been a source of controversy, marked by continuous conflicts between Classical Arabic, French, and, more recently, considerations of Amazigh and Moroccan Arabic (Jaafari , 2015; Ennaji, Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco, 2005). This debate reflects profound, inexpressible socio-political tensions that have hindered the construction of a coherent linguistic policy.

The correlation existing between the language of instruction, be it through native, official or foreign languages, and students' achievements has never been settled in favour of one side. Children learn better when their mother tongue or the language they know well is used as a language of instruction, particularly during early childhood (Hanemann, 2016; Shaeffer, 2020). Mother tongue education has been shown to enhance students' achievements, participation, and community engagement (UNESCO, 2008). Yet, deciding on a single language of language and being consistent with a clear vision is vital.

1.1.Statement of the Problem

Notwithstanding the numerous education reforms, the question of which language of instruction Morocco should adopt has never been decided undeniably and permanently. Such a lack of consistency in linguistic policies leads to counterproductive practices. The result has been incoherence, improvisation, and controversy between supporters and opponents of using either Classical Arabic or French, creating an endless futile battle whose victims are the students in Moroccan schools. This paper aims to uncover the underlying political, cultural, and economic drivers of this incoherence and to critically examine the new policy of language rotation outlined in the Strategic Vision 2015-2030.

1.2.Research Gap

The debate over the language of instruction in Morocco transcends pedagogy, encompassing cultural identity and socio-political power dynamics. Existing studies underscore the conflict between Arabic, French, and Amazigh, but few critically examine the implications of multilingualism in the former education reform (Ennaji, Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco, 2005; Salmi, 1987). While extensive research exists on Arabization and bilingual education in Morocco, little attention has been paid to the practical implementation and impact of the incoherent linguistic imbalance and the new linguistic engineering based on 'languages rotation' in the current education reform of the Strategic Vision 2015-2030. This study addresses this gap by revealing the ambiguities and the socio-political factors influencing forming coherent and agreed-upon linguistic policy in education.

1.3. Research Questions

- What are the historical developments and key reforms shaping Morocco's linguistic policy?
- What factors contribute to the ongoing incoherence and improvisation in decisions regarding the language of instruction?
- How does the Strategic Vision 2015-2030 address these issues, and what are its limitations?

1.4. Significance of the Study

The study is significant in various ways:

- It dissects the current bilingual and multilingual situation of Morocco by revealing the 'silent battle' among its different linguistic elements in the post-colonial period.
- It provides a framework for policymakers to better understand the implications of their decisions and offers insights applicable to Morocco and other North African nations with similar colonial and linguistic legacies.
- It reinforces voices demanding the incorporation of Moroccan Arabic and Amazigh language, the mother tongue of the Moroccan people, rather than the prevailing conflict climate characterizing the linguistic debate in Morocco.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper utilizes a qualitative analytical approach, employing historical and policy analysis to observe linguistic reforms. The analysis is framed by Tollefson's (1991) Historical-Structural Approach, which underscores the historical, cultural, economic and structural considerations in policymaking and implementation. Secondary data sources, including government documents, scholarly articles, and reports, were examined to describe trends and identify patterns of linguistic incoherence and their underlying causes and forces.

2.1. Scope and Limitations

The analysis focuses on Moroccan education reforms from independence to the present. While the findings are specific to Morocco, they may have broader applicability to other North African nations.

3. HISTORICAL REVIEW AND SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INFLUENCES

Since Morocco's independence in 1956, Morocco has undergone a series of education reforms intended to overcome the fragmented colonial legacy and unify the education system, yet these reforms have been considered unsuccessful by different Moroccan groups (Aourraz, 2017; Abed Al-Jabri, 1973; El Allame & Laaraj, 2016). In the years following independence, Morocco began the process of "*nationalization of the central administration of the Ministry of Education, which during the protectorate period employed only three Moroccans*" (UNESCO, 1957). The purpose of nationalization was to prepare adequate administrative staff and teachers, reduce high illiteracy rates, build new schools, design curricula, and promote Classical Arabic in official institutions of the state (UNESCO, 1957; Aourraz, 2017; Ennaji, Language Contact, Arabization Policy and Education in Morocco, 2002). In 1957, the Higher Commission of Education Reform set four principles to guide the reforms, namely unification, Arabization, generalization, and Moroccanization (Ait Ben Assila, 2022).

Early effort was made to construct a unified education system, amidst the challenge of finding a compromise over the language of instruction, given the complex colonial educational and linguistic structure left by the French and Spanish colonizers. The educational landscape during the colonial period included Quranic schools, French schools, Moroccan schools, and Jewish schools, each catering to distinct communities, which left a fragmented system that needed unification (Abed Al-Jabri, 1973). The first Royal Commission on Educational Reform was established and by 1959, the Ministry of Education had been set up. Despite these early initiatives, the reforms largely fell short of expectations. The lack of consensus on a single linguistic policy, along with political and social instability, hindered progress. Disagreements over Arabization versus the continued use of French created constant policy shifts.

By the 1960s, reforms vacillated between promoting Arabization and reinstating French as a medium of instruction, especially for science subjects. Arabic and French competed and switched roles many times as means of instruction in Moroccan classrooms and in curricula which created "*instability and lack of continuity in education policy*", as noted by Llorent-Bedmar (2016). The Higher Committee for Education Reform in 1957 initially pushed for Arabizing the primary school cycle, but the first Royal Commission for Education Reform undid the decision and gave prominence to French, especially in teaching scientific subjects. Soon after, the Institute of Research and Studies was established to prepare for the Arabization process to come into effect again. In 1964, an education reform conference was held in Maamora and dictated that Arabic would be the language of instruction at all levels, and foreign languages would be only used in secondary schools.

This linguistic incoherence marking the linguistic policy in education has also been impacted by economic, social and political tension and austerity policy that defined the post-colonialism at successive distinct periods (Aourraz, 2017; Ait Ben Assila, 2022; Cinquante ans de Développement Humain au Maroc, 2006; Mehdad, 2011). Starting from 1965, the government stopped not only the process of Arabization but also unification, Moroccanization, and generalization due to a severe economic crisis. The social and political tensions peaked on March 23, 1965, when the security forces jailed several high school students in Casablanca as they were protesting against the government's alleged 'unpopular' policies. The ministry of education intended alleviate pressure on the budget by dismissing thousands of high school

students aged 15 to 17 years old. The chaos and violence involved may have indicated that the government had been acting first not insightfully.

As a result of the crisis, the minister of education, Mohamed Benhima, brought a triangular plan 1965-1967 to severely reduce the enrolment ratio, extend the course of study, eliminate technical and vocational education, and return to dual instructions in primary schools using both Arabic and French (Abed Al-Jabri, 1973). However, in 1970-1973, the Supreme Council of Education was established, and supporters of Arabization managed to Arabize curricula of philosophy, geography and history subjects. Mathematics and the sciences in primary and secondary education were Arabized; French was thus "de facto a second language" (Ennaji, Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco, 2005). During that period, the process of Arabization gained a boost as the pro-Arabization leader Azzeddine Laraki had been appointed a minister of education. He openly related dual instructions in Moroccan schools to students' low achievements, yet King Hassan II soon intervened, in 1978, to confirm and reset the balance between Arabic and French in Moroccan schools.

Since the king's intervention, the dual instructions in Moroccan schools have been maintained in the succeeding reforms. The decision-makers have been trying to strike a balance between national official languages and foreign languages namely French, Spanish and English. The National Charter for Education and Training in 1999 marked another attempt to stabilize Morocco's educational framework. Lever 9 of the National Charter emphasized the mastery of Arabic, encouraged learning foreign languages, and called for the inclusion of Tamazight. (COSEF, 1999). Successive reforms such as the Emergency Plan (2008), the Strategic Vision 2015-2030 (2015) and its Framework Law 51.17 (2019) reiterated the principles of bilingualism and multilingual education, yet often lacked practical measures for effective implementation. The Amazigh status has been upgraded in the meantime as it has become an official language under the 2011 Constitution (Constitution (Translated Version), 2011).

As reported in the current education reform of Strategic Vision 2015-2030, establishing new linguistic engineering is fundamental as "*identifying the status of each language separately is a decisive factor in the development of learning and learning about languages*" p. 38 (CSEFRS, Strategic Vision 2015-2030, 2015). The same idea is restated in the Framework-Law 51.17 in articles 31 and 32 in detail. Arabic is considered "*a primary language for teaching*"; there is also a call for "*developing the situation of Tamazight language in schools within a national framework*" and knowing at least two foreign languages" (Framework-Law 51.17, 2019). Yet, the Strategic Vision 2015-2030 and its Framework-Law 51.17 stress the principle of "language rotation", whose aim is to diversify the languages of instruction through teaching some of the contents or parts in some materials in foreign languages (CSEFRS, Strategic Vision 2015-2030, 2015). Yet, this principle enshrined through the new reform seems to provide no procedural plans to organize the use of languages of instruction in Moroccan classrooms. Linguistic rotation does not offer a clear-cut answer and leaves the field wide to decision-makers to interpret it differently according to their interests and conventions.

Not surprisingly, the issue of the language of instruction in Morocco has never been settled permanently. The debate over the language of instruction was reinitiated as the former minister of education Said Amzazi decided to re-teach science subjects through French instead of Arabic in 2019. His draft resolution gained approval from the Moroccan parliament on July 23, 2019. Said Amzazi claimed to target consistency with science subjects in universities where French has already been used as a means of instruction for decades. His decision has been subjected to fierce opposition by Islamists (Baraka , 2019; Elkhaldi , Aftati, Aasid, & Abu Ali, 2019). The debate rages even more when a correlation between the reinstatement of French as

a medium of instruction in science subjects and students' poor achievements and interaction in classrooms (Ifqiren, Selmaoui, Ait Yahia, & Agorram, 2021). The minister of National Education, Chakib Benmoussa, shockingly reported that “70% of Moroccan students face difficulties in reading, writing, and mathematics” (Haskouri, 2021).

4. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Based on the historical review above, the confusion and incoherence regarding the language of instruction in Moroccan classrooms are unquestionable. Languages in Morocco appear to compete rather than complement one another (Ennaji, Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco, 2005; Jaafari, 2015; Elbiad, 1991). The root causes of this issue include political, social, and cultural conflicts disguised as linguistic and pedagogical debates. The incoherence concerning the language of instruction is not merely a result of administrative flaws but rather stems from broader socio-political interests. The linguistic landscape in Morocco is diverse, including Classical Arabic, its varieties, Amazigh, as well as foreign languages like French, English, and Spanish. In this research, we use "Classical Arabic" as a superset of Standard Arabic and Modern Arabic, as making the distinction does not impact our analysis.

Factors underlying incoherence over language of instruction

One of the key maxims that can be drawn from the historical review is that the battle over the language of instruction in Moroccan schools has never been completely linguistic, educational or pedagogical; it has been a manifestation or a cover disguising the conventions of different groups with their distinct political, religious, economic, and cultural interests. Therefore, the incoherence concerning the language of instruction mainly with classical Arabic and French cannot be attributed solely to administrative flaws or incompetence. This has its roots and can be theoretically framed by the Historical-Structural Approach of Tollefson (1991), which regards the linguistic policy of a nation as a reflection of the existing and dominant dynamic forces. Hence, educational policies are instruments to perpetuate power, conflicts, marginalization, inequalities, lifestyle, nationalism, identity...etc. Following this, this analytical part is intended to decipher and uncover the dynamics underlying linguistic formulation and implementation.

Immediately after independence, nationalists tried to restore Moroccan identity and reduce the presence of the French (Redouane, 1998). Driven by their enthusiasm, Arabization has been instrumental in attaining nationalism and national linguistic independence (Benkharafa, 2013). Some Moroccan parties ranked Arabization at the top of their priority programs (Elbiad, 1991). The purpose has been constructing a new linguistic policy through first reducing the amount of French language in the country. (Abed Al-Jabri, 1973; Redouane, 1998; Elbiad, 1991). Yet, implementing the country's new linguistic policy did not come to expectations. Putting this policy into effect was a daunting task mainly due to the lack of consensus over Arabization itself, the complexity of the Moroccan linguistic situation, and political, economic, ethnic and pedagogical worries it raises.

Arabization has been a subject of political calculations during the colonial and post-colonial period. The four principles (unification – Moroccanization – Arabization – generalization) set to guide the successive education reforms after the independence were a compromise among Morocco's emerging bourgeoisie, traditional and religious aristocracy and the masses of the Moroccan people that had been forced to form an heterogeneous national alliance during the colonial period (Abed Al-Jabri, 1973). According to Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri, the members of the Royal Commission on the Reform of Education formed immediately after the country's independence were varied with different interests; they were not trying to

provide permanent solutions to the issue of education. Rather, they attempted to please and satisfy the interests of different parties hiding what Al-Jabri called 'the silence battles' among the parties of the national coalition.

Therefore, Arabization has been set mainly to please or for fear of the Moroccan masses and the traditional and religious aristocracy. This does not imply that Arabic lacks utility in education or as a language of instruction; rather, it suggests that Arabization was not well thought out or agreed upon. At the linguistic level, Morocco, as the case with Arab countries, has more than one Arabic variety. As stated earlier, we will confine to Classical Arabic or standard Arabic and Moroccan Arabic (Darija). The two varieties of Arabic exist in a diglossic relationship and do not enjoy equal status and the same degrees of prestige (Ennaji, Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco, 2005; Redouane, 1998; Salmi, 1987; Elbiad , 1991; Charles , 1959; Jaafari , 2015; Benkharafa, 2013). Irrespective of one's stand towards Arabization in Morocco, there should have been a consensus over one variety of Arabic. As standard Arabic is adopted, there should have been a way to encourage its use in daily lives. In her discussion of Arabization, Rabia Redouane (1998) concluded that :

“the nature of Arabic itself is at the root of the problem, and that a solution lies in improving Arabic. The kind of Arabization that I am advocating would be able to function in a lively modern Standard Arabic” (P:203).

Redouane may have implied that for the success of Arabization, there should have been an up-to-date and flexible form of Arabic that is a compromise between the classical Arabic and Moroccan Arabic given that schools today should be open to its surroundings as a part of informal education, and authentic and daily language should be at the heart of the learning process. According to the definition of language vitality offered by Stewart, classical Arabic can be viewed as rigid whereas Moroccan Arabic demonstrate a great deal of 'vitality'. The result of it is a lack of linguistic competence regarding classical Arabic among the majority of Moroccan people specifically parents who are held countable for educating their kids (Elbiad , 1991; CSEFRS, Rapport analytique sur la réforme de l'éducation et de la formation au Maroc. Ministry of National Education, 2014) given that the rates of illiteracy has been high during the education reforms and classical Arabic is not the mother tongue of Moroccans in the first place. According to recent national evaluations, of the academic performance of students in public schools, only 42% and 27% of students have an acceptable level of Arabic and French respectively, while this percentage declines to 9% in both languages in middle schools (Moroccan Ministry of National Education , 2022)

Classical Arabic and French, not being languages of everyday communication, present pedagogical challenges, as opposed to Moroccan Arabic which is officially recognized neither as an instrument of instruction nor as a language of its own, thereby it is strictly banned in schools (Elbiad , 1991). Children are encountered with two different languages in their first two years of schooling. So, instead of targeting their emotional, cognitive and sociocultural abilities, they usually go through unpleasant experiences of learning meaningless linguistic codes. This may lead to rote learning which is a familiar practice in Moroccan classrooms (Salmi, 1987). Imposing a dominant language through a school system is equated to social and cultural inequality (UNESCO, 2016). Besides, exposure to classical Arabic and French is frequently limited to classrooms and tends to be artificial as children cannot extend their learning experiences beyond the classrooms, which enlarges the chasm between schools and children's lives (Salmi, 1987).

Contrary to this view, some supporters of Arabization defend classical Arabic as they believe both classical Arabic and Islam are indivisible. Typically, religious groups and

fundamentalists do support Arabization as Islamic culture is heavily dependent on the written form due to the sacredness attached to the Quran, the holy book (Salmi, 1987; Ennaji, Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco, 2005; Anderson, 1983). They regard classical Arabic as a shield to preserve and a trustworthy medium to share their religious legacy (Salmi, 1987; Benkharafa, 2013) based on the belief that Islam remains intact as Quran was well and meticulously written in classical Arabic centuries ago and has been recited since then in Moroccan mosques. Therefore, mastering classical Arabic, not Moroccan Arabic or French, will ensure accessibility to religion. Anderson (1983) referred to classical Arabic together with Hebrew and Latin as classical truth languages *"because the sacred texts they (Muslims) shared existed only in classical Arabic"* P29.

On the other hand, the opponents believe that Islamists, conservatism, and nationalists are using religious and national-state mottos to impose Arabization and gain political popularity at the expense of excluding other ethnic or cultural groups such as Amazigh people. Amazigh language is originally spoken by the people of Morocco before the 'invasion' or 'coming' of Arabs in the 7th and 8th centuries. 40% of the Moroccan population are claimed to speak Amazigh as their mother tongue (Salmi, 1987). On their part, some Amazigh activists have always expressed their preservation as Arabization targets the whole Moroccan population irrespective of their different ethnicity or race. Amazigh felt Arabic had been the sole official language of the kingdom after independence. Therefore, Arabization might have been perceived as a tool to extinguish Amazigh identity and language. According to Elbiad (1991),

" the use of Berber is declining in favour of Moroccan Arabic, which seems to be taking over in domains such as home and public places."

Arabization has been instrumentalized and thus provoked the Amazigh people's fear of being assimilated; it caused forms of sociolinguistic inter-ethnic conflict (Ait dada, 2011; Elbiad , 1991; Ennaji, Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco, 2005) Therefore, some Amazigh activists stand against the policy of Arabization in public institutions. To be fair, a part of the problem was that Amazigh language had been an oral language until 2003 when Tifinagh script, the written symbols, was officially adopted by the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM). This does not, however, deny that Amazigh language and culture have been 'damaged' by Arabization and the linguistic resistance of its speakers has raged the debate over the country's linguistic policy (Jaafari , 2015; Salmi, 1987; Ennaji, Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco, 2005). In their article *"Amazigh Language in Education Policy and Planning in Morocco: Effects of the Gap between Macro and Micro Levels"*, Ichou and Fathi (2022) claim that the process of teaching Amazigh was *" in a pending situation"* during the ten years of the Islamist (PDJ) governments.

Also, the denial of Moroccan Arabic, which is an important ingredient of Morocco's national identity, by the nationalist and religious groups places their claim of defending national identity under doubt. The Islamic political party (PJD) and the conservative Istiqlal political party have fiercely opposed the use of Moroccan Arabic, Darija, as a medium of instruction in Moroccan classrooms. The last incident occurred recently when Ayouch, a businessman who chairs the Darija Promotion Center, called for using Darija as an instrument of instruction at schools (Igroupane, 2016; Zakhir & O'Brien, 2016; Jaafari , 2015). Though the debate over the use of Moroccan Arabic faded away, it helped show how widely Moroccan people are divided among themselves regarding the most appropriate language of instruction. Moroccan Arabic is *"the language in which private, familial and social relations occur... the only vehicle of transmission of a major part of Moroccan history, art, folklore, traditions and*

custom" P22, the low status attached to it notwithstanding (Salmi, 1987; Ennaji, Language Contact, Arabization Policy and Education in Morocco, 2002).

Still, the improvisation and incoherence marking the linguistic policy and the acute cultural conflict it manifested had started a long time ago before the Amazigh issue came to the surface. It came out as the national coalition that had been formed against the aggression of the colonizer started to fall apart sooner after independence (Abed Al-Jabri, 1973). In fact, Opponents of Arabization especially the francophone elite have been aware that language of instruction can never be neutral. They know that a language is a " fait de civilisation" (Salmi, 1987). In other words, language is pregnant with cultural norms and practices, skills, and values besides the formal linguistic aspects carried through. In his article *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco* (2005), Moha Ennaji has offered a different dimension to the issue as he considered Arabization a means of social and political re-negotiation for the masses and opposing groups:

"Arabization policy is a hidden fight for social promotion used by opposition political parties and the lower social classes in the hope that Arabization will re-establish collective rights, social justice, and equal opportunities for all" P:19

Realizing this, the Moroccan francophone elite have been insisting at least on a dual approach to language learning in classrooms, or elsewhere and placing hurdles in the way of the pro-Arabization camp. They also managed to parallel French to modernity, science, and technology as Mohamed Benhima, the new Minister of Education declared in 1966 (Ennaji, Language Contact, Arabization Policy and Education in Morocco, 2002).

Under the 2011 constitution, Arabic and Amazigh are considered equally official languages and French is recognized as the first foreign language in Morocco. Paradoxically, French seems to have more dominance over the official languages in many sectors such as business, administration, medicine, media and higher education. It is not only a prerequisite, but it is the only available medium to have access to medical, technical, technological, and engineering courses in both private and public sectors. (Jaafari , 2015; Elbiad , 1991; Redouane, 1998; Salmi, 1987). French is regarded as "*the unofficial but actual working language*" (Salmi, 1987). If the process of Arabization stumbled, it was partly due to the power of francization. The Moroccan francophone elite seems to have inherited the assimilative and deleterious tendency of French colonial policy, which excluded native languages and cultures and rather imposed their culture and language contrary to Spanish colonialism that adopted a relatively 'generous' or tolerant cultural policy in Morocco (Salmi, 1987; Benkharafa, 2013)

Up to this point, we may conclude that the incoherence attached to linguistic policy and language of instruction in education is a warning that the Moroccan officials have been acting unharmoniously against each other. While a party may support Arabization, other parties are making French mandatory, powerful and a prerequisite in higher education and for the job market. Elbiad (1991) says that:

"unless Arabic, and classical Arabic in particular, is made to compete with French in every sociolinguistic domain, Arabization will lack the motivation which people need to believe in it, to support it, and to foster it" (p. 35).

The purpose of this paper is not to support either Arabization or French in Morocco, but to show -how inconsistencies and lack of political will related to languages of instruction and language policy at large may hinder the right implementation of education reforms. The fierce debate over linguistic policy has never been pedagogically. It has been instrumentalized by

different camps in an attempt to serve their own narrowed interests. According to Aomar Boum, post-independence Moroccan schooling ideologies exacerbated regional educational and socioeconomic inequalities among rural and urban students, which he termed "political coherence of educational incoherence". Moha Ennaji in his article *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco* (2005) reported that excluding Amazigh community deprived a whole generation of children from using their language and using languages they had never been introduced to which led to a higher dropout score.

As well, it might be misleading to conclude that Morocco's educational system adopts Arabic-French bilingualism. We might dare to say 'imbalanced' bilingualism not 'additive bilingualism' (Benkharafa, 2013). This is might be attributed to the fact that "*bilingualism is more imposed by historical, political and economic factors than chosen.*" (Ennaji, *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco*, 2005). Students are indeed instructed in both Arabic and French at primary schools, whereas it is a fallacy to claim so at secondary schools and higher education. Arabic dominates the teaching in secondary schools while surprisingly students must figure out how to carry on their higher studies in French. French and Arabic seem to compete and are assigned unannounced different roles. French has always been the medium of instruction in all science institutions and higher schools of technology, medicine and engineering. Not only this, their curricula rely heavily on French programs (Meskine & de Ruiter, 2015). A considerable number of students are penalized and deprived of higher education based on their incompetence in the French language.

The last decision of the former minister of education Said Amzazi to teach science subjects in French at secondary schools was an attempt, as he himself declared, to bridge the linguistic gap and regulate the existing inconsistency concerning languages of instruction at the secondary schools and higher education. Irrespective of his intention, his decision revealed a dark side of the issue and revived heated ideological debate between the francophone elite and the nationalists and conservatives who are fervent supporters of Arabization a new. His decision has been politically instrumentalized in a very drastic manner (Baraka, 2019; Elkhaldi, Aftati, Aasid, & Abu Ali, 2019). As he revealed his intention to shift from Arabic to French in teaching science in Moroccan secondary schools, the government was divided into two opposing camps. In fact, his decision almost led to a split of the multi-party coalition government as the leading Islamic Party (PJD) strongly opposed the decision.

Said Amzazi, on his part, insisted on passing his resolution through the parliament on July 23, 2019. His decision gained the approval of the Moroccan parliament, which was regarded as a failure to the leading 'Islamic' party (PJD) in view of the upcoming legislative election. Such "*politicization and ideologization of languages made it next to impossible to craft a coherent policy. P138*" (Chahhou, 2014). Amzazi's decisions are perceived within the framework of the current education reform: The Strategic Vision 2015-2030 (CSEFRS, 2015). The new education reform set up a new linguistic engineering 'Linguistic rotation', which aims at diversifying languages of instruction. Such linguistic choice seems to reflect a policy of escaping forward by avoiding a kind of linguistic determinism. To put it differently, a decade now from the implementation of the Strategic Vision 2015-2030, there is neither a guideline offering details on how this "linguistic rotation" should be carried out, nor was there any official evaluation of it.

In fact, the current situation has a resemblance to the previous education reform. Probably worse, using "linguistic rotation" in the new education reform has legitimized linguistic ambiguity even more. The linguistic choice has been extended beyond the rigid bilingualism of French-Classical Arabic, but the same linguistic policy has been maintained, the fuzzy words notwithstanding. Decentralized units such as academies, universities, and

higher educational institutions are delegated authority on cases when some other foreign languages mainly Spanish and English can be used in consultation with the Ministry of Education. Therefore, the linguistic policy of the nation including the language(s) of instruction is likely to be determined by individuals, and the dominant lobbying groups again, and is likely to be subjected to compromises that are not necessarily pedagogical or linguistic but socio-economic, cultural and political. These compromises do change as soon as the balance of power shifts nationally or internationally in a different direction and result in improvisation and incoherence.

5. CONCLUSION

Hesitation and improvisation have been the main defining traits of the linguistic policy of the country during the Moroccan post-colonial period, contributing to the failure, inconsistency and discontinuity of the education reform. Although Morocco is proud of its multicultural and multilingual nation, education has been a source of confusion, disorientation and "a major source of wastage" (Salmi, 1987). The conclusions drawn reveal that the Moroccan linguistic policy is disconcerting, ambiguous and heterogeneous.

Arabization, initially adopted to appease the nationalist factions within the coalition after independence (Abed Al-Jabri, 1973), was neither fully embraced nor effectively implemented. It became a subject of controversy and politicization, especially with rising demands to grant Moroccan Arabic and Amazigh languages greater roles. The recognition of Amazigh as an official language in the 2011 Constitution marked a significant milestone, yet its integration into education has faced practical challenges, including a lack of qualified teachers and standardized textbooks. Furthermore, bilingualism has remained skewed toward French, leading to inconsistencies across primary, middle, and secondary education, as well as higher education, where French dominates due to its perceived economic utility.

Arabization, initially adopted to appease the masses and the nationalist factions within the coalition after independence (Abed Al-Jabri, 1973), was neither fully embraced nor effectively implemented. It rather became a source of controversy and politicization amidst increasing voices for giving a substantial role to Moroccan Arabic and Amazigh language. The latter has been declared official by force of the constitution of 2011, but its integration into the educational institutions was hindered by a lack of qualified teachers and the lack of textbooks given that speakers of Amazigh are not acquainted with the standard variety adopted officially. Furthermore, bilingualism has always been unannouncedly skewed towards French and resulted in inconsistency across the three education cycles (primary school- middle schools – secondary schools) and higher education due to the economic prospects in the labour market.

At the level of the outcome, national and international evaluations (e.g., TIMSS 2019, PIRLS 2021) indicate poor students' performance in languages and reading. The Strategic Vision 2015-2030 introduced a new linguistic framework based on "linguistic rotation," aimed at diversifying the languages of instruction. However, this framework lacks procedural clarity regarding which languages should be taught, when, and for what purposes. This ambiguity has further entrenched the incoherence in the linguistic policy. While the framework's openness to incorporating languages such as English and Spanish could reduce French's monopoly, the absence of a designated authority to oversee its implementation leaves it vulnerable to political manipulation.

To address these challenges, an independent supreme authority should be established to develop and monitor an agreed-upon linguistic policy that reflects Morocco's multilingual society and accounts for its sociolinguistic complexities and peculiarities (Ennaji,

Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco, 2005). The rigid French-Arabic bilingualism and the exclusive Arabization approach have proven insufficient. Moving forward, a balanced, well-structured policy that embraces Morocco's linguistic diversity is crucial for ensuring sustainable and effective education reforms.

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The author consents to the publication of this manuscript.

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