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Attitudes Towards Amazigh Education Policies and Their Impact on Moroccan Cultural and Linguistic Identity

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the attitudes of Moroccans towards Amazigh educational policies and their perceived impact on the cultural and linguistic identities of both Amazigh and non-Amazigh communities. A survey was administered to a diverse sample of 41 Moroccan participants encompassing both ethnic groups. Data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distributions. Due to the non-normal distribution of the data, as determined by Shapiro-Wilk test, non-parametric analyses, specifically the Mann-Whitney U test, were utilized. The results revealed a generally positive reception towards the Amazigh educational policies among both ethnic groups, with a strong consensus on the role of Amazigh language and culture in reinforcing Moroccan identity. Notably, the study uncovered a significant difference in perceptions between Amazigh and non-Amazigh participants regarding the influence of these policies on their identity, underscoring the nuanced ways in which educational policies intersect with cultural identity formation.

Keywords: Amazigh educational policies; cultural identity; linguistic identity; attitudes towards education

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Introduction

Significant strides have recently been made in language planning and policy, acknowledging the vital role linguistic diversity plays in enriching both cultural and linguistic identities. Education, in particular, is viewed as a key arena for the implementation of language policies. As the primary setting for language acquisition and development, education helps propagate linguistic norms through standardized curricula and instruction. It also serves as a conduit through which governments foster social cohesion and safeguard cultural heritage. Since language and culture are inextricably linked, language becomes a defining feature of both individual and national identity. Language and its cultural roots are inseparable; together, they play a crucial role in promoting national unity and identity (Trechter & Bucholtz, 2001). This global perspective on language policy and educational practices provides the framework for a more focused investigation into Morocco's language policies.

Morocco's diverse linguistic landscape is shaped by its colonial history and the resulting interplay of various cultural influences. The linguistic fabric of the country is marked by the coexistence of multiple languages, with Arabic and French prevailing in many areas. However, Arabic and Amazigh are the official languages that anchor national unity and cultural identity. Following independence, Morocco adopted language policies aimed at preserving and strengthening its national cohesion. Although Amazigh was initially marginalized in these policies, it has since been recognized and developed as an integral part of Moroccan identity.

Despite recent advancements, the historical neglect of Amazigh in educational policies has contributed to a complex set of factors influencing both linguistic dynamics and Moroccan identity. This study seeks to illuminate the intricate relationship between educational policies and cultural identity in a multilingual society. By focusing on Amazigh education policies, it aims to explore public perceptions of these policies and their direct impact on Amazigh cultural identity—an area of particular significance in light of Morocco's rich cultural and linguistic diversity.

Understanding these issues is crucial for developing inclusive, culturally sensitive educational policies. Moreover, the study will enrich the existing body of literature by examining the ways in which educational planning

decisions can either preserve or transform the Amazigh identity. The findings of this research will offer valuable insights for policymakers and language planners, helping them to grasp the nuanced interplay between language, identity, and education. Specifically, the study sheds light on how educational policies shape national identities in multilingual contexts, where identity is often fluid and influenced by multiple languages.

The objectives of this study are threefold: (1) to assess the attitudes of both Amazigh and non-Amazigh speakers towards the impact of Amazigh education policies; (2) to analyze the extent to which these policies contribute to the preservation or transformation of Amazigh cultural identity; and (3) to understand the intercultural dynamics between Amazigh and non-Amazigh communities in relation to these policies. Guided by these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions: What are the attitudes of Amazigh and non-Amazigh speakers towards the influence of Amazigh education policies on their identity? How do these policies affect the preservation or transformation of Amazigh cultural identity?

Language and Cultural Identity

The notion of cultural identity is complex and has been at the center of recent debates concerning the relationship between culture and identity. Given its problematic nature, it is essential to define cultural identity clearly. Everett (2012) provides a foundational understanding, stating that "language is how we talk; culture is how we live." He explains that language encompasses grammar, stories, sounds, meaning, and symbols, while culture represents a shared set of values and knowledge passed down within a community (p. 6). Bucholtz and Hall (2004) further argue that identity should be seen as the result of linguistic interactions, not merely as a pre-existing factor influencing these interactions. They stress that identity is shaped by social and cultural contexts, emerging from specific linguistic practices. This view complements Brown's (1994) description of culture as a way of life, as well as Goodenough's perspective (as cited in Hudson, 1980), which defines culture as the essential knowledge and beliefs required for functioning within a society.

Building on these perspectives, I follow Erikson's (1963) understanding that identity is shaped by a dynamic interaction between personal experiences and broader social engagements. Erikson (1963) emphasized that identity

evolves through both personal and social interactions, including those with family, culture, and societal norms. He proposed that the psychosocial challenges encountered at each stage of development are critical in forming an individual's identity. Successfully navigating these challenges fosters a coherent sense of self, illustrating the complex interplay between individual growth and social context.

Similarly, Ennaji (2005) observes that the *"language-culture interface is commonly acknowledged as an important symbol of citizenship and group identity, often engendering solidarity among communities and a feeling of belonging to a larger population"* (p. 5). This illustrates how national and cultural identity are deeply influenced by the connection between language and culture. Language and culture are inextricably linked, and the acquisition or learning of a new language or cultural understanding can sometimes challenge the core of indigenous identities. Furthermore, the relationship between education and identity is crucial. Education serves as a vehicle through which language of instruction can shape individuals' political and social orientations.

In Morocco, the education system uses both Arabic and Amazigh as key tools to preserve and maintain the nation's cultural heritage, while French, English, and other foreign languages are often viewed as gateways to global engagement (Zaaraoui, 2024). Defining Moroccan identity is challenging, as two distinct linguistic communities coexist harmoniously, each with its own identity. Benmamoun (2001) highlights that religion, ethnicity, identity, education, and development all play significant roles in determining language use in Morocco. On one hand, the Arabic-speaking community identifies as Moroccan, sharing a common linguistic and cultural heritage. Since, as previously mentioned, language serves as a powerful symbol of identity, it plays a key role in this communal bond.

Conversely, the Amazigh language plays a pivotal role in defining the identity of the Amazigh community. Aissati (2001) argues that if an Amazigh-speaking individual were to lose their language, their Amazigh ethnicity would effectively disappear. This underscores the essential role that language plays in preserving ethnic identity. For the Amazigh community, their language is seen as a fundamental component of their identity, acting as a marker that distinguishes them from other cultural

groups. This perspective reinforces the idea that the loss of a language equates to a loss of identity.

The language policies enacted by the Moroccan government, particularly those concerning the standardization of the Amazigh language, have significantly contributed to the construction and preservation of Amazigh identity. The adoption of both standard Arabic and Amazigh as official languages in Morocco today reflects this dual linguistic heritage, which is central to the broader conception of Moroccan identity.

Berber Education in Morocco

Amazigh, the native language of the Maghreb, has been spoken for around 5,000 years (Boukous, 1995b, p. 18). In Morocco, it is the second most widely spoken mother tongue, with three main varieties: Tamazight, Tarifiyt, and Tashlhit. The official writing system for Amazigh is Tifinagh, which was officially adopted as the script for the language in Morocco in 2003 (Lguensat, 2011). However, following the implementation of the Arabization policy, Amazigh was marginalized, and children whose first language was Amazigh were compelled to enter Arabic schools without prior exposure to the Arabic language. The language policy adopted by the state after Moroccan independence led to the systematic exclusion of Amazigh from key public sectors.

In 1994, King Hassan II initiated a shift in language policy by advocating for the integration of Amazigh into the educational system. This policy was further developed under King Mohamed VI, who established IRCAM (the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture) to spearhead efforts in language planning and promote the inclusion of Amazigh in education. As a result, Amazigh was introduced as a subject in Moroccan primary schools. According to Ennaji (2005), "Berber is taught in over 900 public schools and in many private schools, including the French Institute in Agadir and NGOs working to disseminate and protect this language both in Morocco and Europe, where there is a large Moroccan immigrant community" (p. 20). This demonstrates the progress of educational policies in promoting the Amazigh language and culture through formal education.

However, the implementation of Amazigh educational policies has faced significant challenges. These include a shortage of qualified teachers, insufficient funding for recruitment, and unfulfilled promises, such as the establishment of an all-Berber television station (Idhssaine, 2020; Ennaji,

2005). Despite these obstacles, the ongoing efforts to incorporate Amazigh into the education system have laid a foundation for the preservation and promotion of Amazigh culture and identity.

Previous Literature

A wealth of research has delved into language attitudes concerning the role of mother tongue education in Morocco. Much of this research underscores the negative perceptions that many Moroccans, particularly those in urban areas, harbor toward the Amazigh language and culture. These attitudes often stem from the language's historical association with lower socioeconomic status (Ennaji, 2005; Marley, 2004; Reino, 2007). Despite these findings, a significant gap remains in the literature, particularly regarding how the inclusion of Amazigh in the education system influences Moroccan identity—both within Amazigh and non-Amazigh communities. This gap underscores the urgent need for further exploration of the intricate relationship between language education and the formation of national and cultural identities in Morocco.

While previous studies have primarily centered on attitudes towards mother tongue-based education, few have explicitly addressed the broader sociocultural implications of such policies. For example, Idhssaine (2020) examined Moroccans' views on teaching Amazigh and investigated how self-identified ethnicity shapes these attitudes. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study uncovered that support for Amazigh's inclusion in education varies significantly based on respondents' ethnic backgrounds. Although Idhssaine's work offers valuable insights, it falls short of addressing the broader issue of how these policies impact the construction of Moroccan identity—a central focus of the present study.

Similarly, Elboubekri (2013) tackled the issue from a different angle by analyzing the role of English education in Moroccan textbooks and its potential effects on national identity. Contrary to concerns about foreign language instruction eroding cultural heritage, his findings revealed that English fosters a greater appreciation of Moroccan culture while encouraging openness to other cultures. This stands in contrast to much of the discourse on globalization and language loss, highlighting the nuanced role that foreign languages can play in identity formation.

In a related ethnographic study, Errihani (2008) explored Moroccans' attitudes towards the country's main languages, with a particular focus on Amazigh. The research revealed that many Moroccans define themselves more in terms of religion than ethnicity or language, positioning Amazigh as a symbol of Morocco's cultural diversity rather than a core element of identity. Furthermore, Amazigh was recognized as a valuable tool for promoting Morocco's heritage internationally, especially in the tourism sector.

From a historical and sociolinguistic perspective, Abdelaziz Kesbi (2017) examined the intersection of ethnicity, language, and identity, paying special attention to the language policies enacted during the French colonial period and the 1930 "Amazigh Decree." His study advocated for a nationalist model that embraces both Amazigh and Arab identities, emphasizing diversity as a path to national unity. This dual identity framework highlights the importance of harmonizing Morocco's linguistic and cultural heritage.

In a different context, Belhiah and Al-Hussien (2016) investigated how English Medium Instruction (EMI) in Abu Dhabi affects Arab identity and Arabic language proficiency among students. Their findings indicate that while students gained proficiency in English, their ability to use Arabic diminished, causing a shift in their sense of social identity. Despite their recognition of Arabic as central to their Arab identity, the language was increasingly sidelined in favor of English, reflecting broader global linguistic trends.

The ongoing influence of globalization and the dominance of major languages such as English and French, particularly in post-colonial societies like Morocco, underscores the pressing need for policies that safeguard linguistic diversity. As the Moroccan government continues its efforts to preserve Amazigh language and culture, a critical question remains: What are Moroccans' attitudes towards the impact of these policies on their cultural and linguistic identities?

Method

This section outlines the research design and methodology employed in the study. The primary objective was to assess attitudes towards the impact of Amazigh education policies on Moroccans' cultural and linguistic identity.

To achieve this, a structured questionnaire was meticulously developed, comprising three distinct parts.

The first section gathered demographic information about the participants, providing a contextual foundation for analyzing the responses. The second section presented a series of Likert-scale statements, where respondents indicated their levels of agreement—ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree—on issues related to their awareness and perception of Amazigh education policies, the significance of the Amazigh language and culture, and the perceived impact of these policies on Moroccan identity.

In contrast, the third section consisted of open-ended questions, designed to elicit more nuanced, in-depth perspectives from participants. These questions complemented the Likert-scale items by offering respondents an opportunity to express their views and experiences in their own words, thus providing valuable qualitative insights. This dual approach—quantitative Likert-scale data combined with qualitative feedback—ensured a more comprehensive and multifaceted analysis of the informants' attitudes towards the influence of Amazigh education policies on identity (see Appendix 2 for the full questionnaire).

The mixed-methods design was particularly advantageous, as it allowed for the integration of numerical data with more textured, narrative responses. This combination not only quantified the general attitudes of the participants but also enriched the findings with personal reflections, ultimately offering a deeper understanding of how Amazigh educational policies intersect with issues of cultural and linguistic identity in Morocco.

Participants

The participants in this study were Moroccan citizens, comprising both Amazigh and non-Amazigh individuals. A total of 41 informants, aged between 15 and 60, with an average age of 31, contributed to the research. The participants spanned various educational levels, including primary, secondary, and university education. It is important to highlight that, although the study did not specifically account for gender distribution, there were more male participants than females. The sample included 24 Amazigh and 17 non-Amazigh individuals, with their ethnic backgrounds forming a key component of the study's objective. This diversity allowed for a focused examination of how educational policies—particularly the

inclusion of Amazigh language and culture in the curriculum—are perceived in terms of their impact on the cultural identity of both ethnic groups.

Procedures

To comprehensively analyze the collected data, this research adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative procedures. Quantitative analysis began with descriptive statistics, processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This involved calculating frequencies and percentages to effectively summarize and present the data.

For the inferential analysis, the Mann-Whitney U test was employed. This non-parametric test was selected based on the deviation of the data from a normal distribution, as indicated by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. The Mann-Whitney U test was instrumental in determining statistically significant differences in attitudes between the two independent groups, namely Amazigh and non-Amazigh participants, based on their ethnic backgrounds.

On the qualitative side, data from the open-ended survey responses underwent thematic analysis. This detailed coding process categorized responses into key themes, allowing for richer insights into the participants' perceptions and experiences regarding the educational policies in question. By integrating these two methods, the study was able to provide a well-rounded and robust analysis of how Amazigh education policies are perceived to impact Moroccan cultural and linguistic identity.

Findings and Analysis

The following section discusses the findings with respect to the participants' attitudes towards Amazigh education policies and their impact on Moroccans' cultural identity, be it Amazigh or non-Amazigh. However, SPSS was used to create frequency tables, providing a clear depiction of the survey data. For instance, descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, were employed to interpret the responses systematically. In order to have a clear understanding of the results, the statements were grouped into three main categories and can be presented as follows:

Awareness and Perception of Amazigh Policies

The two statements that were addressed to illicit the informants' attitudes towards the Amazigh educational policies concern whether they are aware of the existence of these policies, and whether they perceive them as effective in the Moroccan educational system.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the Awareness and perception of Amazigh Ed. Policies

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Awareness	19.5%	48.8%	22%	9.8%	0%
Effectiveness	9.8%	17.1%	19.5%	34.1%	19.5%

In this connection, a majority of the respondents, 68.3%, indicate that they are aware of the Amazigh education policies to varying degrees, with 19.5% strongly agreeing and 48.8% agreeing. This suggests a relatively high level of awareness about these policies among the participants. However, a sizable portion, 22%, has remained neutral. This could imply that a significant number of people are unsure of their level of awareness of these policies (see table 1). Further, more than half of the respondents (53.6%) perceive Amazigh education policies as ineffective, indicating potential areas for policy improvement, while a relatively small portion (26.9%) express their agreement on the effectiveness of these policies. This split suggests that there are diverse views or experiences of participants on the effectiveness of these policies on education.

Importance of Amazigh Language and Culture

The informants were also asked to express their agreement on whether the Amazigh language and culture are fundamental to Moroccan identity, and the role of teaching Amazigh in preserving cultural identity and promoting linguistic diversity.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of Attitudes towards the importance of Amazigh

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Essential to Moroccan identity	61%	36.6%	2.4%	0%	0%
Important for preservation	51.2%	43.9%	4.9%	0%	0%

The table shows that (97.6%) of the participants affirm the importance of the Amazigh language and culture to Moroccan identity, with the vast majority (61.0%) expressing strong agreement. This strong consensus suggests that the Amazigh language and culture are deeply integrated into the respondents' conception of Moroccan national identity. This could be an indicative of a strong cultural pride and recognition of the Amazigh heritage within the broader Moroccan populace. It also reflects a likely public support of Amazigh and non- Amazigh for policies that aim to preserve and promote Amazigh language and culture as integral to the Moroccan identity. Subsequently, the table reveals interesting responses on the role of teaching Amazigh. A remarkable 95.1% of those surveyed acknowledge the crucial role of the Amazigh language in preserving cultural identity and enhancing linguistic diversity. Specifically, 21 respondents, constituting 51.2%, strongly agree with this statement, while a further 18 respondents, or 43.9%, agree. Only a minimal portion, 2 respondents (4.9%), remain neutral on the matter. These findings underlie the great support of the integration of Amazigh into the curriculum, emphasizing its significance in maintaining the Moroccan cultural identity and linguistic diversity.

Impact of Amazigh Educational Policies on Moroccan Cultural Identity

The survey involved statements about the perceived impact of the Amazigh educational policies on Amazigh and non-Amazigh cultural identity. The informants' responses reveal a significant acknowledgment of the positive impact of Amazigh educational policies on Moroccan cultural identity

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the Impact of Amazigh Educational Policies on Moroccan Cultural Identity

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Positively affect identity	36.6%	36.6%	17.1%	9.8%	0%
Impact varies greatly	14.6%	53.7%	29.3%	2.4%	0%

This table presents a combined 73.2% of respondents (36.6% strongly agreeing and another 36.6% agreeing) who perceive these policies as contributing positively to the cultural identity of the Amazigh. This substantially interesting finding suggests that the implementation of these educational policies is largely seen as beneficial in strengthening and preserving the cultural heritage of the Amazigh community within the broader Moroccan identity. In the same vein, informants were asked whether there is a difference in the impact of the Amazigh educational policies between people who speak Amazigh and those who do not. The statistical analysis showed that the majority of respondents, a combined 68.3%, either agree or strongly agree that there is a notable difference in the impact of these policies based on whether one speaks Amazigh. This suggests a perception that the educational policies have a differential impact on these two groups. Whereas a significant minority, 29.3%, neither agree nor disagree, which could indicate uncertainty or lack of knowledge about the impact, or it may suggest that these respondents do not perceive the impact of these policies as being significantly different for speakers and non-speakers of Amazigh.

The survey results provide insightful findings about the perceived impact of Amazigh educational policies on both Amazigh and non-Amazigh cultural identities in Morocco. With a significant majority acknowledging the positive influence of these policies on cultural identity and noting a differential impact based on linguistic background, these findings underscore the importance and effectiveness of these policies in shaping cultural perceptions and identities. Now, let us turn our attention to the methodological considerations, the data's normality—or lack thereof—becomes a pivotal aspect of analysis. The results from the normality tests

(see table 4), namely Shapiro-Wilk Test indicate significant deviations -with a p-value under the conventional alpha level (.05) - from a normal distribution. These results have methodological implications for how we proceed with our statistical analysis.

Table 4. Test of Normality: Shapiro- Wilk

Impact of the Policies	.934	41	.020
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Strongly Agree = 1; Agree = 2; Neutral = 3; Disagree = 4; Strongly Disagree = 5

This divergence from normality necessitates the use of non-parametric methods for any further hypothesis testing. These methods, which do not assume a normal distribution of the data, will ensure that the interpretations and conclusions drawn from the survey responses are both statistically valid and robust. The Mann-Whitney U test, which does not assume normality, was thus employed to discern any statistically significant differences in the impact of these policies between two independent groups, defined by ethnic background. The results were as follow :

Table 5. Mann- Whitney U test

Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Mean Ranks	U	Z-score	P-value
Amazigh	24	17.77	426.50	126.500	-2.102	.036
Non-Amazigh	17	25.56	434.50			

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test (see Table 5) reveal a statistically significant difference between Amazigh and non-Amazigh groups regarding the perceived impact of Amazigh educational policies on their cultural and linguistic identity. The test yielded a U value of 126.500, a Z score of -2.102, and an asymptotic significance (2-tailed) of .036, indicating that the two groups hold different attitudes toward the effects of these policies. With the p-value being less than the conventional threshold of .05, this result confirms that the observed difference in perceptions is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

This significant finding highlights that the impact of Amazigh educational policies is perceived differently by speakers of Amazigh compared to non-speakers. Amazigh respondents, in particular, view these policies as having a more substantial influence on their cultural and linguistic identity. Conversely, the non-Amazigh group perceives the policies' impact to a lesser extent. This disparity underscores the differential reception and perceived effectiveness of the policies across ethnic groups within Morocco. Ultimately, this suggests that Amazigh educational policies may play a more prominent role in reinforcing cultural and linguistic identity for the Amazigh community than for non-Amazigh individuals.

Furthermore, the third section of the survey included open-ended questions about the participants' perceptions or attitudes towards the impact of Amazigh educational policies on their identity, the second question intended to illicit their personal experiences with the incorporation of the Amazigh language in the educational system. The responses to the first questions are grouped into a set of perspectives in order to avoid redundancy.

Many participants, belonging to both groups, argue that Amazigh educational policies have a positive impact on their identity. By way of example, a non-Amazigh female argued that: 'A positive impact. I see that this policy could have a very positive impact on the Moroccan identity in general (if implemented well), as it is capable of enriching this diverse and multi-faceted identity. It can also be a tool to strengthen relationships between the various races and tribes in Morocco and hopefully also create harmony and understanding in our society.'

In the same vein, one Amazigh female declared that 'The integration of the Amazigh language into education is a good thing. If a person is not Amazigh, it doesn't mean that it will change their original identity, but it will allow them to learn the language and its culture.' The two responses align with the statistical findings in relation to the effectiveness and the role of Amazigh education in the promotion of cultural identity.

The informants declare a positive impact of integrating the Amazigh language and culture into the Moroccan educational system on the country's identity. They emphasize that the policy has the potential to enrich the diverse Moroccan identity and strengthen relationships among

different ethnic groups and tribes. Also, there is an agreement among the two groups that the Amazigh educational policies enhance cultural and linguistic diversity.

In particular, a non- Amazigh informant believes that [Kandhunn an idraj hadi as-siyasa ghadi y3zez al-hawiya dyalna ka maghariba, hit al-Maghrib btab'uhu bil-tanawwi' al-lughawi wal-tasamuh ath-thaqafi. Ida tam idraj hadi as-siyasa ghadi ya'rifu ath-tallamið kathir 'ala tarih al-Maghrib wahad-shi ghadi ya'zz al-fakhr wal-intima'a dyalhum] 'I believe that the inclusion of this policy will enhance our identity as Moroccans because Morocco is inherently a country known for its linguistic diversity and cultural tolerance. If this policy is implemented, students will learn more about the history of Morocco, which will boost their pride and sense of belonging.' Another Amazigh informant argued [Inhu jayyid liyatta'raf ash-sha3b al-Maghribi bakamlihi 'ala hadihi ath-thaqafa al-jadida bil-nisba lil-ladina laysu bi-Amazigh] 'It's good for the entire Moroccan people to become acquainted with this new culture, especially for those who are not Amazigh.' Nevertheless, both responses highlight the importance of this policy in recognizing and preserving the Amazigh cultural heritage while also promoting diversity and unity among different ethnic groups in Morocco.

Overall, the responses show a substantial agreement on the impact of these policies on the informants' identity. However, they all agree that these policies positively affect the Amazigh identity, but the non- Amazigh informants believe that the inclusion of Amazigh language in the curriculum does not threaten their identity. Instead, it creates a balance and leads to the preservation of the Amazigh language as a national language, and leads to the promotion and enhancement of the linguistic diversity in Morocco. The latter claim supports -to some extent- the proposal of a nationalist approach by Kesbi (2017) that combines both Amazigh and Arab identities, embracing diversity to achieve national unity.

Additionally, the respondents were asked to describe their opinions and personal experiences related to the integration of the Amazigh language and culture into the Moroccan educational. However, there is a trend among the responses to support the integration of Amazigh for cultural diversity and identity preservation. As in this statement by a non- Amazigh informant: [Al-Maghrib lil-Maghareba ajma3een, Arab kanoo aw Amazigh,

dakshi 'alaash khassna nshaj3oo at-tadrees dyal al-loghat bijooj bash nwhedoo al-Arab wal-Amazigh ka Maghareba wa na'kedoo 3ala ann at-tanawu3 al-loghawi howa ghinna w adat lil-wahda mashi at-tafriqa]. 'Morocco belongs to all Moroccans, whether they are Arabs or Amazigh. That's why we need to encourage the teaching of both languages to unite Arabs and Amazigh as Moroccans, and to emphasize that linguistic diversity is a wealth and a tool for unity, not division.' He argued that the integration of Amazigh alongside Arabic promotes cultural diversity within the Moroccan educational system, and leads to national unity. This notion brings to mind Ennaji (2005), who stated that the linguistic diversity seen among Moroccans contributes to the development of varied cultural identities.

Another Amazigh informant asserted [A'dun annaha badirah muhimah. Hadih al-khutwah satusahim bishakl fa3al fi al-ruqj bil-lughah wa kadhalik i3adat al-i3tibar lil-Amazigh li annahu ba'da al-istiqlal sanat 1956 tam istib3ad al-lughah al-Amazighiyah kulyan, lakin al-aan ba'da ja'liha lughah rasmiyah wa bida'iyat tadrishiha taghayyar mandhur al-Maghareba kulluhum tijahha]. 'I think it is an important initiative. This step will effectively contribute to the elevation of the language and also to restoring the Amazigh's consideration, because after the independence in 1956, the Amazigh language was completely excluded, but now, after making it an official language and the beginning of its teaching, the perspective of all Moroccans towards it has changed.' This informant attempted to show the importance of this policy change as an essential step in restoring the status and consideration of the Amazigh language and culture in Moroccan society.

Nevertheless, some respondents declared the importance of these policies in the preservation of cultural heritage. For example, an Amazigh informant highlighted [Finnadari, khass al-lughah alAmazighiyah tawli lughah muhimah wa asasiyah li'annah kat3atabar aslna wa khassna n3tiwha qimah. Ana ka-Amazighiyah ghankun fakhourah bihadshi ala raghm min annana kant3arradu lil'unsuriyah ila ann hadashi ma kayghayyarsha haqiqah annana Amazigh bil-asl]. 'In my opinion, the Amazigh language should become an important and fundamental language because it is considered our origin, and we need to give it value. As an Amazigh, I will be proud of this despite the fact that we face racism; however, this does not

change the fact that we are originally Amazigh.' Despite the ongoing struggle and racism against Amazigh, the speaker underlines a sense of belonging to his Amazigh origins, advocating for the elevated status and appreciation of the Amazigh language in the Moroccan society.

Contrary to these positive views of the Amazigh educational policies, a number of respondents expressed their skepticism on the effectiveness of these policies. One of the responses is expressed as follows: [arā annahu lā ḍarar fī as-siyāsah dātihā wa lakin yabdu lī anna fa3āliyyatuhā fī arḍ al-wāqī3 mushakkakun fīhā, li-dhālika mina alwājib murāja'at aṭ-ṭuruq at-tanfīdhiyya. Ammā 3an at-tajārib ash-shakhṣiyyah fa-anā aftaqiruhā li ann al-Amāzighiyya lam takun mudrajah fī madrasatī] 'I believe that there is no harm in the policy itself, but it seems to me that its effectiveness in reality is doubtful, therefore, it is necessary to review the implementation methods. As for personal experiences, I lack them because Amazigh was not included in my school.' In this example, the speaker recognizes the policy's potential value but expresses skepticism about its practical effectiveness. In addition, he suggests a need for a review of the planning methods because they might not achieve the desired outcomes.

Examining participants' perceptions of Amazigh educational policies and their impact on Moroccan cultural and linguistic identity highlights the distinct views held by Amazigh and non-Amazigh groups. These differences provide valuable insights, which are explored in detail in the following section.

Discussion of the Findings

Drawing on the findings of this study, certain key shortcomings were identified in the existing literature. However, we make major connections between our results and previous research, offering an in-depth understanding on the ways Amazigh education policies influence Moroccan cultural identity. This study has demonstrated that Moroccans are significantly aware of Amazigh education policies, which is consistent with Ennaji's (2005) findings. Nevertheless, in line with Marley's (2004) insights, it also reveals differences in how effective these policies are viewed, especially between speakers of Amazigh and non-Amazigh, highlighting the complex perspectives based on linguistic background. This perceptual contrast is consistent with a work by Reino (2007), which showed that speakers of the Amazigh language had a more positive attitude

towards the language, indicating a stronger cultural and identity bond with it. The overwhelming acceptance of the importance of Amazigh language and culture in preserving Moroccan identity, as identified in this study, is consistent with the broader literature on the crucial function of language in cultural preservation (Boukous, 1995b). This agreement emphasizes the importance of Amazigh in the Moroccan culture, reflecting the national understanding of language diversity as a key component of cultural identity.

Addressing the research objectives, the study illustrates a complicated relationship in the attitudes towards Amazigh education policy, with an apparent difference in opinions between Amazigh and non-Amazigh groups. This finding addresses the original research question about attitudes towards these policies and sheds light on the different effects of these policies on the preservation or change of Amazigh cultural identity. These perceptions and impact differences underscore the complex intercultural factors at play, suggesting the need for a more nuanced and inclusive approach in educational policy-making. The study's contribution is particularly notable in its focus on the disparate effects based on linguistic background, an aspect often overlooked in policy-making. This insight is crucial for policymakers, signaling the necessity for continual adaptation of policies to better adapt to Morocco's diverse population. The results emphasize the need for ongoing research and policy refinement to ensure that Morocco's distinct linguistic and cultural identities are acknowledged and valued. This approach is vital for fostering a more inclusive and representative educational landscape, resonant with the multifaceted identity of Morocco.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study reveal predominantly positive attitudes among Moroccans towards Amazigh educational policies, highlighting their significant role in shaping the Moroccan cultural and linguistic identity. A notable difference in perceptions between the Amazigh and non-Amazigh communities was observed, highlighting the nuanced ways educational policies interact with cultural identity. The research contributes to understanding the complex relationship between education, language, and identity in Morocco, emphasizing the importance of Amazigh in reinforcing national identity and cultural diversity.

However, the study faces limitations, primarily the small and specific sample size, which may not fully represent the broader Moroccan population's perspectives. Moreover, the focus on self-reported attitudes and experiences could introduce subjective biases. These limitations suggest a need for further research with more extensive and varied participant groups to generalize the findings more broadly. To improve our understanding of the impact of educational policies on the cultural and linguistic identity, it is recommended that the educational policies be continually refined to better accommodate the diverse needs of linguistic communities. This involves a more inclusive approach in policy-making, recognizing the varied impacts of these policies on different ethnic groups. However, the promotion of Amazigh language and culture within the educational framework not only preserves this important aspect of Moroccan heritage but also develops a sense of national unity and cultural understanding. This approach aligns with the global move towards embracing linguistic and cultural diversity in education, essential for nurturing inclusive societies.

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