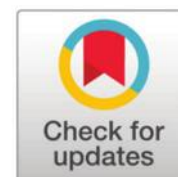


MOROCCAN STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LOCAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES: THE ROLE OF SELF-DIRECTED AND LANGUAGE POLICY FORCES

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Abstract

This article contributes to the hot debate on language preferences and choice at schools and society at large in Morocco from an empirical perspective. It investigates the Moroccan students' attitudes towards the languages they use in their daily interactions and those that are widely used in the Moroccan education system and attempts to explain whether these attitudes are driven by intrinsic forces or by the language policy orientations set by decision makers. To do so, 1,477 respondents belonging to different school levels and disciplines completed a survey about their frequency of use and mastery of languages, as well as their preferences of language use in the future. Findings show that Moroccan students have positive attitudes towards all languages and would like to use foreign languages for instrumental purposes. They also show that such positive attitudes do not depend on the level of mastery of these languages, nor on their use as mediums of instruction or communication. The findings imply that attitudes towards languages in Morocco are rooted in factors beyond the official policy orientations.

Keywords: Morocco, students' attitudes towards languages, motivation

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Morocco is a country in which different local and foreign languages have been used and taught for many decades due to its history and its proximity to Europe and other African countries which use foreign languages either as *lingua franca* or for international communication. In all its education reforms, the Moroccan education system has always insisted on reinforcing local languages and providing foreign language instruction from the early years of education, just as the two milestones of the National Charter of Education and Training (COSEF, 1999) and the Emergency Plan 2009-2011 (Ministry of Education, 2008) did. The same also holds true for the 2015-2030 Strategic Vision (Higher Council, 2015) and the latest Framework of Law 51.17 (Official Bulletin, 2019), both of which claim that they aim to “ensure that students at the end of high school master the Arabic language, communicate in the Amazigh language, know at least two languages.” (Higher Council, 2015, p. 17; Official Bulletin, 2019, p. 5632).

However, instead of designing and following a clear language policy to create harmony among existing languages in the country, the Moroccan government has structured only the number of years and hours of local and foreign language teaching and learning at the different levels of schooling without clearly determining the rationale behind the teaching of foreign languages. This confusing situation has resulted in a situation in which languages compete rather than complete one another or what is termed as language conflicts (Ennaji, 2002; Zouhir, 2013, Bullock, 2014; Jaafari, 2019, *inter alias*). It has also resulted in a situation in which the government invests a lot and students and teachers put a lot of efforts without any commensurate outcomes. This disproportion between investments and outcomes is termed *a major source of wastage* (Salmi, 1987), an ideological matrix termed *political coherence of educational incoherence* (Boum, 2008), whose effects remain counterproductive, a feeling of *anomie* (Bouzidi, 1989), and of *ambivalence* (Boutieri, 2011). Concretely, this unbalanced situation has resulted in limited language achievements (Bouziane, 2018), unequal opportunities in the learning of languages (Bouziane, 2020) and counterproductive effects especially on science students who, after studying science disciplines in Arabic at primary and secondary school levels, shift to literary streams at university level because of their limited proficiency in French (Bouziane & Rguibi, 2018).

This article tries to understand better the status of different languages in Morocco from various students' perspectives. It investigates the students' attitudes towards the most used languages in Morocco. The languages in question are Standard Arabic (SA), the Moroccan Arabic (MA or what is usually termed *Darija*), Amazigh (AMZ or the language which used to be called *Berber*), French (FR), and English (ENG). More languages are taught in Morocco but due to their limited use and spread, they are not included in this study.

The choice of the above languages is based on their status in the Moroccan social, political, and educational scenes. The Moroccan Arabic is widely used by almost all Moroccans and only a few speak solely one of the three varieties of Amazigh on a daily basis. Both Arabic and Amazigh are official languages, as decreed by the 2011 Constitution. They are taught, especially Standard Arabic, from the very start of school education. The generalisation of the teaching of Amazigh at primary school is still in progress. French and English are the most taught foreign languages in the education system. French is studied as the first foreign language in primary and secondary education (from K-2 to K-12) and is used as a language of instruction at tertiary level in most higher education institutions. It is also used as the language of business and correspondence in the private sector. English is taught as a second foreign language in the last year of middle school and the three years of high school education. It is also taught in master and doctoral programmes all over the country and it is the medium of instruction in the departments of English in all universities and in few higher education private institutions. Its introduction at the Fourth Grade (K4) in primary school is part of the 2015-2030 Strategic Vision but it has not yet been implemented. Within this framework, Moroccan learners' language preferences remain at the heart of the hot discussions on the linguistic scene in Morocco. Most of the opinions on this issue are mainly based on personal intuitions and political, ethnic, or religious agendas. To contribute to the debate, this article brings the students' voices to the fore and attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What attitudes do Moroccan students in secondary and tertiary levels of education hold towards the five widely used languages in Morocco?
2. What factors nurture such attitudes?

The above research questions are set to verify the hypothesis that the Moroccan decision makers have designed a top-down language policy that may not affect the learners' attitudes or preferences towards languages.

Literature Review

Research on attitudes towards languages is not a new area of research in Morocco. Actually, ever since the Moroccan government decided to launch the process of Arabisation of many disciplines in primary and secondary schools, this area has attracted many researchers' attention (see Bentahila, 1983, Chapters 1 and 2; and Ennaji, 2005, General Introduction and Chapter 1). Even before this process of Arabisation was put in place, there had been a tough conflict of languages in Morocco. During the protectorate era, the French colonisers needed employees and thus established schools in which French was the main target language. The nationalists, on the other hand, created parallel schools which mainly provided education in Standard Arabic as they considered it to be the language of national identity and authenticity and the language that preserves the religious legacy (Salmi, 1985). This early conflict still makes Moroccans associate French with the colonisers (Guebels, 1976; Sadiqi, 1991; Hyde, 1994; Tomaščík, 2010; Buckner, 2011; Jaafari, 2019; *inter alias*).

Morocco's multilingual character has given spring to academic research that tries to understand the Moroccans' attitudes, including language learning motivation, towards the languages to which they are exposed. Some studies have investigated these attitudes through the lenses of Arabisation (Abbassi, 1977; Gravel, 1979; Elbiad, 1985 *inter alias*) or from the perspective of bilingualism (Bentahila, 1983). Bentahila (1983) overviews various studies, including his own, that investigate the Moroccans' language attitudes and their choice of Arabic and French and concludes that even balanced bilinguals see languages as having distinct roles. He finds that "... it appears that French is associated with the modern world of science and technology, while Arabic represents more traditional values, the cultural and religious heritage of the Arabs" (Bentahila, 1983, p 39). In another study where he collects data through a sentence completion task- adapted from Ervin-Tripp's (1967) test, the eighty balanced bilinguals in his sample used the Arabic version of the test to complete sentences that deal with religious matters and the Arab culture more than the French version. This finding results in the

author claiming that “Moroccans are both bilingual and bicultural; they use their two languages in the same general environment, but they associate each with different values and beliefs” (Bentahila, 1983, p. 49). These studies confirm that language choice depends largely on different factors such as:

- the interlocutor (monolingual / bilingual, stranger, doctor, etc.),
- the setting (where the language is being used),
- the topic being discussed (religious matters are predominantly discussed in Arabic but scientific and technical areas in French),
- communicative purpose or mood (e.g. telling jokes, insulting, etc. is mostly done in Moroccan Arabic),
- performing certain tasks (e.g. taking a driving test, receiving education or sitting for examinations mostly happen in French),
- media (on radio, TV, and in newspapers French is more frequently used than Arabic), etc.

French, in these studies, is then used as a sign of formality and MA as a sign of informality or for daily interactions (Ennaji, 2002, 2005). Bullock (2014), who brings testimonials of twelve Moroccan voices through interviewing them, concludes that each language used in Morocco carries ideologies related to family, ethnic or religious representations, or as she states: “it is clear that languages represent far more than simply means of communication. They are potent symbols that stand for family, nation, state, and God” (Bullock, 2014: 100). Marley (2004) shows no doubt for the multilingual future of Morocco and reports that the students in Morocco are more instrumentally motivated towards foreign languages and that explains their interest in having both French and English in their curricula. Bouzidi’s (1989) study confirms the same preferences.

Further research reveals other nuisances in the Moroccans' attitudes towards Arabic and French. Chakrani (2011) studies covert attitudes towards SA, MA, and French in Morocco. Using a Matched Guise Test which is based on a cluster of traits referred to as status traits and solidarity traits, the 57 balanced bilinguals of Arabic and French who served as respondents in the study clearly preferred French to SA and MA for status traits. Chakrani considers this finding “not surprising, given the fact that the projection and ideology of modernity are strictly associated with French” (Chakrani, 2011, p. 171).

But what is surprising, for him, is that French turns out to share solidarity traits with MA and scores higher than SA in them. Chahhou (2014) claims that “Moroccan multilingualism is not a sign of cultural prosperity but one of sociolinguistic disease” (p. 31). He justifies his claim by referring to the political context of officialising Arabic and launching the Arabisation process to concede to nationalists in the post-independence era, introducing French-Arabic bilingual programmes to concede to the francophone elite that carried the legacy of the Protectorate, and officialising the Amazigh as a result of the Amazigh people’s pressure and the aftermath of the Arab Spring. For the same author, such official measures have little impact on language preference or daily use of the languages in Morocco. Yearous (2012) confirms the Moroccan students’ preference of French as their language of instruction (70% of her sample) as they believe French is necessary for their future (80%) and that their children should learn French (96%). Similarly, Anderson (2013), who studies the Moroccan attitudes towards AMZ, MA, SA, French, English, and Spanish, concluded that the top ranks of importance are distributed between French and English. However, in the mastery of speaking and reading these two languages follow MA and SA, which come first and second in rank, respectively. English comes at the top of the list of the growing languages in use, the language Moroccans will use in the future, the language the children should learn and the language of Facebook, followed by French and Spanish, and only then by the local languages. These top languages keep their rank in the frequency of use in email writing, text messaging, watching TV, listening to music or reading. The researcher concludes that the attitudes are shifting over time and that “the rise of English is challenging the dichotomy between French as the language of Western culture and Modern Standard Arabic as the language of Islamic identity” (Anderson, 2013, p. 243).

Another body of research has investigated the relationship between social class and language attitudes in Morocco. Chakrani and Huang (2014) investigate how language use is aligned with language attitudes in Morocco. To do so, they administered a questionnaire to 454 university students belonging to different social classes from Arabophone and Amazighophone contexts and from schools where subjects are taught in French or SA. They show that there is correlation between language use and attitudes among French-taught university students. Thus, education tends to shape the students’

attitudes. They also find that there is a class divide among social classes as to language use outside the classroom. The high-class students interact in French inside and outside the classroom and middle- and high-class students favour French as the medium of instruction whereas lower class students prefer French only classes. They also report inclination towards foreign languages by upper class students and towards SA by lower classes. Despite some variations, the respondents in their study show strong support for French, followed by English and then by SA. The latter receives far less attention by all the classes (upper-, 5%; middle-, 7.1%; and lower-class, 8.3%). In the same vein, a survey by *L'Economiste* (2011) on a sample of young Moroccans (n=1,046), aged 16 to 29 years representing all the regions of Morocco, confirms the role of social class in learning languages. The respondents' reactions to a question about the language in which they read confirm that the higher the socioeconomic status is, the more the learners read in foreign languages. Conversely, the lower it is, the more the youth read in Arabic. Noticeably, English and Spanish seem to be the most elitist languages with a wide gap between the top percentages and the bottom ones. The Moroccan youth in this survey consider French to be the language of prestige and job opportunities. However, in their informal interactions, they code switch in MA and French or English, but they never do so in SA.

As mentioned above, English is gradually gaining ground on other foreign languages in Morocco. Studies have always shown that Moroccan students hold positive attitudes towards English. The documentation of this preference dates to the 70s when research showed that Moroccan learners showed preference for English compared to other foreign languages (Guebels, 1976; Ezzaki et al., 1985; Sbaihi, 2001). This explains why university students chose to join the department of English over other departments (Ouakrime, 1986; Dahbi, 2003; Mekouar, 2020 *inter alias*). Sadiqi (1991) confirms that there was a strong connection between education and the spread of English in the 1980s. At that time, as Sadiqi explains, many new English departments opened and attracted more students, and so did many language centres. She attributes the interest in that language to forces such as the international status of English, the increasing number of economic agreements with the UK and the USA in the 1960s, and tourism. Later, Buckner (2008), who surveyed 324 Moroccan English language learners (ELL) from private and public universities and language centres and 97 control group (CG) students

comprising students who would not major in English, showed how Moroccan learners value the learning of English even if they want to major in a language other than English. In a more recent study, the same author (Buckner, 2011) confirms the same findings and shows that the Moroccans, regardless of their social class belonging, are motivated to learn English for instrumental purposes such as better economic and job opportunities. However, she reports that while the upper classes are interested in English to keep their prestige and to open to the global economy, lower classes use it to escape their limitations in French and to seek positions such as related to the teaching of English. Errihani (2017), who shares this view, claims that English is gaining grounds in the Moroccan linguistic scene and that “all indications at this time point to a strong shift in Morocco’s language education policy from a focus on Arabic and French as the traditional mediums of education to English” (p. 130). Particularly in higher education, recent research studies confirm the Moroccan students’ inclination to English. Belhiah (2020) studies the Moroccan students’ motivations towards English, through a sample of 286 from five universities in Morocco and suggests ten qualitative patterns emerging from the collected data, namely “(i) Language attitudes and beliefs, (ii) Cultural interest, (iii) Ideal L2 self, (iv) Instrumentality, (v) International orientation, (vi) Language facility, (vii) Linguistic vitality, (viii) Social milieu, (ix) School Milieu, and (x) Multilingual orientation” (Belhiah, 2020: 40). He then concludes that English is growing rapidly in Morocco and that the students prefer it for its global status and affordance of learning on the net at the detriment of other languages, especially their mother tongue, Arabic. Amrous (2020), on the other hand, has surveyed a sample of 72 Moroccan students’ preference of English and has found that such preference is based on *Attitude toward learning* the target language more than *Ought-to-self* and *Cultural interest*. He came to this finding based on both regression and post hoc comparisons coefficients of the three variables as calculated by comparing employee and non-employee students in their entrance and exit years. In this same vein, Azhar (2020) starts from the Bourdieu’s premises of cultural capital theory and interviews 30 Semester 6 Moroccan learners on their motivations to the choice of English as a major in university. His findings confirm that in their process of language learning, the Moroccan students acquire the three forms of cultural capital as set in the theory that informs the study: “embodied forms (language skills, accent, and behaviors), the objectified forms (cultural products, music,

clothes, nicknames, etc.), and the institutionalized forms (B.A., M.A., or Ph.D. degrees in English Studies or related fields)” (p. 79).

The above studies have reported that Moroccans never fail to show their positive attitudes towards learning foreign languages. This preference is determined by factors such as social class, the type of school, family, context, interlocutor, the topic of discussion, etc. While the education policy encourages the learning of Arabic, including through Arabisation of various subjects, and opening towards Amazigh and foreign languages, students may have different intrinsic forces for their language preferences. None of the reported studies has investigated whether these two trends match and whether the top-down policy orients the students’ inclination to languages. This article tries to fill this gap using a larger sample of young people at the secondary and tertiary levels of education.

Methodology

This empirical study relies on a survey as a strategy of research. The answers to different questions by so many students yield patterns which will result in trends upon which evidence-based conclusions can be drawn.

1,477 Moroccan students from the Ben M’Sik area in Casablanca participated in this study. This area is known for being inhabited by a mixture of people coming from different regions of Morocco. Also, being a suburban area, it is known for gathering a variety of social classes but with a tendency of gathering far more low-class inhabitants than any other classes.

The students are distributed by gender as follows (two students did not disclose their gender):

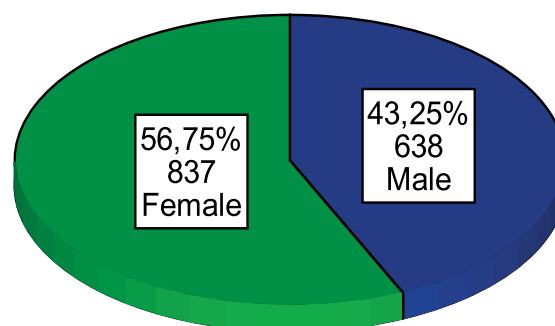


Figure 1. Sample distribution by gender

These students belong to different streams of study as the following table shows:

Table 1

Sample distribution by field of study

Level	Stream	N	Percentage
Tertiary: School of Letters and Humanities	Arabic Studies	90	6.09%
	French Studies	96	6.50%
	English Studies	196	13.27%
	Islamic Studies	92	6.25%
	Philosophy	107	7.24%
High School	Literature and Humanities	398	26.95%
	Sciences	498	33.70%
	Total	1,477	100%

The students in this study come from different disciplines. The tertiary level covers all the levels within each stream (students from Semesters 2, 4, and 6) but those in the secondary schools represent almost all the disciplines but their levels, at the time of administering the questionnaire, were Baccalaureate 1 and Baccalaureate 2.

The choice of the disciplines at the tertiary level is balanced. The students from the language studies programmes are assumed to demonstrate positive attitudes to their respective language of instruction: e.g. the students from the Islamic Studies are likely to show more positive attitudes towards Arabic and those of philosophy are likely to show positive attitudes towards the language they use or will use later. Similarly, in secondary school, the Literature and Humanities and Sciences streams are investigated because some of the former will show inclination towards any language they would choose for their studies and the latter will tend to choose French because it is used as a language of instruction in most schools of sciences, commerce and management, engineering, technology, medicine, etc.

A questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire included, in addition to questions related to demographics questions that evolved round the use of the five languages – Amazigh, Standard Arabic, *Darija*, French, and English – at home and with people close to them such as classmates and friends. Other questions had to do with the importance of languages, and whether the attitudes are nurtured by instrumental or integrative motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Another question dealt with self-

assessed mastery of the languages under study except Darija which is not taught at school.

After the collection of data, the coded questions were processed in Excel and SPSS for further analyses. The percentages, based on descriptive statistics and displayed in graphs, are used to answer the first research question. Chi-square and correlation are used to work out the relationship between students' gender and specialty on the one hand and their attitudes or mastery of languages on the other.

Findings

Most of the findings pertaining to Moroccan students' attitudes towards languages and the factors that drive those attitudes are reported in percentages. The findings show the frequency of use of languages, the degree of importance of languages for the respondents, their mastery of languages, and the type of their motivation to languages (instrumental or integrative).

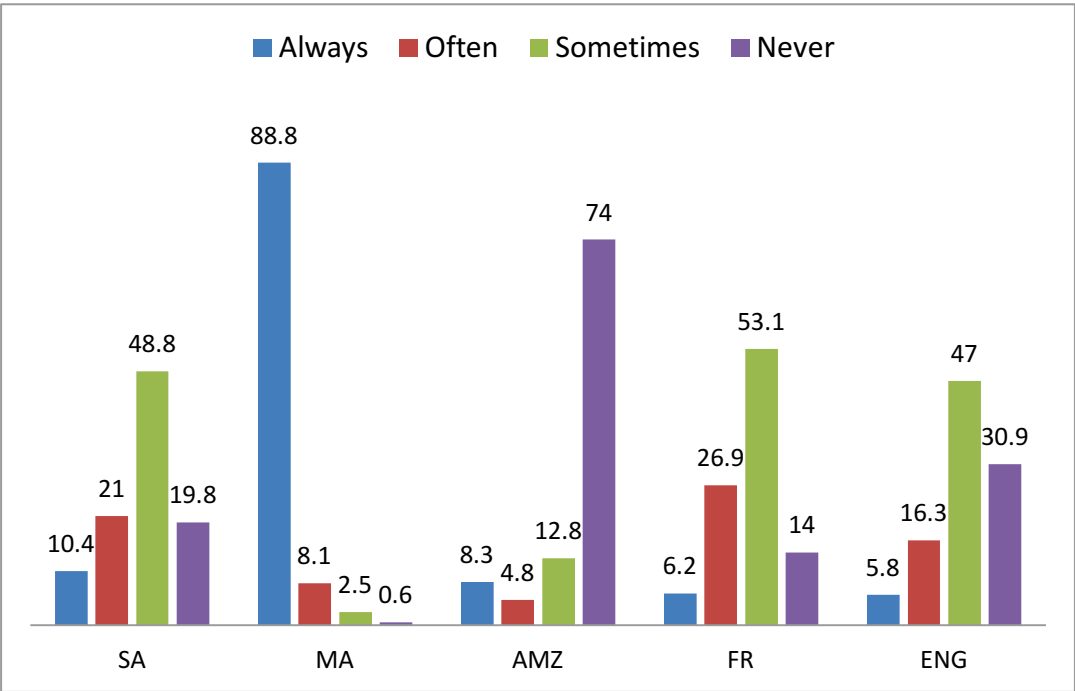


Figure 2. Use of languages by Moroccan students at home

Figure 2 shows that most students use MA at home but other languages are also used at varying degrees. The striking finding is the scarce use of Amazigh at home (three quarters of the respondents never use it), though at least 26% of the students speak it but only 13% report that they always or often use it. The MA is used with relatives,

friends, and colleagues or classmates. However, MA and AMZ are more used inside home with family members and relatives whereas foreign languages are more used outside home with classmates or colleagues and friends:

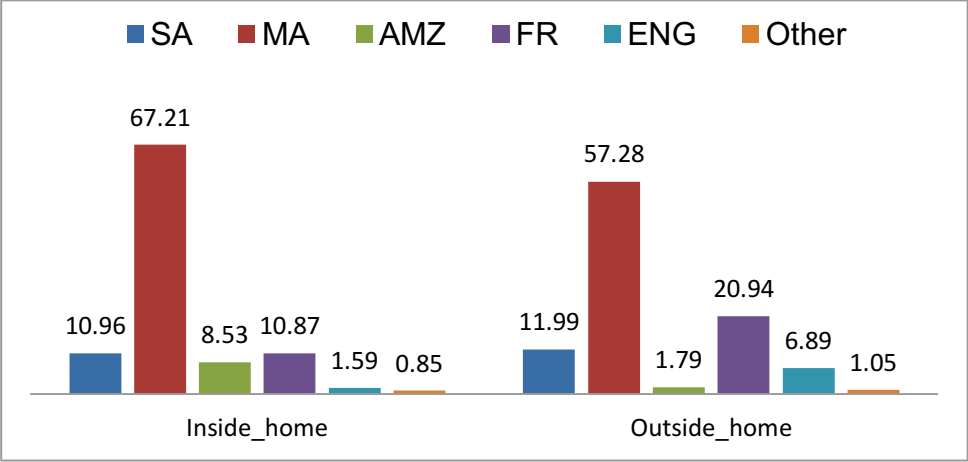


Figure 3. Language use by Moroccan students inside and outside home

The language which is the least used outside home is AMZ, given the reasonably high percentage of the students who speak it (about 26%). MA is less used in contrast to other languages which are more used outside home. For example, French is used outside home twice as much as it is used inside and English almost three times.

The use of languages determines their importance to the students under study as the following graph shows:

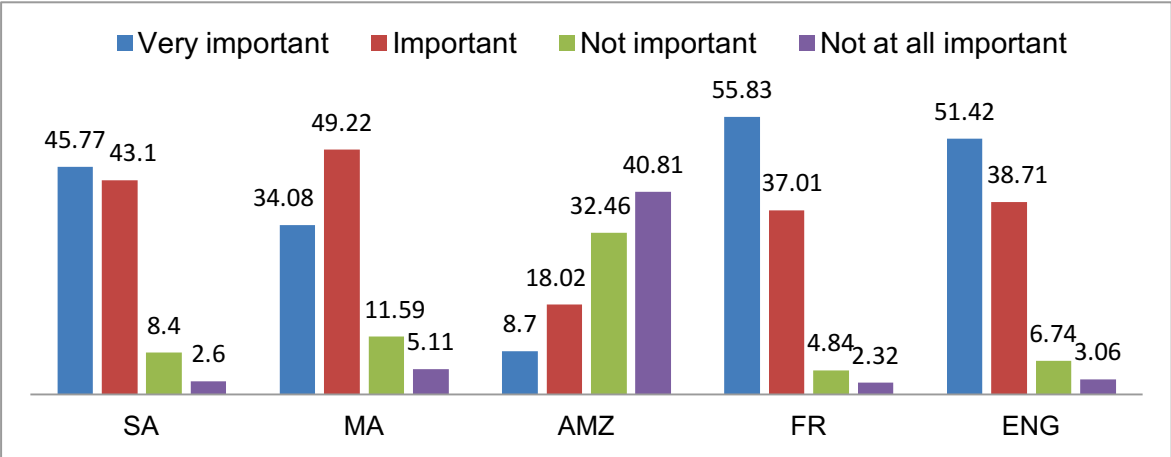


Figure 4. Importance of languages for Moroccan students

Apart from Amazigh, which scores a very low degree of importance, all the other languages are granted high importance. Only 11%, 17%, 7%, and 10% deem SA, MA, FR, and ENG, respectively, unimportant. This reflects the importance given by Moroccan students to local and foreign languages. These findings are quite identical to those found

by Et-tahiri (2019) who asked the same question to 520 Moroccan university students from different disciplines. The details of importance of languages in relation with department are reported in the following table:

Table 2

Importance of languages for students by stream of studies in the tertiary level

Department	Language	Not at all important	Not important	Important	Very important
Arabic Studies	Arabic	0 0.0%	2 2.2%	22 24.7%	65 73%
Islamic Studies	Arabic	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	11 12%	81 88%
French Studies	French	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	31 32.3%	65 67.7%
English Studies	English	5 2.6%	4 2%	44 22.4%	143 73%

It is clear that the tertiary level students give due importance to the languages in which they specialize, as is the case with the students from the Arabic, French, and English Departments in their respective languages. Islamic Studies Department students value Arabic because it is the language of instruction in their department and it is also the language of the Holy Book (Qoran) and the Hadith (see Ennaji, 2002 for a debate of this issue).

Table 3

Importance of languages for students by stream of study in high school

Stream of study	Language	Not at all important	Not important	Important	Very important
Sciences	French	12 2.4%	22 4.4%	154 31%	309 62.2%
Literature and Humanities	French	11 2.8%	23 5.8%	138 34.8%	225 56.7%
Sciences	Standard Arabic	18 3.7%	56 11.4%	239 48.8%	177 36.1%
Literature and Humanities	Standard Arabic	11 2.8%	28 7%	180 45.2%	179 45%
Sciences	English	19 4%	28 5.9%	174 36.9%	251 53.2%
Literature and Humanities	English	17 4.3%	40 10.2%	157 39.9%	179 45.5%

Unlike the students in the tertiary level, students in high schools do not value their language of instruction so much (see the bold figures in Table 3 above). However, they value the languages of their future studies. For example, the students of sciences give more importance to French because it is the language of instruction in the streams they are likely to choose at university. They also value English because they know they will need it for further studies or to consult references in their scientific or technical university streams. Students in the Literature and Humanities streams value Arabic because many of them will go to academic schools of arts, humanities, law, economics, and social sciences and they will receive their academic input mainly in Arabic, followed by French and then by English.

Another parameter to investigate was whether there is a relationship between language preference and gender. In fact, the analysis of the findings revealed that there is a significant relationship in all the languages except English, as the following table shows:

Table 4
Students' preference of languages by gender

	Chi-square	df	Sig.
English	4.475	3	.215
Standard Arabic	9.710	3	.021
French	14.610	3	.002
Amazigh	24.983	3	.000
Moroccan Arabic	18.091	3	.000

Except for English, which is appreciated in a similar way by males and females, the general trend is that females like languages more than males, as Figure 5 shows:

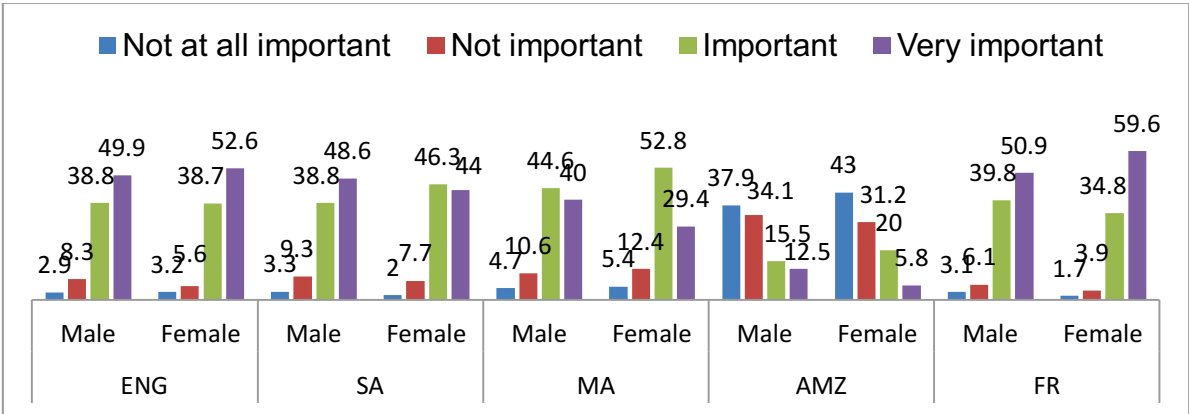


Figure 5. Details of students' language preference by gender

As Figure 5 shows, the only language in which females have demonstrated less interest is Amazigh (the same holds true for male students too). This may result from the fact that it is neither used for studies as a medium of instruction nor for daily interaction with friends as Casablanca is an Arabic-speaking city (see more explanation in Table 7 below).

Another factor to investigate in this study was whether the positive attitude towards the language at hand is related to its mastery. For this, the students were asked to rate themselves on a scale of 0 to 4 with the numbers representing levels of mastery as follows: 0= do not know; 1= basics; 2= intermediate; 3= advanced; and 4= native-like.

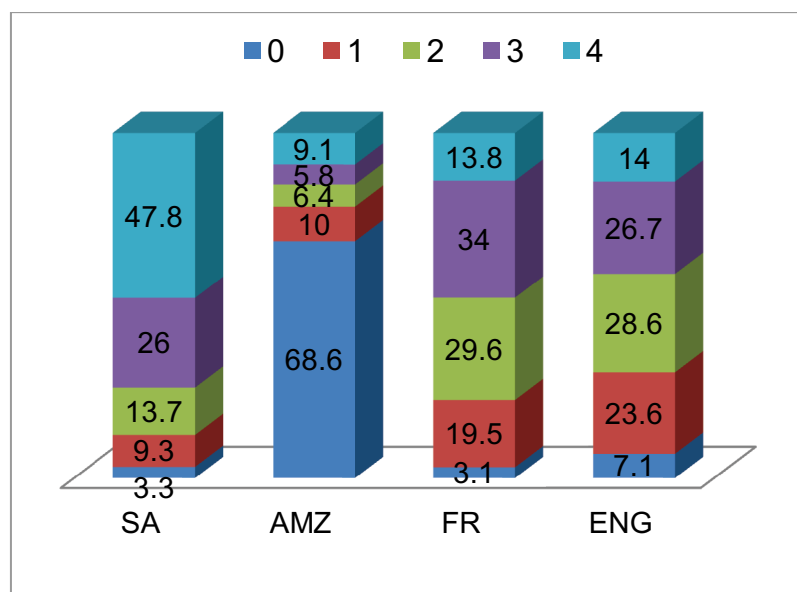


Figure 6. Self-evaluation of mastery of languages by Moroccan students

Figure 6 shows how Moroccan students, after so many years of learning foreign languages (French and English in this case), still think they have levels ranging mostly between basics (1) and intermediate (2). Surprisingly, some students have low levels in their mother tongue, SA, and almost 70% do not know anything in the official language, Amazigh (AMZ), which they are supposed to learn in primary school. A close look at the students of the Islamic Studies stream reveals that they know more English than French and, as expected, they are good at SA, their medium of instruction (see Table 5).

Apparently, these students mainly focus on Arabic but they do not underestimate the importance of languages as a big majority of them also believe other languages are very important or important (see the table above).

Table 5

Mastery of languages by the Islamic Studies students

	0 (do not know)	1 (basics)	2 (intermediate)	3 (advanced)	4 (native-like)
SA	0	0	8	25	58
	0.0%	0.0%	8.8%	27.5%	63.7%
ENG	19	48	20	5	0
	20.7%	52.2%	21.7%	5.4%	0.0%
FR	7	57	17	11	0
	7.6%	62%	18.5%	12%	0.0%
AMZ	65	4	1	10	12
	70.7%	4.3%	1.1%	10.9%	13%

It was originally assumed that the students who study a certain language must think it is important. However, in the three departments under study very weak correlations have been found between the importance of languages to students and their mastery of those languages, as the following table shows:

Table 6

Correlation between medium of instruction and language importance by students' Departments

Department	N	Spearman's rho	Sig.
Arabic Studies	89	.18	.09
French Studies	96	.16	.08
English Studies	196	-.06	.33

However, unlike the results of data analysis by students' departments, the study revealed significant correlation between students' language preferences and their mastery of the language at hand, as the following table shows:

Table 7

Correlation between students' mastery of a language and its importance at all levels

Language	Spearman's rho	Sig.
Arabic	.233	.000
Amazigh	.446	.000
French	.250	.000
English	.187	.000

Table 7 confirms that the mastery of a language reflects its importance to the learner. Except for English, which is important to all and therefore the correlation coefficient is relatively low, the other languages have shown stronger correlation values.

Specifically, AMZ has scored the highest correlation value which supports the claim that the students think that its importance is associated to its mastery.

Another factor that reveals a positive attitude towards a language is the student's intention to preserve this language by using it with a partner. The students have shown such intentions, which are mapped out in the following graph:

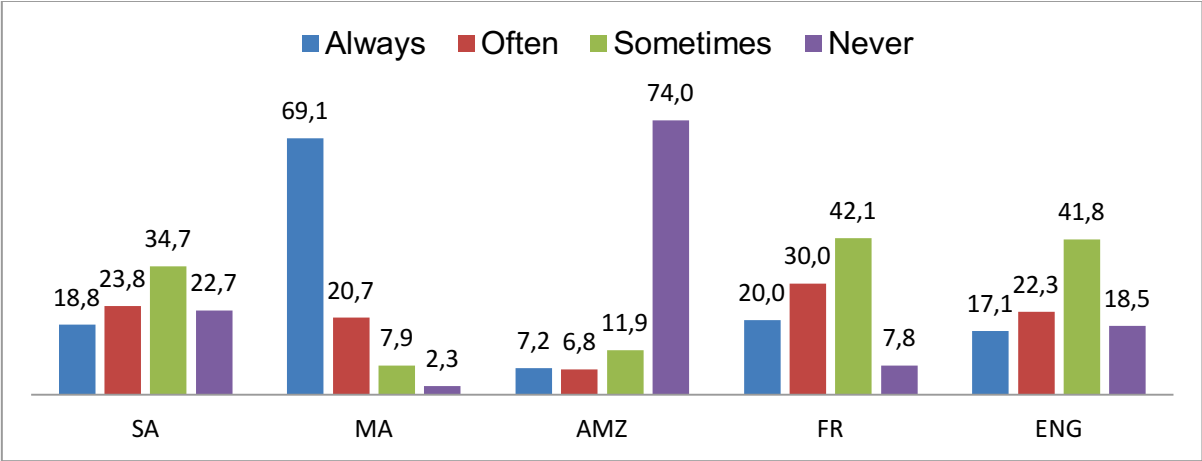


Figure 7. Use of languages with partner in the future

The analysis of the data concerning the use of a language with partners, spouse, in the future has revealed an important factor shaping the students' attitudes towards languages. It is shown that the Moroccans will use the languages in the following order: MA first, followed by French, then English, then SA and then Amazigh. This finding implies that the students identify with the Moroccan Arabic as their mother tongue and favour foreign languages they deem useful for their careers and lives (see Figure 8 below). Only 26% of the students will use Amazigh with their partners. However, the order differs when the students are asked about the use of languages with their children.

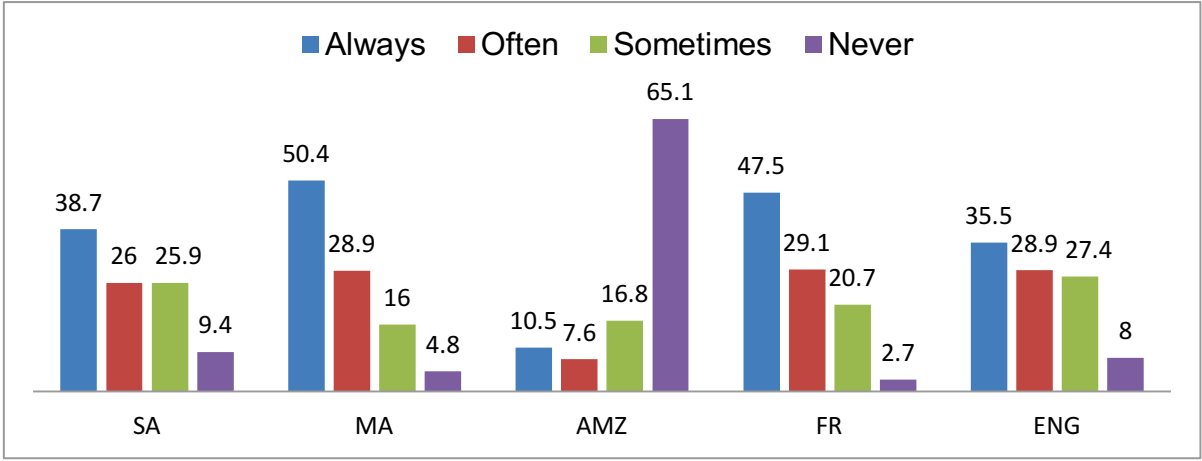


Figure 8. Students' use of languages with children in the future

Thirty-five per cent of the respondents intend to use Amazigh with their children and this percentage exceeds the number of the students with the Amazigh origin (26% said they used it at home, see Figure 2 above) in the sample. The striking finding is that the number of students who will use foreign languages with their children is far higher than those who will use Arabic, the official language. These students prefer foreign languages for their importance for their children’s education and professional lives later (see more reasons in Table 9 below). The highest score has gone for MA because it is the language of daily interactions with the students’ immediate background; it is followed by French, SA and then English. The mastery of languages must play an important role in this choice.

A further indicator to investigate is why the students want to study foreign languages. The students have chosen the following reasons:

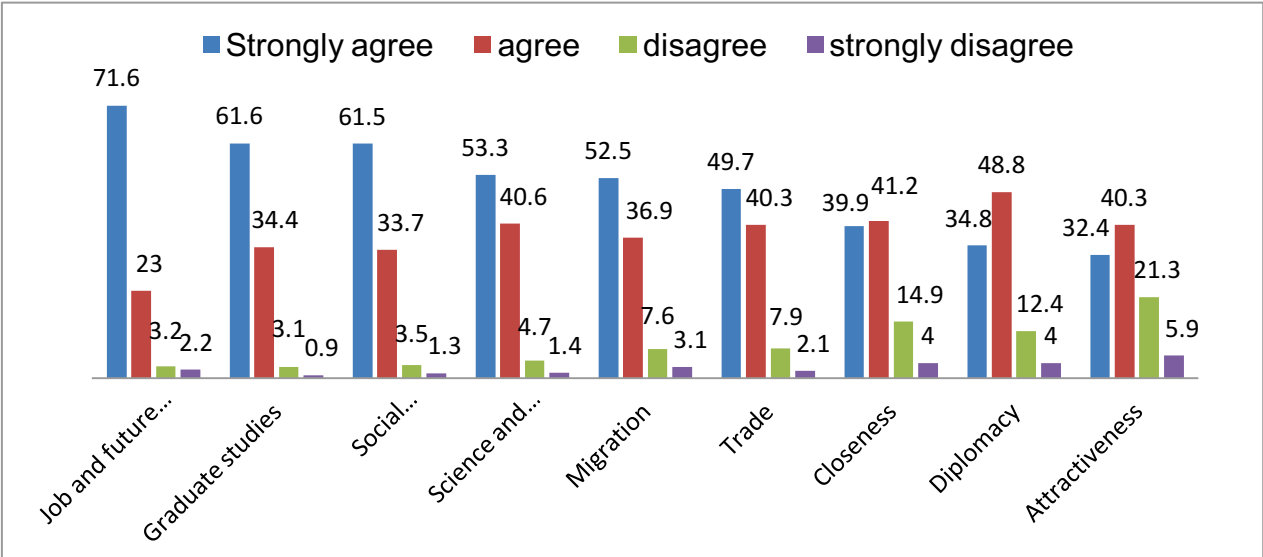


Figure 9. Instrumental reasons for students learning foreign languages

The high scores in Graph 9 lend support to the fact that a good command of foreign languages offers multiple opportunities for development and self-realisation. Actually, the reasons for learning foreign languages that receive the highest scores (the addition of results for *Strongly Agree* and *Agree* equals 95% or more) are those which have immediate effect on individuals such as finding a job, or pursuing further studies, or having more access to science and technology. Other reasons that serve communities or the country or bring communities closer received less attention, though the added value of *Agree* and *Strongly Agree* options ranges between 70 and 90%. The integrative reasons have received quite the same percentages.

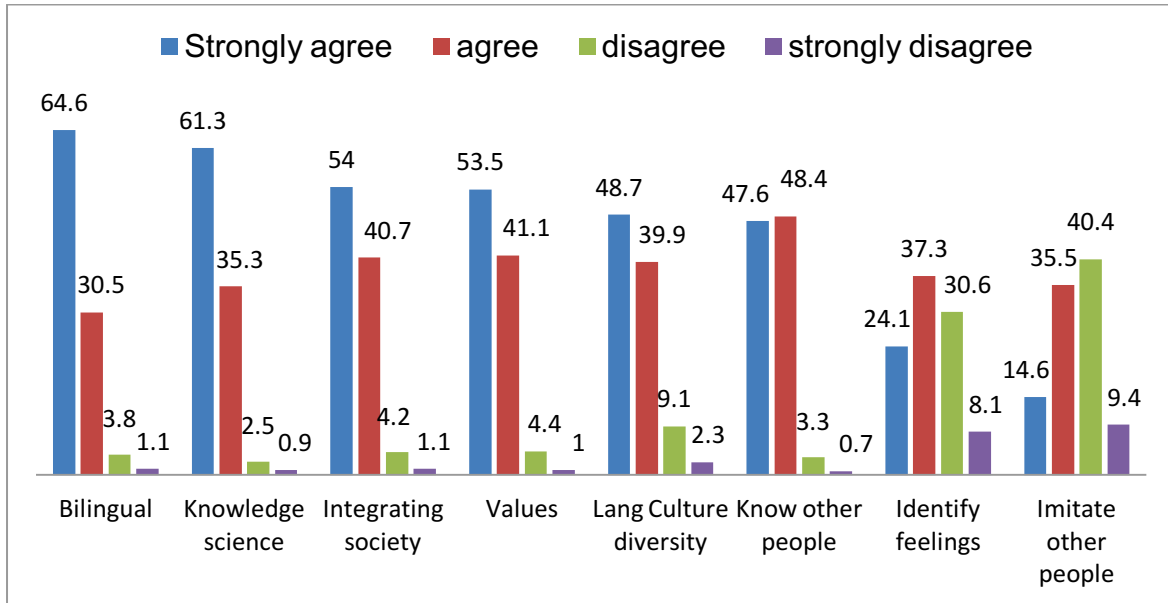


Figure 10. Integrative reasons for students learning foreign languages

Similarly, the factors that affect individuals immediately have received the highest scores, namely becoming bilingual and knowing more about science. Also, those factors that affect communities received lower scores. When *Strongly agree* and *Agree* are added up, the scores for the integrative reasons for learning foreign languages are distinctively high, with values as follows: I would like to become bilingual 95%; Knowing other languages can help me have access to others' cultures and sciences 97%; Knowing another language will help me integrate another society 95%; Knowing another language will help me spread social and cultural values 95%; Diversity of languages means cultural diversity and this interests me 89%; Knowing another language will help me know other people 96%, Knowing another language will help me identify with other people and share their feelings 61%, and Knowing another language will help me imitate other people 50%.

Figures 9 and 10 show that Moroccan students have both instrumental and integrative motives for learning foreign languages. The high percentage of Moroccan migrants and the aspiration of the Moroccan youth to seek better opportunities in countries in which these languages are spoken may explain these preferences for the respective foreign languages. Also, the less promising opportunities that are related to the official languages may have triggered such data results.

The overall findings are linked to the answers to the two research questions (see above). As an answer to the first research question it could be argued that Moroccan

students at all levels generally hold positive attitudes towards languages and tend to prefer those that help them reach their personal objectives. Not only do they believe in the importance of languages but they also use all the languages they study, though at varying degrees. However, while they use Moroccan Arabic on a daily basis and intend to use it with their family partners and children in the future, they do not do so with Standard Arabic. They tend to value languages according to their role in their studies and the opportunities they offer in the future. They prefer foreign languages for both integrative and instrumental motives. This echoes Elinson's (2013) comments: "Despite more than fifty years of official Arabization policies, knowledge of French and, increasingly, English is viewed as necessary for success in a wide range of fields including science, technology, and business." (p. 716). These students are far from being chauvinistic as they value all languages, including those they neither study nor use daily. The only language they deem unimportant is Amazigh, but that may not reflect a negative attitude towards this language. Rather, the reason may be related to the data which was collected from a background where Moroccan Arabic is mostly used and, therefore, the respondents feel there is no need for Amazigh. These results, however, should be checked in an Amazigh-speaking background for further verification. Generally, these findings reinforce the fact that Morocco has been and will remain a multilingual country.

The factors that nurture positive attitudes towards languages are closely related to individuals and their close backgrounds. A major factor that nurtures the positive attitudes towards language in Morocco is the prestige that languages are granted. It has been shown in the review of literature that upper-class students are interested in and master foreign languages whereas lower-class are almost monolingual with more focus on SA, the latter being regarded as less prestigious. The other factor that nurtures more inclination to some foreign languages lies in the instrumental functions of these languages. Moroccan students consider some languages such as French and English to be a key to their future. The high school students prefer French as they believe it will provide opportunities for their study aspirations (see Bouziane & Rguibi, 2018). Another factor can be inferred from the students' answers to questions concerning the reasons for their integrative and instrumental language learning motivation. Their positive answers to both types of questions implicitly show that they understand that learning

another language helps to explore different peoples and cultures. This breeds mutual respect and understanding across societies. This factor also needs more investigation.

The factors that nurture the students' preferences to languages are far from being related to language policy orientations; rather, they are related to students' personal objectives. Whereas policy makers believe that languages, especially official ones, represent signs of identity and authenticity, the students consider languages from more instrumental perspectives. They partially care about language continuity or about the mother tongue as a symbol of national identity preservation as they exclude both official languages from their use with their family partners or children in the future or even for their daily interactions. Seemingly, the respondents believe that the future of their children depends more on foreign languages, namely French and English, than on the local ones. This clearly implies that the education system seems to have failed in implementing the reforms it has designed and articulated in the Moroccan official discourse (see the introduction above). While the decision makers try to boost Arabic and Amazigh as official languages in Morocco, students believe in foreign languages as ways of competition and openness to new cultures and to the world at large. Therefore, the hypothesis set for this study, Moroccan decision makers have designed a top-down language policy that may not affect the learners' attitudes or preferences towards languages, is confirmed. This finding is in harmony with Jaafari's (2019) wonder of whether "the multilingual situation in Morocco has ever been taken as the starting point for educational policy makers" (p. 139).

However, the issue of the Moroccan learners' choice between French or English needs further scrutiny as it seems far more complex. Despite the spread of English in Morocco and its ease of learning both in formal (Benzehaf, 2017) and in non-formal settings (Dressman, 2019), French still predominates the Moroccan linguistic scene. The students see it as an opening for future studies and career prospects in Morocco and abroad. The Moroccan students' aspirations to foreign languages face two important challenges. First the Moroccan learners' level in foreign languages is too low to enable them to pursue their undergraduate studies or get a job in which such languages are used as mediums of communication (Bouziane, 2018). Second, English is generally taught systematically in some areas of academic study that do not directly contribute to the development of the country such as language studies and humanities and less

systematically in other areas that do. Importantly, the implementation of delivering contents in English in other domains seems to face challenges of implementation (Nadri & Haoucha, 2020). However, the delivery of subjects related to business administration, technology and engineering are exclusively affordable to a tiny portion of the Moroccan society as they are provided in highly expensive and private institutions or abroad where the fees are too high for a large portion of Moroccans (Bouziane, 2011). These arguments reduce the Moroccan students' inclination towards foreign languages, at least those involved in this study, to mere hopes or even dreams. There is still hope for some, however. The students who can afford to follow science, technical or engineering streams in French can still develop their linguistic competencies in English but this remains more an individual initiative than an institutional and educational policy.

The last point which is worth raising is that despite the bulky number of studies conducted in an attempt to understand the Moroccan students' attitudes and motivation towards languages, local or foreign, this area remains ambivalent. Such ambivalence has its roots in the history of the education reforms and particularly in the introduction of Arabisation which has inherent contradictions (Boutieri, 2011). Further research is needed on history of some linguistic phenomena in Morocco such as Arabisation, bilingualism, code-switching, the role of languages in the Moroccan linguistic scene, the dynamics of languages and language conflicts that are subtle in Morocco, but they are becoming more and more serious over time. In short, the complexities of languages in Morocco and the ambivalent situation they have created throughout recurrent reforms require more research.

Conclusion

This study has shown that Moroccan students' attitudes towards languages lie outside the policy making spheres. These students are ready to study languages and consider them important but their selective approach follows instrumental considerations. A large body of research has shown that social class determines the interest in the foreign languages in upper class, albeit at the detriment of the mother tongues to a large extent, as foreign languages are considered languages of prestige. Surprisingly, the factors that nurture such preferences lie far beyond belonging to a department in which a certain language is used as a medium of instruction. They are related to how important and instrumental the language is for the learners themselves.

The recurrent reforms come and go with very little effect on the accumulating failures in the area of language teaching and learning. Particularly, other motives of the Moroccan learners' preference of English can be attributed to its status worldwide as a global language with a wide spread (Sadiqi, 1991). The abundance of online resources has facilitated the learning of English for many students in Morocco. The question on which decision makers should reflect is the future awaiting the official languages, SA and AMZ, if young generations start to consider them unimportant and thus not worth studying.

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