

Language in Politics: Exploring the Impact of Political Discourse on the Depiction and Reframing of Amazigh Language Ideologies in Morocco

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ABSTRACT: Speech plays a pivotal role in achieving political objectives and influencing the masses. The presence of Tamazight in Moroccan political discourse dates back to August 20, 1994, when King Hassan II publicly acknowledged the Amazigh language (Tamazight henceforth) as a prerequisite for Moroccan identity. In fact, many initiatives, especially those undertaken by Amazigh activists, have sought to institutionalize Tamazight since independence. However, the language policies adopted by successive post-independence governments have led to the language's underrepresentation. The 1994 Agadir Charter spearheaded the recognition of Tamazight, culminating in its constitutionalization in 2011 and establishing it as a significant area of Moroccan political discourse. For decades after independence, the Moroccan political discourse was mainly dominated by an Arabo-Islamic ideology that marginalized Tamazight, portraying it as a threat to national unity. This paper examines how political discourse constructs, de/legitimizes, and reshapes evolving Tamazight-related language ideologies in Morocco. By analyzing the shift from post-independence marginalization under Arab-centric linguistic policies to full constitutional recognition in 2011, this study offers critical insights into state-directed language planning and policy.

The landmark 2011 constitutional recognition has driven a paradigm shift centered on implementing top-down linguistic policies governing this important linguistic component. Following this trend, political discourse began to focus mainly on debates over the pace and quality of Tamazight instruction, its visibility in media outlets, and its use in public spaces. Generally, power dynamics influence political discourse, as politicians seek to communicate particular political messages, including linguistic issues, to manipulate others. Thus, Tamazight is approached politically through different ideological lenses that frame the Amazigh issue differently, delay the implementation of the related legal arsenal, and give rise to divergent and competing ideologies.

Drawing on critical discourse analysis (CDA), this paper explores the ideological mechanisms at work in contemporary political texts and policy debates concerning Tamazight. It examines the extent to which ongoing Moroccan political discourse affects the full integration of Tamazight and reinforces language ideologies. More specifically, the study fundamentally aims to identify how political discourse approaches the Amazigh component, both linguistically and culturally, and how this reshapes related Amazigh language ideologies nationwide.

KEYWORDS: Tamazight, Political discourse, Language ideology, Critical Discourse Analysis, Power dynamics.

I. INTRODUCTION

Morocco's linguistic landscape has long been a complex arena where political power, cultural identity, and multiple language ideologies intersect. Given that "language has always been a political issue" (Rahmani & Saeed, 2024, p. 2067), the ongoing debate over the status and recognition of Tamazight has added new dynamism to the subject in contemporary Moroccan political discourse. Historically, Tamazight was doubly marginalized, first during the French protectorate and later by language policies adopted throughout the postcolonial period.

Following Morocco's independence in 1956, state-building initiatives prioritized a highly centralized national identity rooted in Classical Arabic and driven by Arabization policies. Under this framework, Tamazight was marginalized in public institutions by the state's discriminatory, ideologically driven nation-building policies that advocated official monolingualism. Official discourse also portrayed it as a collection of nonstandardized, regional oral dialects. However, the 2011 constitutional reform marked a historic transition toward the officialization of Tamazight. Article 5 formally ended the post-independence Arabization policy, paving the way for a multilingual Moroccan linguistic system. It also formally recognized Tamazight as an official language alongside Arabic.

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This constitutional mandate was later implemented through Organic Law 26-16, which established a phased framework for integrating Tamazight into high-prestige, high-power domains, such as public administration, education, the judiciary, and mass media.

Organic Law 26.16, enacted by Dahir No. 1-19-121, laid the groundwork for granting Tamazight official status and set a 15-year deadline for its full integration. Immediately after the law's promulgation in the Official Bulletin on September 26, 2019, voices emerged criticizing the state's handling of Tamazight's official recognition. Amazigh activists expressed dissatisfaction, arguing that the eight-year wait for the law's final ratification calls into question the state's willingness and the credibility of the political parties that formed the government majority to officially recognize Tamazight.

Despite significant legislative developments, a substantial gap remains between constitutional recognition and everyday implementation. Legal sanction alone does not dismantle deeply entrenched language hierarchies. Political discourse, including royal addresses, parliamentary debates, political parties' manifestos, and public policy documents, is the primary arena for legitimizing or delegitimizing Tamazight-related language policies.

More recently, although legal frameworks formally grant Amazigh cultural and linguistic rights, implicit language ideologies embedded in Moroccan political discourse frequently limit the practical utility of these rights. Whether framed as a historical artifact requiring preservation and revitalization or as a functional medium for governance, the political institutionalization of Tamazight critically shapes public perception, institutional funding, and social inclusion.

II. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Historically, Tamazight is Morocco's oldest indigenous language (Chafik, 1982). It encompasses three main regional dialects: Tarifit, Tamazight, and Tashelhit. According to December 2024 data from the High Commission for Planning (HCP), Tashelhit is the most widely spoken Amazigh language in the country, accounting for 14.2% of the population, with a heavy concentration in southwestern Morocco, primarily in the Souss Valley, the High Atlas, and the Anti-Atlas. Tamazight represents the second-largest group at 7.4% of the national population. It is predominantly spoken throughout the Middle Atlas and in parts of the High Atlas mountains. Tarifit accounts for the smallest share at 3.2%, localized mainly in the northern Rif Mountains along the Mediterranean coast. Upon release, Amazigh activists immediately questioned the credibility of the census results, which reported that only 24.8% of the population spoke Amazigh dialects. This figure sharply conflicts with earlier studies estimating Tamazight speakers at 33% to 50% (Belhiah & Lamallam; Jaafari, 2019) and with figures indicating that the so-called indigenous people in Morocco constitute approximately 30-40% of the population (El Aissati et al., 2011; Zouhir, 2014).

Before its constitutionalization on July 1, 2011, following the so-called 'Arab Spring,' Tamazight was recognized within the Moroccan linguistic landscape through the creation of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) on October 17, 2001. Fundamentally, IRCAM has helped preserve and revitalize the Amazigh language and culture. Since its creation, the institute has played a pivotal role in standardizing Tamazight, developing pedagogical materials, and expanding the language's presence across key social domains, including education, business, administration, and justice (Errihani, 2023a; Redouane & Sabiri, 2024).

The Institute was primarily tasked with safeguarding and promoting the Amazigh language and culture. It has standardized the oral varieties and developed a unified linguistic standard, "adopting Neo-Tifinagh as the official script" (Fathi, 2025, p. 66). The choice of an appropriate script for writing Tamazight has long been a subject of intense political debate, primarily between proponents of the Latin script and advocates of Arabic orthography (Finn, 2022). On February 10, 2003, King Mohammed VI, the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM), and various political entities reached a formal agreement to adopt the Neo-Tifinagh script, "transforming Tamazight into a full-fledged language" (Amedyaz & Fathi, 2026b, p. 35). However, conservative parties, including Istiqlal and the Justice and Development Party (PJD), raised notable reservations.

Throughout history, these two political parties have denounced all Amazigh-based demands, including adopting it as a medium of instruction and incorporating it across the functional domains of public life (administration, justice, the media, etc.). To foster national unity through a unified national identity, the post-independence government, headed by the Istiqlal Party, adopted the commonly known Arabization policy (Errihani, 2023b; Loutfi, 2020; Moustauoui, 2017; Zakhir & O'Brien, 2017). According to its proponents, this language policy aimed at linguistic homogenization, centering on the "one country, one language, one identity" paradigm. Following the state's imposed Arabization policy model, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) was designated as the sole official language of government, administration, education, and mass media, effectively underrepresenting Tamazight and treating it as a "sub-national identity and a threat to national unity" (Amedyaz & Fathi, 2026a, p. 4).

Similarly, despite leading the Moroccan government for two consecutive terms (2011–2021) following the landmark 2011 constitutional reform, the Justice and Development Party (PJD) delayed enacting the requisite legal framework for Tamazight. Consequently, this institutional delay hindered the language's official integration and public expansion. As one of the most prominent advocates of Modern Standard Arabic in the Moroccan political arena, PJD ideologically and systematically resists any institutional incorporation of Tamazight. For instance, the institutional implementation was significantly delayed (Ghilani, 2022):

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Organic Law 26-16 underwent an eight-year ratification process, and the National Council for Languages and Moroccan Culture (NCLMC) was not formally created until 2020. Furthermore, the enactment of the aforementioned law was not accompanied by clearly defined enforcement mechanisms, thereby tangibly impeding its implementation.

While linguistic issues are often exploited to achieve political ends during elections, political parties primarily use them as instruments to undermine rivals' credibility. Once political achievements are secured, these promises quickly evaporate. As Professor Taoufik Jaafari (2019, 131–132) notes when addressing this exploitation:

The language debates that have been going on for many years, in the hope of achieving a balanced linguistic market and a clear language policy, have reduced the linguistic varieties in question to mere weapons of struggle among politicians [...]. The damages of the shifting language policies which have been implemented for the last four decades did not yield any benefits for people in general and for the pupils and students in particular.

Prior studies have highlighted critical structural flaws in Organic Law 26-16. Ichou and Fathi (2025) note the vagueness of the relevant legislation, emphasizing that "unlike other organic laws, the Amazigh organic law does not include any article specifying the budget necessary for the official enactment of the Amazigh language" (p. 149). Additionally, because the 2011 constitutional recognition "has not been matched by coordinated governmental action" (Fathi, 2025, p. 28), public perceptions of statutory authority have shifted. This persistent implementation gap has fostered a broader consensus that statutory reforms remain largely ineffective unless paired with mandatory, time-bound implementation frameworks.

The systematic linguistic and cultural marginalization of Tamazight dates to the French protectorate period (1912–1956). On May 16, 1930, colonial authorities issued the Berber Dahir (Decree), a strategy intended "to divide Moroccan society by separating the Amazigh people from the Arabs, and to place the areas where the Amazigh language is spoken geographically beyond the direct control of the Sultan (Muhammad V) and the Makhzen" (Amedyaz & Fathi, 2026a, p. 2). Under the guise of preserving indigenous linguistic and cultural heritage, colonial powers instrumentalized Tamazight as a tool of political control. Scholars such as Fathi (2026a) contend that the linguistic impacts of the French protectorate persist in modern Morocco, arguing that "the colonial legacy of the French protectorate [...] left an enduring imprint [...] on Morocco's linguistic landscape" (p. 95). Although the Arabization policy was implemented as the primary post-independence language policy, it triggered "resistance as Amazigh communities began to feel increasingly threatened" (Schwed, 2017, p. 11).

A notable contradiction in the implementation of Arabization lies in the behavior of its leading proponents. While defending the policy as an indispensable prerequisite for national sovereignty, nationalist elites consistently "educated their children in private French schools and sent them abroad for higher education" (Finn, 2022, p. 224). This suggests that what ultimately mattered in the post-independence era was developing an elite capable of managing the state's administrative institutions, thereby consolidating the control of ideologically Arab-oriented political parties over state governance. Finn (2022) made this clear, arguing that throughout the Arabization period, "these [French] schools continued to educate the elite in society, whereas public schools established for the masses taught French as a foreign language" (p. 223). The institutionalization of French in Morocco's administrative and educational sectors dates to the French protectorate. Language policies implemented during the colonial era established a sociolinguistic hierarchy that positioned French as a dominant second language (Benzakour, 2007). This legacy persists today, as the 2024 census indicates that French remains a strong presence in daily communication in Morocco, with 32% of the population nationwide speaking it.

Tamazight was first formally integrated into Morocco's macro-level language planning through the National Charter for Education and Training. The Moroccan educational system's openness to Tamazight is explicitly addressed in Article 115 of the Charte nationale d'éducation et de formation (1999). This article allows local education directorates to use local Tamazight varieties in early childhood education, facilitating a smooth transition to the official Standard Arabic. Amazigh activists criticized Article 115's framework, contending that it treated Tamazight as an optional language, a concept termed *ouverture*, rather than guaranteeing its full integration into the education system. They argued that this official recognition remains largely symbolic because it lacks clear, concrete implementation mechanisms (Boukous, 2013). In addition to facilitating the teaching of Tamazight and its culture starting in the 2003/2004 school year, the National Charter marked a key foundational legal milestone that preceded subsequent institutional and constitutional reforms, notably the creation of IRCAM in 2001 and the historical official recognition of Tamazight in the 2011 constitution.

III. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Morocco offers a compelling case study of how language ideologies are actively constructed and reframed through the interplay of political discourse and state language policy. As Kroskrity (2010) defines them, language ideologies are the ideas, values, and beliefs that individuals and official institutions hold about languages, dialects, and linguistic behavior. Political discourse and dominant ideological paradigms significantly shape language evolution, standardization, and revitalization. Kroskrity (2010, p. 192) further defines language ideologies as "beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and use which often index the political

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economic interests of individual speakers, ethnic and other interest groups, and nation states" (p. 192). Far from being merely linguistic, these ideologies are politically and ideologically driven. Charteris-Black (2011, p. 4) highlights the correlation between language and politics, stating that: "it is debatable whether language would have developed in the first place without politics". This argument suggests that language development is fundamentally intertwined with politics and that language agendas are usually politically governed.

To understand and analyze how language ideologies are established and recontextualized through political and legal texts, this study draws on the theoretical frameworks of Fairclough and Van Dijk. These frameworks address key concepts in critical discourse analysis, such as manipulation, power, dominance, and resistance (Fairclough, 2010; Van Dijk, 2006). From a CDA perspective, the Arabization paradigm, which positions Arabic as the core of national identity, grants legitimacy solely to Arabic and marginalizes other linguistic components, such as Tamazight. Similarly, the re-articulated presentation of Tamazight as a major component of national heritage, depicting it as a "shared asset" that belongs to all Moroccans, grants the Amazigh language preservation and cultural recognition.

The Moroccan political landscape has been an arena for diverse ideologies. Depending on their ideological orientations, Moroccan political parties differ in how they approach linguistic issues and in the procedures they use to implement related language laws. For example, the conservative Party of Justice and Development (PJD) has historically been cautious about the Amazigh case and Amazigh rights, whether cultural or sociolinguistic. By reframing the language through a religious lens, PJD argues that Tamazight should complement the sacred role of Arabic as the language of the Quran rather than serve as an independent, indigenous pillar of national linguistic identity. On the other hand, liberal parties such as the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM) and the National Rally of Independents (RNI) position Amazigh rights as an important and indispensable constituent of the State's openness to economic development, modernity, and, more importantly, advanced regionalization that Royal speeches have consistently called for.

For Left-Wing and Progressive Parties such as the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP), the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS), and the Unified Socialist Party (PSU), Tamazight is framed through the lens of governance and public service efficiency. Despite internal ideological differences, all three parties have advocated operationalizing Tamazight's official status under Organic Law 26-16, viewing it as the sole guarantee for accelerating the generalization of instruction in the language, bilingual court proceedings, certified court translators, and a high-status presence in the media. These three parties, along with other left-wing political parties, have heavily criticized the decade of conservative Islamist rule (2011-2021), stating that the two governments led by PJD reneged on constitutional promises regarding Tamazight. They have overtly criticized the bureaucratic approach used by previous governments to address the Amazigh issue, characterizing the enactment of related laws without dedicated budget allocation as insufficient and merely symbolic.

IV. AN OVERVIEW OF THE STATUS OF TAMAZIGHT IN MOROCCAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

In Moroccan political discourse, the representation and mobilization of Tamazight have undergone a profound paradigm shift. From the post-independence era through the late 1990s, Tamazight was systematically politically marginalized (Spaulding, 2023), remaining a deeply sensitive taboo within official Moroccan state discourse. Throughout the postcolonial period, successive Moroccan governments pursued ideologically driven assimilationist cultural and linguistic policies. The Arab-Islamic nationalist narrative underrepresented Amazigh identity, portraying the Amazigh issue as "a threat to national unity" (El Kirat El Allame, 2009, p. 183). Similarly, the emerging post-independence discourse established a "one language, one culture, one nation" model centered on Arabic, categorizing Tamazight as fragmented, traditional, and merely folkloric. Following this exclusionary language policy, "Tamazight [...] has been banned from the institutional framework of Morocco, including the legal, political, and educational systems" (Fischer, 2010, p. 33).

These ideologically driven narratives have fundamentally shaped the evolving status of Tamazight in Moroccan political discourse, reducing it to an unwritten variety associated with "rural, illiterate and backward parts of Morocco" (Errihani, 2008, p. 413). In *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, Schieffelin et al. (1998) define language ideologies as "ideologies [that] are not about language alone. Rather, they envision and enact ties of language to identity, to aesthetics, to morality, and to epistemology. Through such linkages, they underpin not only linguistic form and use but also the very notion of the person and the social group, as well as such fundamental social institutions as religious ritual, child socialization, gender relations, nation-state, schooling and the law" (56-57). This foundational work examines how institutions produce and enforce language ideologies that maintain or challenge dominant power structures. It highlights the role of official curricula in promoting standard-language cultures while systematically marginalizing nonstandard dialects and linguistic minorities.

In the Moroccan context, the ideologically imposed policy of Arabization, historically grounded in the legitimization of the Arab-Islamic monolingualism paradigm, framed Tamazight as a threat to national cohesion. A recently published study (Ichou & Fathi, 2026) characterized post-independence language ideologies in Morocco as "formed by social, cultural, and economic factors and

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directly impact [language] use and transmission" (p. 2). Along the same line, Aït Mous & Wazif (2008) portrayed the post-independence Moroccan cultural scene as "marked by the exploitation of culture in a nationalist perspective. The newly independent state primarily focused on consolidating the "national constants": i.e., Islam, the monarchy, Arabism, and territorial unity. Nationalism was understood as a global identity favoring cultural standardization to the exclusion of any cultural difference" (p. 295). To counter cultural and linguistic homogenization driven by the policy of Arabization and to preserve indigenous identity, "Amazigh intellectuals and activists [...] formed several civil society groups with complementary specializations and tasks" (El Kadoussi et al., 2024, p. 7). Concurrently, as activist calls for linguistic justice and cultural recognition grew, the Amazigh Cultural Movement (ACM) emerged and actively advocated for the institutional recognition of Tamazight.

To "achieve visibility, gain prominence, social approval, and mainstream acceptance" (Amedyaz & Fathi, 2026a, p. 5), the ACM challenged the state's top-down language policies and advocated linguistic justice for indigenous peoples during the 1980s, a period of intense cultural suppression. Several cultural and civil society organizations emerged to defend Amazigh linguistic rights and preserve heritage. In 1978, the Association Nouvelle pour la Culture et les Arts Populaires (ANCAP) was established. This organization later evolved into the Tamaynut Organization, which became an early focal point for Amazigh cultural mobilization. In 1979, the Association Culturelle Amazigh (ACA) was founded in Rabat by prominent intellectuals and activists, including Mohamed Chafik, Ali Sedki Azayko, and Abdelhamid Zammouri. The ACA explicitly introduced the concept of "Amazighity" into Moroccan institutional discourse in the early 1980s. Concurrently, the Association de l'Université d'été d'Agadir (AUEA), commonly known as the Agadir Summer University, was founded in October 1979 and has remained a vital forum for academic and cultural discourse.

By 1980, the Association Culturelle du Souss (ACS) had been founded. Under the leadership of prominent figures such as Hamza Abdallah Kassem, the association marked a sociological paradigm shift within the Amazigh movement. Whereas preceding organizations were led predominantly by educators, academics, and intellectuals, the Association Culturelle du Souss was established primarily by merchants, legal professionals, and entrepreneurs, thereby broadening the movement's socioeconomic base. By operating within established legal and civic frameworks, the ACS's founders made the pursuit of Amazigh cultural recognition increasingly viable.

What unites these civil society organizations is their revolt against the institutional prioritization of Arabic over Tamazight and their call for the accelerated integration of Tamazight into high-status domains, mainly education, administration, and the media. However, Moroccan authorities responded with restrictive measures, including the arrest of Amazigh Cultural Movement leaders such as Hassan Id Balkassam, first in 1974 and again in 1982, as well as Ali Sidki Azaykou in 1982. Azaykou was one of the most prominent Amazigh intellectuals to write about Arabization, popular culture, and national identity since the 1970s. He scathingly criticized the state's adoption of Arabization and its conflation with Islamic identity. His article, "*For a True Concept of Our National Culture*" (*Fi sabili mafhum haqiqi lithaqafatina al-wataniyya*), was first published in the semi-annual scientific journal *Tidighin* in 1972 and republished in the first issue of the *Amazigh Magazine* in 1981. This controversial article, which questioned Morocco's official history, led to the dissolution of several associations (such as *Intilaqa* in 1981) and forced a full ban on Tamazight in 1982. Conversely, the 1990s marked a pivotal turning point for Amazigh activism in Morocco. A climate of political openness during this decade facilitated the institutional demarginalization of Tamazight, which in turn encouraged the growth of civil society organizations dedicated to Amazigh advocacy. A key milestone in this movement occurred on August 5, 1991, when six prominent Amazigh associations signed the Agadir Charter. This foundational document articulated core linguistic and cultural rights, demanded structural justice for the Imazighen, and called for the creation of a dedicated institute for Amazigh studies. On May 1, 1994 (May Day), during labor union parades in Goulmima, members of the local Amazigh cultural association Tilelli (Freedom) joined the march, which began as a peaceful protest, carrying banners in Tifinagh script calling for an end to state-led marginalization of Tamazight. Moroccan authorities responded with immediate repression, sentencing seven Tilelli activists to prison and imposing heavy fines. The Goulmima arrests sparked significant domestic mobilization and drew strong criticism from international human rights bodies, transnational Amazigh networks, and global media outlets. In response to mounting pressure, King Hassan II publicly acknowledged Tamazight as a fundamental component of the national heritage. He declared it an essential pillar of Moroccan identity, signaling a shift in state policy toward cultural integration.

V. POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND TAMAZIGHT DE/LEGITIMIZATION

Based on empirical ethnographic research, Boutieri (2016) analyzed the Moroccan linguistic situation, attributing blame to the imposed Arabization policy and criticizing its ideological linkage to Islam, which was intended to influence individuals. She argued that these politically and ideologically driven language policies were among the reasons for the educational system's failure, resulting in ceaseless political conflicts between modernists and traditionalists. Similarly, the post-independence state's strategic decision to designate Arabic as the sole national language, thereby positioning it as the ultimate symbol of unity, has proved counterproductive, undermining rather than reinforcing national unity (Dines, 2021; Naguib, 2020).

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The top-down imposition of Arabization intensified existing socioeconomic stratifications by creating a structural divide between standard Arabic-medium public education and the French-dominated private market. French, regarded as a "legacy of colonialism, [...] dominates business, higher education, and diplomacy. While it offers global connectivity, its prominence overshadows local languages" (Fathi, 2026b, p. 922). By maintaining an inherited economic framework reliant on French (Ennaji, 2005), this linguistic rift undermined the national cohesion the newly independent state sought to build.

The pro-Arabism political elite consolidated power around a narrative of 'Arab nationalism and Islamic identity,' leading to the systematic underrepresentation of Tamazight. The prevailing political discourse framed Tamazight as a rural heritage asset, favoring monolingual nation-building models that legitimized both Standard Arabic and French. These models relegated Tamazight to "folkloric representations" (El Younssi, 2023, p. 130), casting it as incompatible with modern economic and political development. Decades of sustained activism by Amazigh organizations since independence culminated in the official recognition of Tamazight, repositioning it within the national linguistic map. King Mohammed VI's 2001 Throne Speech redefined Moroccan cultural and linguistic heritage as pluralistic.

Historically, the Moroccan political arena has been marked by the monarchy's manipulation. "Royal speeches are part of the political arena" (Mouhsine & Durance, 2026, p. 1). They aim to respond to citizens' emerging socio-economic interests, to legitimize or delegitimize certain actions, and to reconstruct ideologies. In his study, Fdis (2025) argues that "Political language goes beyond its basic function as a means of communication to become a rhetorical instrument for influencing and guiding people's actions" (Preprint). Royal speeches set long-term objectives for the country, unify disparate political agendas, and drive immediate change. The Ajdir speech marked the beginning of a new era in the state's language policy. This landmark marked a formal departure from decades of monolithic cultural and linguistic policies, enabling the creation of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) and laying the groundwork for Tamazight's eventual constitutional recognition as an official state language. The Institute was established by a Royal Decree (Dahir). Leaders from various political parties, including those in the government and the opposition, attended the Institute's inauguration without publicly voicing partisan objections. However, reservations and heated political debates occasionally arise over the pace of law implementation and the integration of Tamazight into specific sectors, such as education, media, the judiciary, and administration. The Turkish professor of politics Senem Aslan (2015, 167) confirms this, emphasizing that the stance of certain Moroccan parties is out of step with the King's orientation, thereby hindering or delaying the enactment of the organic laws governing the management of the linguistic issue. She states:

This process of accommodating Amazigh demands has not been linear and coherent due to the resistance of the political parties and the bureaucratic establishment to the recognition of Berber identity and culture. Their opposition to the accommodation of Amazigh demands demonstrates that even in authoritarian contexts, where state leaders are the ultimate decision makers, governments, political parties, and bureaucracies may not act solely as facades that do not have influence over policy making.

Another vivid example of political factions failing to implement Tamazight-related initiatives, even after they were voted on in parliament, dates back to the 1980s, when the Interior Ministry asked the leading figure in the Amazigh Cultural Movement, Mohamed Chafik, to prepare a comprehensive report on the "Amazigh question." Chafik's report advocated establishing an institute for Amazigh studies to codify Tamazight and ultimately support its teaching. The parliament approved the creation of the institute in 1979, but the measure was never implemented (Maddy-Weitzman, 2011).

The lack of political commitment to implementing legislation for Tamazight can be attributed to how the language was presented in the 2011 Constitution. Idhssaine (2023) cited Williams S. Hein's translation of Article Five, stating:

Arabic remains the official language of the state. The State works for the protection and development of the Arabic language, as well as the protection of its use. Likewise, Amazigh constitutes an official language of the State, being the common patrimony of all Moroccans without exception. An organic law defines the process for implementing the official character of this language, and the modalities of its integration into the school system and the priority domains of public life, so that it may be permitted in time to fulfill its function as an official language. (Moroccan Const. Art. 5, 2011)

Article Five treated Arabic and Tamazight, both official languages of the state, unfairly: while it explicitly mandates state protection, development, and use of Arabic, it conditions Tamazight's integration on enacting an organic law. Following this bureaucratic inertia, the enactment of this organic law was delayed by 8 years. Despite being accused of failing to meet legal obligations regarding Tamazight, the Moroccan government, led by the Islamist party (PJD), which historically opposed integrating Tamazight into the national linguistic market, promulgated legal text 26-16 on September 12, 2019. Notwithstanding the fact that it fails to secure sufficient financial support for better enforcement through annual state finance laws, this organic law outlines the implementation of the Amazigh language's official status in Morocco. This clearly demonstrates a lack of coordination between the Constitutional text and the organic laws enacted by Parliament to reconstruct the linguistic landscape. Massar (2025) reports that "Such a lack of consistency in linguistic policies leads to counterproductive practices" (p. 314). In the same vein, El Kirat El Allame argues that "the lack of institutional support for a language can play a determining role in its stigmatisation".

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In fact, the lack of dedicated funding and long implementation timelines, spanning 5 to 15 years for the language's integration into public administration and education, remain major obstacles to enforcing this law's provisions. The absence of definitive, funded action plans reflects a failure to allocate adequate resources to recruit specialized educators and professional interpreters and to build the administrative infrastructure needed to ensure Tamazight's official status in practice. Although Organic Law 26-16 has set the timeline for implementing Tamazight's official status across the aforementioned public domains, and although major political parties included commitments regarding Tamazight in their electoral cycles following the language's constitutionalization (2016 and 2021 general elections), political will remains the obstacle to implementing these measures, trapping the Amazigh issue in a cycle of endless electoral promises.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study provided a critical analysis of the sociolinguistic evolution of Tamazight within the Moroccan institutional landscape. Given the political system's profound societal impact, Amazigh activists have long advocated integrating Tamazight into priority domains of public life, including education, administration, the judiciary, and the media. To evaluate progress in the political engagement of Moroccan parties, this research provided a comprehensive overview of how various political actors approached the Amazigh issue before and after its constitutionalization in 2011. It also offered a critical analysis of the top-down policies implemented in post-independence Morocco.

Broadly, the Amazigh Cultural Movement acknowledges the major foundational advances made so far: the official recognition in 1994, the creation of IRCAM in 2001, the language's constitutionalization in 2011, and the organic law activating the language's official character in 2019. However, it characterized the implementation procedures as being weak, insufficient, and largely symbolic. The MCA criticized the logistical delays related to the full integration of Tamazight in primary education, the shortage of dedicated teachers and specialized translators within Moroccan courts, as well as restrictive budgeting. Along the same line, Amazigh activists have stated on several occasions that what is lacking for the full integration of Tamazight as a national linguistic component is political will, being the sole prerequisite for translating legislative provisions into reality. As an identity marker, Tamazight has been incorporated within the Moroccan political mainstream and political parties' discourse, focusing on the pluralism of national identity. However, conservative parties approach the funding of the Amazigh media through an ideological framework, arguing that state financial resources should be utilized to serve and foster unified Arab-Islamic values. Despite the approaching end of the third government's term regarding the constitutionalization of Tamazight, institutional and political debates and disagreements over Tamazight channel budget and Tifinagh script persist. Amazigh cultural groups, along with left-wing parties, argue that budget allocations remain inadequate, which hinders the channel's infrastructure growth and high-quality programming. To conclude, this study has limitations. Among these limitations is the pronounced dearth of academic resources and empirical literature in this specific research domain, which constrained the depth of the analysis. Another limitation is that the current study did not specifically address how each of the last three successive governments, following the 2011 constitution, approached the Amazigh issue. To address these limitations, subsequent research should examine the efforts undertaken by each government to formulate and implement its vision regarding Tamazight, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of each government's specific policy.

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