

Language Planning and Policy in Media: A Historical Overview of the Impact of the Top-Down and Bottom-Up Policies on the Evolution of Tamazight in Moroccan Media

Belal Amedyaz¹ and Said Fathi²

¹PhD student, LALITRA Laboratory, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Hassan II University, Mohammedia, Morocco

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-7093-2766>

²Full Professor, English Department, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Hassan II University, Mohammedia, Morocco

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0763-2468>

Corresponding Author: Belal Amedyaz, E-mail: amedyaz.belal-etu@etu.univh2c.ma

Received: 07 Mar 2026, Received in revised form: 04 Apr 2026, Accepted: 09 May 2026, Available online: 14 May 2026

©2026 The Author(s). Published by IJTLE. This is an open-access article under the CC BY license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

Abstract— *In every linguistic community, the State's management of the language issue, alongside minority groups' activism to preserve, revitalise, and promote their linguistic rights, raises language tensions. Top-down and bottom-up policies play substantial roles in the emergence of new theoretical linguistic policies aimed at shaping or reshaping the nation's linguistic identities. The Amazigh language in Morocco has been a subject of conflict and political tensions. Despite the suppression that accompanied their struggles, especially after the adoption of the Arabisation policy in the 1960s, Amazigh activists continued to fight for the integration of their language into key sectors of public life (education, media, justice, administration, etc.), particularly during the 1980s and 1990s. Correspondingly, the state implemented several language policies that profoundly altered the status of Tamazight in the Moroccan media. On March 1st, 1980, the first Amazigh newspaper was published. In 2005, the Amazigh radio station extended its broadcast to reach 16 hours. Later, the Amazigh channel began its trial broadcast on January 6th, 2010, followed by its regular broadcast on March 1st of the same year. Actually, several studies have tackled Tamazight in the media from different perspectives. The current study aims to analyse the impact of the adopted top-down language policy model on enhancing the status of Tamazight in Moroccan media outlets. More importantly, it seeks to examine the variance between the macro and micro levels of language planning and how this gap affects the status of Tamazight in Moroccan media.*

Keywords— *Tamazight, linguistic activism, language policy, language planning, Moroccan media outlets.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Broadly speaking, the media in Morocco have reflected the country's social, cultural, and linguistic transformations. At the most general level, the Moroccan media have witnessed significant changes with the emergence of digital platforms and private media outlets. The transition from traditional media, such as radio and television, to digital media has facilitated the representation of marginalised languages,

such as Tamazight. Whereas traditional media reflect the nation's social and economic progress, digital media provide a means for the expression of oppressed voices.' (Almasud, 1999, p.118). The 21st-century technological progress helped shape the identities of marginalised linguistic groups. The Amazigh language did not receive its rightful status in both pre-independence and post-independence Moroccan media. Hargreaves (1994) reveals that 'what we are witnessing here is the emergence, in the context of postmodernity, of the

voices of those who have previously been unheard, neglected, rejected, ignored- the voices of those who have been marginalised and dispossessed' (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 10). During the French protectorate (1912-1956), the Amazigh language and culture were largely excluded from the media. The adopted Berber Decree of May 16, 1930, aimed 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. Article 6 of the decree clearly indicates that the French authorities aimed to facilitate their takeover of lands where the Amazigh is widely spoken, formalising and reinforcing the use of customary, non-written law, instead of Islamic Sharia law, in Amazigh-majority areas:

The French courts sitting in criminal matters under their own rules are responsible for the punishment of crimes committed in Berber country, regardless of the status of the perpetrator. In these cases, the Dahir of the 12th August 1913 (9 Ramadan 1313) on the criminal procedure (The Berber decree, Art. 6, 1930)

Fathi (2026) affirms that 'the colonial legacy of the French protectorate [...] left an enduring imprint [...] on Morocco's linguistic landscape' (Fathi, 2026, p.95). French authorities instrumentalized Tamazight while presenting themselves as protectors of the indigenous peoples' cultural and linguistic heritage. During the post-independence nation-building period (1956–1975), the marginalisation of Tamazight continues, as the cultural and linguistic choices of the post-independence Moroccan governments, headed by the Al Istiqlal Party, were ideologically driven. The implementation of the Arabization policy by Moroccan nationalists in the 1960s aimed to restore national unity and reduce the influence of the coloniser's language in priority domains of public life. This policy has successfully prioritised Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and restricted Tamazight to informal usage. The exclusion of the Amazigh component from the Moroccan cultural landscape characterised the post-colonial era. Aït Mous & Wazif (2008) depicted the new cultural scene, stating that:

The cultural policy of the early years of independence was 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

favouring cultural standardisation to the exclusion of any cultural difference. Consequently, the cultural sphere was deprived of creativity. (Aït Mous & Wazif, 2008, p. 295)

Thus, the pre- and post-independence exclusionary cultural and linguistic policies led to the emergence of many voices demanding linguistic justice. The Amazigh Cultural Movement (ACM) advocated for a vibrant, legally enforced language. A language that can reverse the long-lasting marginalisation and achieve the recognition it deserves in the Moroccan linguistic market. Over many decades of struggle, the ACM sought the transition of Tamazight from an oral, non-functional language to an official language with high status in education, justice, and the media. Similarly, the ACM rejected the imposed cultural homogenization and linguistic insecurity, calling for the promotion of Amazigh identity and challenging the Arab-Islamic nationalist narrative by making Amazigh culture a national 'common patrimony' as it was later included in Article 5 of the Moroccan constitution:

Arabic is [demeure] the official language of the State. The State works for the protection and development of the Arabic language, as well as the promotion of its use. Likewise, Tamazight [Berber/amazighe] constitutes an official language of the State, being the common patrimony of all Moroccans without exception. An organic law defines the process of implementation of the official character of this language, as well as the modalities of its integration into teaching and into 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)

Among the domains the ACM struggled to introduce Tamazight into is the media. Through the Media, marginalised communities can express themselves, raise the subject of their underrepresented and misrepresented language and culture, and more importantly, liberate both the radio and television from the monopoly of the state. Caubet (2017) reports that:

Long before the Arab Spring, language representations had evolved in the wake of a cultural effervescence compared to the Spanish *movida*- the *Nayda*- which emerged around 2005. There have also been public debates around the defence of Amazigh (Berber) and of Darija (Moroccan Arabic), and around the nature of the Moroccan identity. (Caubet, 2017, p. 100)

The long history of activism since the early 1960s has enabled the ACM to be aware of the centrality of media in self-representation, ethnic identification, and the dissemination of Amazigh culture and language. For this reason, ACM activists have fought to enact organic laws that would enhance the status of Tamazight in the Moroccan media landscape. El Kadoussi et al. (2024) portrayed the efforts of the ACM, stating that:

From its inception, the Amazigh cultural movement (ACM) has militated for both communicative and socioeconomic rights. ACM activists were aware of the importance of Amazigh languages for the construction, consolidation, celebration, and reimagining of the Amazigh collective identity. They were also aware of the centrality of mass media to Indigenous identity politics and to the cultural representation, articulation, and diffusion. (El Kadoussi et al., 2024, p.1).

Amazigh activists fought against the dominance of Arabic in the national media landscape, initially calling for newspapers specialising in Tamazight and for increased airtime for Tamazight on national radio and television channels. Amazigh activism, both in the streets and across institutions, helped increase Amazigh radio broadcasting to 12 hours a day in 1974. In November, 2005, the daily broadcasting volume extended to 16 hours. Lately, on June 24th, 2020, the Amazigh radio station began broadcasting continuously 24/7. Regarding the written Amazigh press, the first issue of the *Amazigh Magazine*, managed by Ouzzine Ahrdhan, was published on March 1st, 1980. Years later, *Amadal Amazigh*, the oldest independent monthly published newspaper in Morocco, released its first issue on May 31, 2001.

In 2005, the *Azetta Amazigh Journal*, managed by the Amazigh activist and lawyer, Ahmed Arehmouch, released its first issue, shedding much light on the Amazigh cultural and linguistic rights in Morocco. Additionally, the 1990s witnessed the publication of several community newsletters like *Tidrine* and *Anaruz*. The Amazigh written press was characterised by being a collective, activist press that tried to cover the concerns of the Indigenous peoples despite the very limited financial resources. As far as the audiovisual media are concerned, a specialised Amazigh television channel has been a key component of the broader ACM demands. Amazigh activists recognised the importance of mass media in the construction, consolidation, and promotion of the Amazigh culture and identity early. For this reason, they championed the fight for the adoption of Tamazight in the national broadcasting throughout

the 1990s. The ongoing pressure resulted in the launch of Tamazight TV on January 6, 2010, as the first Moroccan public channel entirely devoted to the Amazigh language and culture, offering cultural content, entertainment, and news in three main Amazigh varieties: Tamazight, Tachelhit, and Tarifit for the sake of regional linguistic diversity.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Throughout history, Morocco has been a land of the encounter and coexistence of many ethnicities, such as the Amazigh and Arab peoples, and of languages, including Tamazight, Darija, Modern Moroccan Arabic, Hebrew, French, and Spanish. Besides, it has been a haven for many religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Under the umbrella of apparent coexistence lie long-running and intense ethnic and linguistic complexities. The Amazigh people or Imazighen (meaning free people) in North Africa are among 'the indigenous peoples who have been dispossessed and marginalised' (Almasude, 1999, p. 118). They were subjected to different conquests (Phoenician, Carthaginian, Roman), yet maintained their social organisation and cultural habits. However, great social, cultural, and religious transformations took place with the coming of the Arabs in the 7th century.

The expansion of Islamic conquests into North Africa during the 8th century greatly contributed to the conversion of large numbers of Indigenous peoples from Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity to Islam. The imperial ruling dynasties that alternated in governing Morocco from the Almoravids in the 11th century to the Sharifians in the mid-17th century have remarkably contributed to debilitating the Amazigh's power in society. The presentation of Classical Arabic as the language of the Qur'an gained its weight not only in the religious domain but also in the administrative and literary affairs. The emerged new sociopolitical situation, which marked the actual establishment of the Alawite state by Moulay Errachid in 1664, served Arabs and Arabic at the expense of the Indigenous Imazighen and their language:

The makhzen system steadily grew from the 17th century as a political and economic system based on "order and obedience" with a hierarchical authority centralised around the sultan and his surrounding aristocracy and spreading through systems of taxation and surveillance across Arab or Arabized dwellers of "urban" areas and surrounding villages. Disobedience and dissidence, by comparison, were

undertaken mainly by Indigenous self-governing Berber and mixed tribes against the system of taxation, which they perceived as unjustly imposed on people with already precarious livelihood conditions and against a system of governance that was perceived as subversive to their deeply rooted tribal traditions of jurisprudence. (El Kadoussi et al., 2024, p. 5)

The state of political instability that resulted from mutual aggression between *blad al-makhzen* (under the rule of the Sultan) and *blad as-siba* (lawless areas outside the Sultan's rule) allowed the colonisers to maintain their control over the country at the beginning of the 20th century. During the French protectorate, the country's linguistic landscape was defined by the dominance of French and the relegation of Arabic and Tamazight.

The post-independence inherited administrative, political, and economic centralised system has exacerbated the national socio-economic and linguistic situation. Tamazight has undergone a long period of imposed silence as well as a systematic linguistic and cultural subordination. The post-independence first government, headed by the nationalist Istiqlal party, aimed to build a nation-state based on Arab-Islamic identity. To do so, it adopted the Arabization policy, aiming to erase not only the French colonial influence but also any component that did not align with Islamism and Arab nationalism.

Besides self-conscious self-isolation, the Amazigh have, more importantly, been subjected to systemic marginalisation. [...] the postcolonial political establishment focalised the Arabo-Islamic ideology, excluding the Amazigh dimension—as land, language, history, and culture—from the institutions of the nation-state: political parties, public administrations, justice, education, and the media, which meant that Amazigh social issues remained outside central institutions and on the margin of public debate. (El Kadoussi et al., 2024, p. 7).

The post-independence Moroccan State, pursuing Arab-Islamic homogenization, has treated Tamazight as a sub-national identity and a threat to national unity. Hence, the language has been fully excluded from major official public domains, including education, administration, legislation, and media.

The language was excluded from the identity component of the independent state during the State-building process and was banned from all

public domains, marginalised, and stigmatised for decades. (Boussagui & El Kirat, 2025, p. 38).

In the media domain, Tamazight was largely ignored and absent in national print media, radio, and television in favour of Classical Arabic, and more recently, in favour of Moroccan Arabic or Darija, which started gaining a foothold in the media landscape.

Radio stations and television channels have begun to present programs and debates between politicians from different and opposite parties about political topics and issues entirely in Darija to attract more viewers from the uneducated masses and to get their message understood. (The complex language debate, 2014, p. 3)

Even though Amazigh culture is considered “the backbone” not only of the Moroccan nation but also of all countries across North Africa (Hart, 2000), the post-independence government established a “one language, one culture, one nation” model around Arabic. This nationalist trend has led to the marginalisation of the Amazigh component, which has become folkloric and often invisible. Following this trend, ‘the Tamazight language has been banned from the institutional framework of Morocco, including the legal, political, and educational systems.’ (Fischer, 2010, p. 33). Arab nationalists tried to deny the existence of the Indigenous Amazigh people and keep them under control by refusing to broadcast anything related to them and their language.

Up until January 2006, not a single program in the Amazigh language was allowed to be broadcast on Moroccan state-controlled television. For nearly 50 years, between 1962 and 2011, while the policy of Arabization was widely and publicly debated, the Amazigh population of Morocco was not allowed to hear its own language on television (in documentaries, interviews, hygiene education, reporting normal events, etc.). (Alalou, 2017, pp. 143-144)

The historic Ajdir Speech, delivered by King Mohammed VI on October 17, 2001, in Ajdir, Khenifra, marked a milestone in the authorities' dealings with the Amazigh language. The speech addressed the institutionalisation of the Amazigh culture as a core component of the Moroccan collective heritage. It was subsequently followed by the creation of the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Language (IRCAM) on October 17, 2001, which is fully dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the Amazigh language and culture. The creation of IRCAM marked a turning point in the

way the regime manages the linguistic market, offering 'obvious opportunities for the revitalisation of the Amazigh language and culture' (Boukous, 2011, p. 102).

Among the responsibilities assigned to the institute is ensuring and reinforcing the status of the Amazigh language and culture in the local media. In addition to its role as an advisory body, the institute is entrusted with making partnerships with leading media institutions like the Ministry of Communication for the purpose of raising the quota of Tamazight programs in public media channels (SNRT, 2M) to reach 30%. To foster multiculturalism, founded on tolerance and pluralism, public media are urged to intensify the adoption of programs that positively represent Amazigh culture. In this regard, the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture signed an agreement with the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HACA) on June 29, 2012. The agreement was signed by the president of the HACA, Mrs. Amina Lemrini, and the president of IRCAM, Mr. Ahmed Boukous, and included provisions for training media professionals to integrate the Amazigh content in broadcast media. Similarly, it aimed to monitor and reinforce the qualitative presence of Tamazight in audiovisual content through operating the 2011 constitution's guidelines regarding the maintenance of the national cultural and linguistic diversity.

III. TAMAZIGHT IN MOROCCAN MEDIA: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

From a historical perspective, the media have been instrumental in the valorisation of the language 'among Moroccan communities, bringing about a relative change in their negative attitudes towards the Amazigh language, culture, and identity.' (Idhssaine, 2023, p. 180). Similarly, languages achieve visibility, gain prominence, social approval, and mainstream acceptance through accelerated adoption in media. As a priority domain of public life and powerful social instruments, the media play a pivotal role either in the legitimation or delegitimation of any given language. Media texts portray social dynamics, privileging certain voices and marginalising others. The media reinforce dominant ideologies, control public opinion, shape and reshape social attitudes, 'offering dominant identity scripts, stereotypes, and counter-narratives' (Krishna, 2025, p. 1135). To do so, the usually responsible agent is the language, which often 'operates as a vehicle of power and ideology' (Pasumarthi, 2026, p. 7).

The media landscape in Morocco has been a battlefield for linguistic conflict throughout the ages. During the colonial era, the French colonial administration declared French as the country's official language and imposed its noticeable and prestigious presence in the media. The colonial language policy, predominantly grounded in the adoption of French as a division tool, targeted the underrepresentation of both Tamazight and Arabic, plunging them into perpetual conflict. Despite the nationalists' post-independence plan of Arabization, the linguistic colonial legacy maintained its leading position as French continues to hold a privileged position in the media landscape. Fathi (2025b) states that the Arabization endeavours 'were tempered by the enduring presence of French and the marginalized status of Amazigh, setting the stage for ongoing debates and reforms in language policy in the decades to come.' (Fathi, 2025b, p. 58). Laaraj (2023) affirms that French has been able to withstand the tense language competition and maintain its status as the predominant language in many fields. In the same line, Boussagui and El Kirat (2025) highlighted the continued reliance on French despite the official policy of Arabization, stating that:

French has been viewed as the language of opening the modern world and an essential tool for social mobility, offering more job prospects in Morocco. It is the only medium of instruction of scientific and technological subjects (e.g., Physics, Medicine, engineering, etc.) at all levels and is widely used in administration, banking, and economic sectors in general (media and official and formal speeches, etc). (Boussagui & El Kirat, 2025, p. 40)

The drive for Arabization did not achieve the desired aspirations in the media sector. France retained its remarkable presence both in the audiovisual and print media. To target the educated population, state-aligned dailies, independent publications, and intellectual journals were mainly in French. Although challenged by the establishment of Modern Standard Arabic as the official language immediately following the country's independence in 1956, French retained its position as a deeply entrenched language in written media. French-language publications targeting Moroccan educated elites remained influential. Hiri (2021) argues that, even after independence, the French language sustained a high standing in Moroccan print media, stating that:

After the independence of Morocco, France wanted to maintain, through the press, its influence and economic interests. The French media group Mas (named after its boss, Pierre Mas) maintains a strong

presence, especially through its four francophone newspapers that continue to be freely published: *Le Petit Marocain*, *L'Echo du Maroc*, *La Vigie Marocaine*, and *Le Courier du Maroc*. (Hiri, 2021, p. 10)

The media liberalisation in the 1990s led to the emergence of new economic and independent publications that attracted high readership, especially among the business elite, politicians, and academics, such as *La Vie Eco*, *La Nouvelle Tribune*, *Les Inspirations Eco*, *L'Economiste*, and *TelQuel*.

Being regarded as a leading component in ensuring Morocco's openness to the world and a prerequisite for modernisation, the French language maintained a prestigious position in audiovisual media with the launch of 2M TV on March 4, 1989, and shortly became the most popular Moroccan channel. To ensure pluralism, 2M introduced a new model of bilingual broadcasting, which aimed to foster strong cultural ties between Morocco and France, offering documentaries, films, interviews, and news in both Arabic and French. In the same line, Radio 2M, the companion radio channel to 2M TV, was launched in 2004, as the second hybrid (public-private) radio channel to ever be allowed broadcast, offering music, news, and subsequently entertainment and talk shows starting from 2015. The first mixed-ownership radio station was Medi 1. Based in Tangier, the station broadcasts throughout the Maghreb countries. In 2024, Medi 1 radio became public and was brought under the control of the state-broadcaster SNRT (Société Nationale de Radiodiffusion et de Télévision). In her 2023 study on the French language visibility in radio channels, Hassa (2023) confirms that:

In 1981, [...] Medi 1, which focused on national and international news, began broadcasting [...] as a result of a French-Moroccan partnership, employing Moroccan and French journalists. Medi 1 quickly became one of the most popular and trusted news radio stations and remains so today as it continues to broadcast beyond Morocco's borders to the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia), demonstrating the popularity of a bilingual French-Arabic radio station in postcolonial North African countries. (Hassa, 2023, p. 263)

The evolution and integration of Tamazight in the national media sphere have undergone two major stages: the colonial era and the independence era. The political conditions that accompanied each of these stages had a significant effect on the Amazigh language policy, relatively.

3.1 Tamazight in the media between 1912 and 1956

The colonial powers denied the Amazigh language access to institutional media spheres, treating it as an oral language that does not deserve to rise to the level of full representation in the media landscape. The French and Arabic political media discourse of the time marginalised Tamazight and led to its lasting underrepresentation. In the same vein, the adopted institutional exclusion brought negative effects on Tamazight, treating it as a symbol of low status. Aligning with this inclination, 'The Tamazight language has been banned from the institutional framework of Morocco, including the legal, political, and educational systems.' (Fischer, 2010, p. 33).

The Berber Dahir made the situation even worse. It was enacted by the coloniser as a tactic to undermine the unity of Moroccan society by annexing the predominantly Amazigh regions under French rule. Being regarded as an anti-nationalistic political issue, the Dahir delayed the adoption of Tamazight in the media for six decades. At the same time, through the "divide and rule" Strategy, the French authorities aimed to isolate the Amazigh communities from the Arabic-speaking population. To do so, the use of Tamazight was integrated into public media to lessen the Arab-Islamic influence. Programs in different varieties (Tamazight, Tachelhit, and Tarifit) were introduced into the radio station *Radio Maroc* since its first year of broadcasting around 1928 to address different Amazigh demographics. The focus was mainly on the broadcasting of the coloniser's official news, local orders, and cultural content (songs and poetry) rather than immersing in intellectual debates. Embracing this approach, the Amazigh language was portrayed as folkloric, which simultaneously hindered its broad administrative integration. Actually, the purpose behind the Berber Dahir was to facilitate addressing the Amazigh people, without any mediation of Arabic, and subsequently reinforce their distinction from the rest of the country. The dedicated broadcasting of the Amazigh varieties has been increased respectively by allocating 10 minutes for Tachelhit in 1928, 10 minutes for Tamazight in 1952, and finally 10 minutes for Tarifit in 1955, just a year before Independence.

As for the status of the Amazigh language in print media during the French Protectorate, its presence can be summarised in the anthropological studies conducted by French academics. *Les Archives Berbères Journal*, which began publication in 1915, focused on linguistic and literary documentation for a deeper

understanding of the Amazigh mind. By the same token, 'Amazighologists, who were called berbérissants (berbérologues) at the time, made significant efforts to document Amazigh lore, theorise its fundamentals, and transmit it to students and scholarly communities.' (El Guabli, 2022, p. 1094). *Archives Berbères*, a French-language journal published between 1915 and 1919, was exclusively dedicated to studying the indigenous local arts and customs. The journal was founded by the *Comité d'études berbères de Rabat* (Rabat Committee for Berber Studies), and starting from 1921, was subordinated to the *Institut des Hautes Études Marocaines* (The Institute of High Moroccan Studies), which was founded in 1920 by the French *Résident Général* in Morocco, Hubert Lyautey.

3.2 Tamazight in Media from 1956 to the present

Unlike the colonial era, the independence brought remarkable changes in terms of integrating the Amazigh language into the media landscape, especially starting from the 1980s. Due to the state's nation-building project of Arabization, the marginalisation of the native Tamazight language continued in almost all domains. The pan-Arab ideology aimed to define Morocco as an Arab-Muslim country, relegating Tamazight and portraying it as merely folkloric. The limited and unfair representation of Tamazight in the different fields, including media, in addition to the continued economic disparity, cultural suppression, and linguistic marginalisation, triggered rural and tribal Amazigh uprisings against the centralised urban power of the Istiqlal party. To impose its unilateral policy, the newly formed government faced the uprisings in the Rif and Atlas regions militarily.

The demand to include Tamazight in the education sector marked the beginning of subsequent demands for its integration in other sectors. Hence, during the 1970s, there were the beginnings of a resistance as Amazigh communities began to feel increasingly threatened through the introduction of Arabization programs in public schools (Schwed, 2017, p. 11). Besides, the domination of Classical Arabic and French on the national radio and media marked the 1970s due to the strict state monopoly, which focused on the promotion and marketing of an Arabized cultural image. Nevertheless, the rise of cassette tapes marked a boom in Amazigh expression during the early 1970s. This accessible recording technique allowed Amazigh activist musicians to reach households, bypassing the state-controlled media. This musical renaissance marked a cultural and political resurgence demanding

linguistic recognition of Tamazight. Following this silent movement, Amazigh intellectual awakening, in addition to diasporic mobility, which is responsible for the creation of early associations in France, formed a solid basis for the Amazigh Spring (Tafsut n'Imazighen) in the 1980s. This era marked a major shift in the demand for cultural, linguistic, and political rights across the Maghreb and highlighted the emergence of print media through magazines and local newsletters. *The Asnflul* (Creativity) by AMREC (Association des Échanges Culturels en Amazigh) pushed Amazigh cultural and literary revival, using French and Arabic alongside Tamazight to reach a broader audience. Years later, for the expansion of the Amazigh cultural fabric, AMREC launched the first issue of *Tamunt (Unity) Journal* in February 1994.

The status of Tamazight in the audiovisual media was promoted during the 1990s. The political pressure and activism marked the integration of Tamazight into the mainstream media. Following the King Hassan II Royal Speech of 1994, the state-run broadcaster RTM (Radiodiffusion-Télévision Marocaine/ Moroccan Radio and Television) started airing news bulletins in the three Amazigh varieties. The allocated airing time remained restricted, consisting of approximately 15 minutes for each variety. The broader changes regarding the integration of Tamazight in audiovisual media are brought by the launch of Tamazight Channel on January 6, 2010, with a budget of 500 million dirhams (approximately \$65 million USD).

Along the same lines, the 2000s brought key developments regarding the status of Tamazight on the Radio. The allocated airtime in the national stations was extended, and new regional stations were added (Agadir radio, Azlan Atlas radio, etc.). Besides, the greatest institutional milestone was marked by the formal establishment of the Amazigh radio in 2004, as debate on the Amazigh linguistic rights peaked. The station initially started with 12-hour broadcasting daily, which was expanded to 16 hours in 2005, and reached 24/7 broadcasting on June 24, 2020, offering news, music, social, and cultural programs in the three Amazigh dialects. In addition, Tamazight gained an advanced position within the Moroccan audio media with the emergence of 24/7 online broadcasting radios such as Radio Achkid FM and Izlanzik Music Radio.

Across postcoloniality (1956-1990s), the State harnessed all its capabilities to enforce the Arabization policy. The pan-Arabic nationalists called for a return to Arab-Islamic roots, neglecting the pluralism of Morocco, where the Amazigh people are forming an essential

cultural cornerstone. Adopting this proclivity, 'Tamazight was largely neglected in [...] language planning processes' (Amedyaz, 2026, p. 35). Being regarded as a source of pressure and an important domain for marketing Amazigh culture, activists throughout the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century called for 'intensified adoption of [media] programs that valorise and positively represent the linguistic and cultural uniqueness of Amazigh' (Ait Laaguid, 2023a, p. 71). Similarly, despite the long-adopted discriminatory policies towards it, 'Tamazight serves as a symbol of indigenous pride and resistance, especially among communities historically marginalized by Arabicization policies.' (Fathi, 2025a, p. 27)

King Hassan II's speech on August 20, 1994, was a historical moment that recognized Tamazight as a central component of Moroccan national identity. The King affirmed the importance of Amazigh dialects, characterizing them as an important, primordial part of the state's national identity and a 'part of our heritage.' The King's speech publicly validated the declaration of the Amazigh culture as a pillar of the State's collective identity, officially recommending the transition from a policy of marginalization to one of integration. Along the same lines, the Ajdir Speech, delivered by King Mohammed VI on October 17, 2001, marked a turning point in the officialization of the Amazigh language. The sovereign announced the creation of the IRCAM, which holds the promotion of Tamazight and its integration into the education and media sectors as a first step, intending to integrate it into other sectors (e.g., justice).

In 2004, IRCAM signed a partnership agreement with the Ministry of Communication and the Higher Institute of Information and Communication (ISIC). The agreement's provisions targeted strengthening the professional capacities of journalists for enhancing Tamazight content within public broadcasting. Training sessions were provided for more than 60 journalists from Société d'Études et de Réalisations Audiovisuelles-2M SOREAD 2M, the National Broadcasting and Television Company SNRT, and Maghreb Arab Press MAP. The training modules targeted the mastery of reading and writing using the standardized Amazigh Tifinagh script, the understanding of the standardized variety developed by IRCAM, and the mastery of specialized Amazigh media vocabulary. Besides, the training modules focused on equipping journalists with the foundations of Moroccan history, civilization, and culture to ensure meticulous representation of the country's pluralism in cultural and historical programs.

Hence, the partnership had a great impact on enhancing the visibility of Tamazight in the national media, leading to significant improvements, including the introduction of Tamazight news bulletins on 2M, the enhancement of Tamazight news programming on Al Aoula (formerly known as TVM), in addition to the expansion of the Amazigh radio broadcasting. Besides, the agreement facilitated the introduction of Amazigh films, documentaries, theater, and Music on the Arrabia Channel.

Following the aforementioned partnership, a Joint Commission IRCAM/Ministry of Communication emerged. The commission was tasked with analyzing and providing opinions on strategies that can ensure optimal representation of Tamazight in the public media sector. Among the major outcomes of this commission is the preparation for the eventual creation of Tamazight TV (TV8), which was officially launched on January 6, 2010.

In 2005, IRCAM and the Ministry of Communication continued their ongoing partnership initiated in 2004 to integrate and promote Tamazight in written media and professional journalism. 12 journalists from written and electronic media improved their professional know-how through training workshops led by professionals and held at ISIC.

In order to encourage the media professionals' creativity and valorise the Amazigh language journalistic output, unusual prizes are awarded under the National Prize of Amazigh Culture to journalists working in different sorts of media (audiovisual, print, and electronic media).

The constitutional recognition of Tamazight in 2011 is considered a benchmark in the state's approach to Tamazight. Article 5 clearly validates the importance of the Amazigh language, portraying it as 'a common heritage of all Moroccans without exception.' (Moroccan Const. Art. 5, 2011)

Idhssaine (2023) referred to the translation of Article Five by Williams S. Hein, stating that:

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 of implementation of 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)

To fully perform its role as an official language, the Moroccan government enacted the Organic Law 26-16 on September 12, 2019. The law was subsequently promulgated in the Official Bulletin on September 26, 2019, setting a 15-year deadline for the full integration of Tamazight in the media sector, among many others. Immediately after the enactment of this law, voices emerged criticizing the state's handling of the official recognition of Tamazight. The activists expressed their dissatisfaction, stating that waiting for 8 years so that the law is finally ratified brings the state's unwillingness regarding the real officialization of Tamazight into question. In addition, one of the criticisms leveled against this law is the ambiguity surrounding its implementation mechanisms. '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' (Ichou & Fathi, 2025, p. 149). The activists criticised the state's actions, which perpetuate the marginalization of Tamazight in public broadcasting. They depict the integration of Tamazight in media as merely symbolic and folkloric, which delays the language's full and equitable representation compared to Arabic.

IV. TAMAZIGHT IN SOCIAL MEDIA: TOWARDS A NEW ERA OF REVITALISATION

In recent years, social media has rapidly gained great potential serving not just as a medium for entertainment, but as a key agent for preserving endangered languages. Being an indigenous language that suffered from institutionalized underrepresentation for many decades, Tamazight is witnessing a reversal shift by dint of social media. Research shows that platforms like Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok are frequently used to promote endangered and minority languages and boost their visibility (see, among others, Ait Laaguid & Khaloufi, 2023b; Minhas & Salawu, 2025; Nkhi & Mofana, 2025). These networked publics act like digital spaces where marginalized languages can be used, learned, negotiated, and even documented beyond the scope of established institutional settings. Facebook groups and WhatsApp chats foster a sense of community, allowing younger generations to engage with their linguistic heritage. Furthermore, 'social media platforms have emerged as critical tools for promoting language preservation, enhancing

accessibility, and facilitating outreach' (Obasi, 2026, p. 16).

Digital communities hold significant importance in the endangered languages' standardization through developing new orthographies, reviving old terminology, and elaborating new vocabulary. The rapidly evolving social media landscape served Pro-Tamazight digital activism. Open-access Facebook groups form ideal communities for spreading Amazigh ideologies and digital spaces for the dissemination of the language. Social media serve as vibrant virtual spaces for language usage and promotion, substituting the institutionalized state-sponsored platforms.

Despite the institutionalized measures taken so far, and although approximately 7 years have passed since the Organic Law 26-16 was enacted, the presence of Tamazight in the Moroccan media remained below expectations. Therefore, social media platforms are used as alternatives to participate in the cultural movement, engage in identity negotiation, and push for tangible equality with Arabic.

V. CONCLUSION

This study has tackled one of the most important issues related to the evolution of Tamazight in the Moroccan context. As highly impactful social agents, the media have been regarded as of great importance in the nationwide revitalization and promotion of Tamazight. The significance of this study lies in providing a general overview regarding the impact of both top-down and bottom-up language policies on enforcing the status of Tamazight in the media. Further, the study contributes to the increasing discussions on social media as a vital alternative for ensuring and maintaining the public presence of the language. However, there are limitations to this study. Among these limitations is the reliance on only a variety of published works. Another limitation is that this current study has not analyzed the most dependent script in dealing with the Amazigh issue on social media platforms. Hence, future research may draw on this study and tackle the extent to which the Tifinagh script is used in print media as well as daily social media chatting.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ait Laaguid, B. (2023a). Amazigh in Moroccan Media: An Attitudinal Study. *Science Step Journal*, 1(2), 69-80. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.24135438>
- [2] Ait Laaguid, B., & Khaloufi, A. (2023b). Amazigh Language Use on Social Media: An Exploratory Study. *Journal*

- Arbitrer*, 10(1), 24–34.
<https://doi.org/10.25077/ar.10.1.24-34.2023>
- [3] Ait Mous, F., & Wazif, M. (2008). Summer festivals in Morocco: International influence and a factor of social cohesion. In *Annuaire de la Méditerranée Med.2008 /Bilan*, IEMed, 293–302
- [4] Alalou, A. (2018). The question of languages and the medium of instruction in Morocco. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 19(2), 136-160.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2017.1353329>
- [5] Almasude, A. (1999). The New mass media and the shaping of Amazigh identity. In J. Reyhner, G. Cantoni, R. N. St. Clair, & E. P. Yazzie (Ed.), *Revitalising Indigenous languages*, 117–128. Northern Arizona University.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED428932>
- [6] Amedyaz, B. (2026). Language Planning and Policy in Education: Exploring the Impact of Organic Laws on Enforcing the Amazigh Language Teaching in Morocco. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 9(4), 32-39.
<https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2026.9.4.4>
- [7] Benchenna, A., & Marchetti, D. (2021). Writing between the 'red lines': Morocco's digital media landscape. *Media, Culture & Society*, 43(4), 664-681.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443720972316>
- [8] Boukous, A. 2011. Revitalising the Amazigh Language: Stakes, Challenges, and Strategies. (K. Bensoukas, Trans.) IRCAM (Eds.). Rabat: Top Press.
- [9] Boussagui, Y., & El Kirat El Allame, Y. (2025). Language Policy and Power Dynamics in Post-Independence Morocco: A Critical Analysis. *Language Policy in Africa*, 1(1), 36-58.
<https://doi.org/10.36950/lpia-01-01-2025-4>
- [10] Caubet, D. (2017). Darija and the Construction of Moroccaness. In *Identity and Dialect Performance: A Study of Communities and Dialects*. R. Bassiouney (ed). Chapter 6. Routledge. 99-124.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315279732-7>
- [11] El Guabli, B. (2022): Where is Amazigh Studies? *The Journal of North African Studies*, 27(6), 1093-1100.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2022.2114234>
- [12] El Kadoussi, A., Zaid, B., & Ibahrine, M. (2024). Amazigh cultural movement and media in Morocco. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.1345>
- [13] Fathi, S. (2025a). The status of teaching standard Tamazight in Moroccan universities. *UAR Journal of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences (UARJAHSS)*, 1(6), 25-28.
<https://zenodo.org/record/16888539>
- [14] Fathi, S. (2025b). A Historical Overview of Language Policy & Planning in Morocco. *International Journal of Teaching, Learning and Education*, 4(6).
<https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/ijtle.4.6.7>
- [15] Fathi, S. (2026). Education in Morocco at the crossroads of globalization and local identity. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*. 30(01), 092-104.
<https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2026.30.1.0806>
- [16] Fischer, S. R. (2010). Amazigh legitimacy through language in Morocco. *Human Rights & Human Welfare: Topical Review Digest: Human Rights in the Middle East & North Africa*, Denver University, 10(1), 32-45
- [17] Hargreaves, A. (1994). Restructuring: Postmodernity and the prospects for educational change. *Journal of Educational Policy*, 9(1), 47-65.
- [18] Hart, D.M. (2000). *Tribe and Society in Rural Morocco* (1st ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315039671>
- [19] Hassa, S. (2023). French is the local language of radio and podcasts in Morocco. *Contemporary French Civilisation*, 48(3), 257-282.
<https://doi.org/10.3828/cfc.2023.15>
- [20] Hiri, A. (2021). A journey through the history and development of the press in Morocco: from its origins to the present. *Revista de Comunicación de la SEECI* (54), 1-18.
<https://doi.org/10.15198/seeci.2021.54.e669>
- [21] Ichou, A., & Fathi, S. (2025). Enacting the official character of the Amazigh language in Morocco: Myth or reality? *Journal of Applied Language and Culture Studies*, 8(2), 142-158.
<https://revues.imist.ma/index.php?journal=JALCS>
- [22] Idhssaine, A. (2023). A critical review of the sociolinguistics of the Amazigh language in Morocco: Documentation, teaching, and officialisation. *Langues et Littératures*, 28, 179-201.
<https://revues.imist.ma/index.php/langues-litteratures>
- [23] Krishna, A. (2025). Language, Power, and Identity in Media Discourse. *International Journal of Humanitie Social Science and Management (IJHSSM)*, 5(2), 1135-1138.
- [24] Laaraj, Y. (2023). An Overview of the Moroccan Language Situation. *International Journal of Science Academic Research*, 4(4), 5401-5404.
- [25] Minhas, S., & Salawu, A. (2025). Preserving and Promoting Indigenous Languages: Social Media Analysis of Punjabi and Setswana Languages. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 60(7), 4109-4126.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2025.1442935>
- [26] Nkhi, S.E., & Mofana, M. (2025). Social Media and the Integration of Minority Indigenous Languages in Political Participation: Challenges and Prospects. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00219096251352489>
- [27] Obasi, H. U. (2026). The Role of Social Media in Preserving Indigenous Nigerian Languages. *IRASS Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(2), 15-18.
<https://irasspublisher.com/journal-details/IJAHSS>
- [28] Pasumarthi, A. H. (2026). Language, Power, and Ideology: A Critical Review of Political Discourse Studies. *International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 4(1), 01–12.
<https://doi.org/10.61424/ijah.v4i1.686>
- [29] Schwed, J. (2017). The Power Dynamics of Language: An Analysis of the Positionality of Amazigh Language in Morocco [Unpublished undergraduate independent study]

project]. SIT Digital Collections. Independent Study
Project (ISP) Collection. 2632.

https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/2632

- [30] The complex language debate in Morocco, the unresolved relationship between Fus'ha and Darija, has long fuelled controversy in the North African country. *Al Jazeera*, April 27, 2014 (Retrieved from www.aljazeera.com/news/2014/4/27/the-complex-language-debate-in-morocco).
- [31] Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco (2011). Translated by Jefri J. Ruchti, 2012, Constitute Project. (Retrieved from https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Morocco_2011#:~:text=Morocco%202011%20Constitution%20%2D%20Constitute,Ruchti)