

**Language Drama in Morocco: Another Perspective on the Problems and Prospects of Teaching Tamazight**

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**Abstract**

In *Language Policy in Morocco: Problems and Prospects of Teaching Tamazight*, Mohammed Errihani (2006) examines the status of Morocco's new language policy to teach Tamazight in elementary schools. This article will theorize about many of the implementation problems that Errihani finds. I argue that the Tamazight language policy is riddled with problems because it was designed by the monarchy as a political tool meant to garner support from diverse audiences rather than as a language education policy sincerely intending to teach Tamazight. My analysis considers both economic and educational data on the status of the Imazighen in Morocco as well as qualitative fieldwork conducted in late 2004 in two rural villages outside of Tafraoute, a Tamazight-speaking village in the south of Morocco. While affirming the importance of Tamazight for all Moroccans, I argue that there exists another very real, yet often overlooked, benefit of teaching Tamazight, for both Amazigh students and the nation as a whole: the educational potential of mother-language education.

## **Introduction**

In *Language Policy in Morocco: Problems and Prospects of Teaching Tamazight*, Mohammed Errihani (2006) examines the status of Morocco's new language policy to teach Tamazight in elementary schools throughout the nation. He details the policy's goals, design and limitations. Errihani recognizes that while making language policy may be easy, implementing it is never so. Despite the best intentions of IRCAM and the sincere efforts of many Tamazight teachers, the policy still faces countless problems in implementation and fragmented support from the larger public. Errihani explains that the underlying goal of improving the status of Tamazight is much larger and more difficult than simply teaching the language in schools (which is, in fact, not simple at all). He concludes by arguing that considering the importance of Tamazight to Morocco's heritage, it is crucial to continue the difficult task of reviving the Tamazight language and enhancing its status.

This article will expand upon Errihani's research to make two major points. First, while recognizing that implementing language policy is always a complicated, value-laden and fragmented process, I argue that the problems the Tamazight policy faces are not inevitable. Instead, I examine how the Tamazight language program is specifically designed by the monarchy as a political tool meant to garner support from diverse audiences rather than as a language education policy sincerely intending to teach Tamazight.

Second, as a policy that means different things to different audiences, I argue that the policy should be understood as having varied purposes and potentials depending on the community it serves. While for urban Arab Moroccans the policy may work to improve the status of Tamazight, as Errihani argues, the policy has the potential to mean something very different to Tamazight-speaking Moroccans. I consider both economic and educational data on

the status of the Imazighen in Morocco as well as qualitative fieldwork conducted in late 2004 in two rural villages outside of Tafraoute, a Tamazight-speaking village in the south of Morocco. I argue that specifically for Tamazight-speaking Moroccans, there is another very real, yet often overlooked, benefit of teaching Tamazight: the potential of the Tamazight language policy to improve the social, political and economic situation of rural Tamazight-speakers as a mother language education policy.

### **Part I: From Language Ecology to Language Drama**

I use the metaphors of language ecology and language drama to understand how the Tamazight language policy fits into Morocco's already complicated and politicized multilingualism. The language ecology metaphor is explained by its creator Haugen, as the "study of interactions between any given language and its environment" (Hornberger 2001 p. 32). Hornberger (2001) offers the relevant aspects of the metaphor: language evolution, language environment and language endangerment. She states that languages are understood to: "(1) live and evolve in an eco-system along with other languages (2) interact with their sociopolitical, economic, and cultural environments (language environment), and (3) become endangered if there is inadequate environmental support for them vis-à-vis other languages in the eco-system" (2001 p. 35-36). In Morocco, Tamazight is only one part of a complex multilingualism; it must interact and compete for public space alongside Modern Standard Arabic, Moroccan Arabic, French and a host of other languages and dialects. Recently, Tamazight has increasingly become an endangered language due to changing environmental features including urbanization, mass-media and universal Arabic education (see El Aissati 2001; Bentahila and Davies 1998).

The linguistic situation of Tamazight in Morocco, however, is not entirely organic, as an ecological metaphor might suggest. Instead, it has been shaped by the nation's complex history of ethnic relations and colonization; Arab-Islamic conquerors, French colonizers and Moroccan leaders have all been active in creating the nation's language policies. I use the concept of language drama to understand how the environment in which languages live and compete is constructed and shaped by those in power. Much like the director of a play, who chooses how the props will be arranged and how much voice will be granted to actors, the powerful political elite of Morocco have altered the nation's language education policies and the nature of linguistic interactions to serve their varied purposes. When the French were in control they imposed French as the language of education and government (see Redouane 1998; Marley 2004; Benmamoune 2001). When Moroccan nationalists regained control they used language to emphasize the nation's identity as an Arab-Islamic state and constructed explicit Arabization policies in both the public and educational spheres (see Redouane 1998; Venema and Mguild 2003; El Aissati 2001).

More recently, under the direction of King Mohammed VI, this Moroccan linguistic drama has taken a new twist, incorporating Tamazight into the realm of schools. Much like the director of a play, the King seems to have single-handedly altered the nation's language policies with a single speech. By expressing sentiments counter to the country's official policy of Arabization, the King seems to be keenly aware of how other dramas are playing out in his own country and around the world as theories of multiculturalism and effects of globalization are influencing his decisions.

## **Part II: Tamazight Teaching in Morocco**

On October 17<sup>th</sup> 2001, King Mohammed VI created the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture (IRCAM), stating that Amazigh is an essential element of Moroccan identity and therefore, it is the obligation of the monarchy to protect and promote Amazigh culture (Venema and Mguild 2003 p. 37). In the edict announcing IRCAM's creation, the King states that Morocco has, "a plural identity, as it has been constructed on the basis of diverse tributaries: Amazigh, Arabian, African-Subsaharan and Andalusian, all of them being inputs which, on account of their openness to other cultures and civilizations and by interacting with them, have contributed to refine and enrich our identity" (dahir 1-01-299). In the justifications for the creation of IRCAM that follow the King explains that the introduction of Tamazight into elementary schools is a primary goal of IRCAM. From his speech, it is clear that the King, at least rhetorically, seems to base domestic policies of ethnic relations on the global philosophy of multiculturalism. He recognizes the multicultural roots of Morocco and takes a stand in defining Moroccan national identity as more than exclusively Arab-Islamic. This statement is in contrast to the nation's decades-long Arabization policy that emphasized Arab linguistic and cultural heritage in the public and educational realms. This redefinition of the essential Moroccan identity as no longer simply Arab, but a blend of many cultures and languages supports the theory that the effects of multiculturalism and globalization have forced nations to redefine their identities and language policies.

Although the monarchy's official rhetoric explains that IRCAM was created to maintain the multicultural heritage of Morocco, there is always more to motivation than is publicly revealed. Errihami notes the symbolic nature of language policy; drawing on Ruiz (1984) he explains that languages can be recognized not out of concern for human or linguistic rights, but

instead as a result of internal or external political pressure. Indeed, whether sincerely concerned about the preservation of Amazigh culture or not, the Moroccan monarchy is realistic, and sincerely interested in maintaining its power and reputation. This requires compromise and cooperation. As Michael Brett and Elizabeth Fentress (1996) argue in *The Berbers*, “the ruling ideology is that of the monarch, insistent upon loyalty, suspicious of the Berber identity encouraged by the French and resistant to Berber claims but nevertheless wholly pragmatic in its approach to the Berber question, aiming to incorporate rather than repress” (1996 p. 267). By not accepting cultural preservation as the sole justification, and instead looking at the formation of IRCAM from the perspective that incorporating the Berber movement into national politics is actually advantageous to the aims of the monarch, then we can speculate on the various other possible explanations for the creation of IRCAM.

The creation of IRCAM serves varied aims including: to avoid organized resistance and the problems of Algeria, to allow the poorest to participate in the economy, to avoid Islamic radicalism, to appease Berber activists and to gain global recognition. Errihami explains that the rise of the Amazigh cultural movement and the emergence of a vocal Amazigh elite have put pressure on the state for official recognition of Amazigh culture and language. In addition, he notes that the monarchy is keenly aware of the problems presented by Algeria and is hoping to avoid political resistance (Errihami p. 145). Certainly, the monarch must be attempting to avoid the problems Amazigh activism has caused in Algeria, including disruptive protest and demonstrations by Kabyle-based activists over language, political parties and economic concerns. By incorporating the Amazigh activist movement into official channels, IRCAM claims to provide recognition and legitimacy to the demands of Amazigh activists. Simultaneously, however, the monarchy must certainly understand the benefit of allowing the

Amazigh movement to work within the system, as the inherent bureaucracy and compromise that policy-making involves will mellow the demands of activists.

In his discussion of the monarchy's interest in the Amazigh movement entitled *Royal Interest in Local Culture: Amazigh Identity and the Moroccan Nation*, David Crawford (2005) raises many other interpretations of the possible effects that IRCAM may have in Moroccan society, which could have inspired its conception. One of these is the possible enfranchisement of Morocco's poorest (Crawford 2005). Morocco is experiencing huge social changes and yet, rural Imazighen remain the poorest and most marginalized demographic groups, and there are no prospects of that changing any time soon; the creation of IRCAM could ensure that they have advocates with social clout and access to networks of power.

While such social enfranchisement is certainly a noble pursuit in and of itself, economic improvement is also crucial to slowing the growth of the Islamist movement. The growth of Islamism has recently been greatest among the marginalized and urban poor. Moreover, Crawford observes that "Islam's message of equality and justice, important traditional values in Amazigh culture resonates powerfully among disaffected Berbers as well as Arabs" (Crawford 2001 p. 187).

The creation of IRCAM not only appeases activists locally and internationally but also garners international approval. The monarch comes across as supportive of an emerging liberal society and as participating in the movement for multiculturalism and identity recognition. Even if IRCAM's actual impact results in minimal changes to Moroccan society, at least the gesture can be framed in a positive light.

Another private motivation for the creation of IRCAM is the avoidance of responsibility for the Amazigh question. Clearly, the creation of IRCAM is the monarchy's official response to

the question, and a direct response it is, but in creating an official body to deal with the Amazigh problem, does the King potentially skirt his responsibility to it? Does the creation of IRCAM mean that the monarchy can avoid taking responsibility for the Institute's decisions and effectiveness?

The monarchy must recognize the myriad benefits to IRCAM, and therefore, all of these possible explanations are to some extent possible and useful for interpreting the creation of IRCAM. Similarly, these various private and political motivations for establishing the progressive language education policy to teach Tamazight in schools highlights how the creation of language policy in Morocco is never just about either language or education, but is part of a larger web of political drama in both Morocco and the world.

Errihami explains that, according to many at IRCAM, the sincerity of the policy's original intentions is irrelevant. Instead, according to them, what is important "is that this recognition is official and that it is being implemented through the gradual introduction of Tamazight in Moroccan schools" (p. 145). Unfortunately, the sincerity of intentions does matter; a policy created with insincere intentions stands to face huge obstacles in implementation, as its design can intentionally undermine effective implementation. The policy's current design primarily benefits the monarchy; in fact it seems specifically designed as a political tool meant to garner support from diverse audiences, including Amazigh activists and international organizations, rather than a language education policy. In a form of hegemonic rule, the King has managed to quiet most Amazigh discontent for the time being, thus safeguarding his ultimate control over the nation.

The many problems with the policy's design that undermine its effectiveness include: dividing power between two organizations with diverging viewpoints, permitting IRCAM only a consultative role and failing to emphasize language attainment as a goal.

One of the policy's major problems is the superficial nature of language teaching it endorses. In the royal dahir, the King states that IRCAM will help, "further develop the language policy defined by the National Charter of Education and Training (Charte Nationale d'Education et de Formation), which establishes the introduction of the Amazigh language in the education system" (Dahir 1-01-299). The National Charter of Education (1999), to which the King alludes, lays out numerous structural and curricular reforms to be met by 2004. While the King makes the teaching of Tamazight sound almost inevitable from his portrayal of it in the dahir, when one consults this charter, one finds that it mentions Tamazight only twice in its hundreds of provisions. Moreover, with regards to language learning, the charter states that the educational system must, "perfect the learning and use of the Arabic language and the mastery of foreign languages and introduce Tamazight" (Commission Spéciale Education Formation). The charter expands upon its expectations for Tamazight by stating that local authorities can choose to teach, "Amazigh language or any local dialect with the goal of facilitating the learning of the official language by preschool or first year of primary school" (Commission Spéciale Education Formation). As Errihami notes, the language is intended to be a subject matter, not a language of instruction, and Tamazight is only allotted three hours a week in the curriculum. It is clear that the introduction of Tamazight into the school system is the extent of the King's goal for the program. Full bilingualism is never mentioned, in fact, the use of Tamazight is mentioned as a way to facilitate mastery of Arabic, not as worthy of study in and of itself. Moreover, the charter provides no mention of how to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy – after all, a policy

without clear outcome goals cannot fail. The very wording of the policy, in which a mastery of Arabic and other foreign languages is expected, while only the introduction of Tamazight is called for, reveals that in many ways this language policy is a superficial gesture towards the Amazigh community, but is not taken too seriously.

In addition, as Errihami explains in detail, the design of the program divides power between IRCAM and the Ministry of Education, who have opposing viewpoints on the importance of the Tamazight language program. The language program was developed by IRCAM but the Moroccan Ministry of Education is ultimately in charge of the program's implementation, which entails selecting the participating schools as well as training Tamazight instructors. It is clear, however, that the Ministry of Education does not seem to view Tamazight instruction as an official priority; there is little to no oversight or evaluation of the program at the local level. Errihami notes that there still exists no unit in the Ministry of Education for promoting Tamazight education. Thus, while the most supportive experts and officials were housed in IRCAM, the Ministry of Education was given ultimate control over implementation.

Not surprisingly, considering its design flaws, IRCAM and the Ministry of Education are facing numerous challenges with implementation. Errihami provides a detailed list of these problems, which include: no specialized teachers, which means that Arabic and French teachers, who do not necessarily speak the language, are expected to teach Tamazight; complete lack of appropriate teacher training (2 weeks in 2003-2004 and 3 days in 2004-2005) and little oversight at the local level by teacher inspectors, so teachers do not feel obligated to actually teach Tamazight. According to Meryem Demnati, an expert at the Didactic and Pedagogical Center of IRCAM, many of the difficulties with the program are the result of the unwillingness of the Ministry to take the program seriously. For example, she says that while IRCAM asked the

Ministry of Education to select only Tamazight-speaking teachers to teach Tamazight classes, they did not. Ms. Demnati also said that at the teacher training session in October 2004 she was expected to train over 200 teachers in only three days, an expectation she called entirely unrealistic.

Considering these problems, it might be surprising to find that in June 2005 the Moroccan Special Commission on Education and Training issued a report on the progress of the educational reforms of 1999, in which the teaching of Tamazight is classified as being ‘realized without delay.’ In the text of the report, the commission states:

Regarding the implementation plan [of Tamazight], due to the coordination between the Department of National Education and IRCAM of Amazigh culture – it is worth mentioning the teacher-training program and the preparation of accompanying curricula – the progressive integration of Amazigh is occurring within primary schools. Thus, as of the first two years (2003-2005), the number of concerned establishments has risen to 960, which is 20% of the total number of primary establishments in the kingdom<sup>1</sup> (COSEF 2005 p. 33).

In light of the many difficulties that face the Tamazight program, I find this statement evidence of the large disconnect between the officials at the Ministry of Education, who design and evaluate the policy, and the teachers who actually implement it.

It is clear, however, that IRCAM and the Ministry of Education do not have the same perspective on the success of the Tamazight program. In March 2006, Dr. Jilali Saib, the Director of IRCAM’s Center for Translation, Documentation and Communications Publishing and member of the Joint Commission on Education to study Tamazight, confided that:

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<sup>1</sup> Sur le plan de réalisation, fruit d’une coordination entre le Département de l’Éducation Nationale et l’IRCAM, il y a lieu de mentionner le programme de formation des enseignants et la préparation des curricula accompagnant l’intégration progressive de l’Amazighe au sien des établissements primaires. Ainsi au titre des deux premières années (2003-2005), le nombre d’établissements concernés s’est élevé à 960, soit 20% de l’ensemble des établissements primaires dans le Royaume.

The news about Tamazight Language teaching are quite grim and the prospects look bleak. As of now, there is hardly any teaching in third year, even though the book for this year had been printed. Tamazight was supposed to be introduced at the Junior High School level, but it has not been. At the university level, departments of Tamazight or at least teaching and research units, were supposed to be created. Nothing of that has been done. The Ministry, the Academies and the Universities are dragging their feet. (Personal Correspondence March 2006)

The discrepancy between the opinions of the Ministry of Education and IRCAM is telling. While the Commission's analysis may not give us an accurate portrayal of the success of Tamazight programs in Moroccan schools, it does give us a great deal of insight into the nature of the policy, which seems to be more of a device to hedge opposition than a sincere initiative to teach language. Borrowing on Gramsci's notion of hegemony and Winant's insights, which observe that those in power maintain the status quo through both coercion and consent – by both imposing their will and by incorporating the opposition into their project – I maintain that to understand the contradictions inherent in assessment of the Tamazight program, it is essential to examine what is in the best interest of the monarchy.

Due to the politicized nature of the Tamazight program it is in the interest of the government to show a high level of success, regardless of the difficulties teachers and students face and those admitted by the policy designers at IRCAM. In this light, it is easy to understand why the Education Commission's report emphasizes the collaborative nature of the work, despite the conflicting opinions of members of IRCAM and the Ministry of Education and many practitioners' beliefs that internal divisions are hampering implementation. In addition, the report states that 960 schools now have programs – this high rate of implementation would seem to serve as proof of the Ministry of Education's sincere support of the Tamazight program. In

short, a half-hearted attempt at implementation disguised as full support with positive outcomes serves the many interests of the monarchy.

### **PART III: Implementation in Rural Tamazight-Speaking Morocco**

To investigate how this language policy drama is actually playing out, I visited schools and interviewed teachers and community members about their opinions and problems with the Tamazight policy. Unlike Errihami, all of my fieldwork was conducted in a Tamazight-speaking area. My research was conducted in Taфраoute, a town with a population of approximately 5,000 located four hours south of Agadir. The entire southern region of Morocco maintains a strong pride in its Amazigh heritage, and Taфраoute is no different. Numerous citizens told me about how they had taught themselves Tifinagh from the Internet or from newspaper publications. In one shop, I found books and stories written in Tamazight and even a copy of the Qu'ran transcribed into Tashilhit, the southern dialect of Tamazight. All of the community members I spoke to supported teaching Tamazight in schools without question and yet, each had different reasons for justifying their support. Their justifications included: that Tamazight is their mother language and is the original language of the people of North Africa; that teaching Tamazight will help preserve the language and culture of their people; and that language learning is inherently good as it helps people understand and communicate with one another.

From my conversations with Moroccans and from my time in this community, it seemed to me that this overwhelming community support seems to stem from sincere pride in Amazigh language. Language was never portrayed as merely the vehicle for teaching about Amazigh culture; instead, its legitimacy as an ancient yet still contemporary and vibrant language was respected. From my community assessment of opinions, the schools in Taфраoute do not seem to

be the battlegrounds for local politics and moreover, the program to teach Tamazight in schools seems in line with the communities desires. The distinct existence of a thriving sense of Amazigh identity in Tafraoute, however, is not a phenomenon common in all Amazigh regions of Morocco and certainly not the case in the urban centers of the country. As a result, any arguments made about community priorities and IRCAM's relationship to the community are specific to this particular region and are not necessarily applicable to other areas.

I interviewed the Tamazight instructors at two schools in small villages outside Tafraoute, one of whom was teaching Tamazight according to IRCAM's syllabus and one who, despite having been trained, being Tamazight-speaking and having the materials, was not teaching Tamazight due to lack of time. The teachers faced many of the obstacles that Errihami notes including the difficulty of teaching students multiple scripts, a shortage of workbooks and the fact that Tamazight is not an official priority for teachers because it is not taken seriously by the Ministry of Education. In addition, Tamazight-speaking regions face unique problems with the curriculum. One Tamazight teacher explained that while he is a native speaker, he himself often struggles with the vocabulary because the dialect he and his students speak has been influenced heavily by Arabic and French over the years.

Despite these problems, however, without question, the most salient factor for rural teachers attempting to teach Tamazight was merely the nature of teaching in rural classrooms. Throughout my fieldwork, I was consistently impressed by the teachers' willingness to share their concerns with me; one going so far as to write me a three page letter detailing the challenges of rural teaching, emphasizing that no one took their concerns seriously.

In rural classrooms the greatest difficulty is the existence of multi-grade classrooms i.e., classrooms in which teachers must teach more than one grade at the same time. Teachers

explained that there is a complete absence of a pedagogical method to deal with multiple classes and instructors are not trained to teach in multiple classes. In addition, the time to present the material, which is usually a half an hour or forty-five minutes, is always insufficient, as teachers are dividing their time between two or three lessons simultaneously. In fact, it was these issues that prevented one Tamazight-speaking teacher I interviewed from implementing the IRCAM curriculum, despite having undergone training and having the curriculum and materials. He said that the major reason for not implementing the program was not a result of the program itself, but because he had trouble devoting the proper amount of time to the Tamazight language program.

Because of the urban bias in policy design, the pedagogical program and the schedule of lessons are designed for classes with only one grade each and do not take multiple classes into consideration. Teachers also complain that the pedagogical program and textbooks rarely take into consideration the lifestyle and needs of students in rural classes, citing few pictures of rural life and lessons that use examples or amenities not common in rural areas.

Moreover, the physical environment in rural schools is also often inferior and the quality of instruction suffers as a result. Many rural classrooms lack appropriate utilities and supplies and vandalism is a common problem for roadside schools. There is often a lack of support for education outside of class because many rural Moroccan parents are illiterate and cannot help with assignments or work. Rural teaching is often hardest on teachers, who often have to negotiate between their professional and personal lives; teachers explained that they are expected to teach on suq days, which are often their only weekly access to supplies and food. Moreover, the administrative organization of rural schools into sectors, each sharing one administrator, means that teachers must travel long distances for training and meetings, compounding teachers' feelings of isolation. All of these problems of rural teaching pose real difficulties for teachers

who are asked to implement Tamazight language programs, as the teachers do not have the resources or outside support needed to easily change their methods or curriculum, nor the time and energy to add lessons to their busy schedules.

Nonetheless, Tamazight-speaking regions also have distinct advantages. As I noted earlier, there can be a great deal of community interest and support for the program. Moreover, teachers and students are already familiar with much of the vocabulary and grammar. As a result, lessons can be much more engaging than simple direct translation from Arabic. For example, in one forty-five minute Tamazight class there was counting, vocabulary review, object identification, letter identification, and reading and writing practice, all in a coherent lesson plan that followed the curriculum designed by IRCAM. Having witnessed extremely successful Tamazight lessons, I know it can be done. Yet, unfortunately, it does seem to be more of the exception than the rule.

While the nature of the Tamazight language program undoubtedly has the greatest chance of success in Tamazight-speaking regions, where students and teachers are familiar with the language, it is exactly those schools that have the fewest resources and most difficulties. In the schools I visited, successful implementation was made difficult by the harsh circumstances under which the program was expected to exist, specifically the difficulties that come from teaching in rural schools, such as a lack of appropriate materials and classrooms space, and a lack of educational supports outside the classroom.

I have argued that it seems as though the policy was designed in a specific way to ensure that it struggled with implementation. This is not uncommon for Morocco; Crawford (2005) observes that “many have noted that the Moroccan monarchy bases something of its practical relevance on its ability to manipulate sectarian politics” (2005 p.188). His ability to maintain

politicized divisions to serve his own interests is manifested in the design of bureaucratic oversight of the Tamazight language program. By granting the Ministry of Education ultimate responsibility for selection of schools and teacher training, the King practically guaranteed difficulties. It is not feasible to expect Arabic-speaking teachers in urban cities of Morocco, who have little to no exposure to Tamazight, to be able to instruct students in a new language after only three days of training. A sincere commitment to language instruction requires bilingual teachers (see Skutnabb-Kangas 1999), a fact that IRCAM recognized when requesting that only Tamazight-speaking teachers be trained.

A sincere commitment to both education and linguistic instruction would rely on a politics of differentiation that recognizes that the *same* treatment rarely means *equitable* treatment. Urban areas may lack qualified Tamazight teachers yet have sufficient resources and time to teach the program. In contrast, while some rural areas may have an abundance of Tamazight-speaking teachers, they may have specific demands on their time that prevent implementation. Specifically, in failing to consider the very different needs of urban and rural students and teachers with regards to Tamazight, policy implementation was doomed to struggle.

It is important to realize that while implementation of language policy is always difficult, it is not always, and does not have to be, undermined by its own design. Recognizing the more cynical nature of the policy suggests that the problems the policy faces in implementation cannot simply be written off to the difficulties of implementation generally. Despite the best of intentions of practitioners, sheer hard work by itself may not overcome such problems; instead, the whole design of the policy must be viewed as flawed.

In short, the monarch devised a process for implementation that was based an entirely top-down bureaucratic model; designed to be exactly the same in all schools, it did not take into

consideration communities' distinct needs and the vast differences between students, teachers and schools throughout the nation. Moreover, the policy not only divided implementation responsibilities between two organizations with diverging viewpoints, but also gave ultimate control to the unsupportive Ministry of Education. The metaphor of language drama helps us recognize that the circumstances under which the policy was implemented were not naturally occurring, but instead were constructed to serve the interests of the monarchy, the director, and as a result, the policy's design seems to benefit the monarch most clearly, perhaps at the expense of Tamazight language learners.

### **Conclusion: Another Perspective on Tamazight Language Education**

As a policy which, as Crawford says, “stands to have different uses for different actors” (Crawford 2005 p.188), the policy should be understood as having varied purposes and potentials depending on the community it serves. In addition to the normative arguments for linguistic recognition and cultural rights which underscore the introduction of Tamazight into Moroccan schools, there is another, often-overlooked argument for teaching Tamazight in primary schools in Tamazight-speaking regions: the educational benefits of mother tongue education. The potential educational benefits of teaching Tamazight are all but forgotten in most discussions of the Amazigh movement and the decision to teach Tamazight in schools. In the King's edict for the creation of IRCAM, he makes several references to the importance of identity recognition and the nation's multicultural heritage, but not one to the educational benefits of minority-language education. While the potential educational benefits of mother language education should never be overlooked, in a country such as Morocco, with thirty-percent of its population

schooled in a non-native language, dramatic educational underachievement and a struggling economy, it is all but essential to address the intersection of language, education and society.

Even while recognizing the diversity of both the Imazighen and rural populations throughout the country, it is worth noting that the majority of rural Moroccans are Imazighen and rural poverty in Morocco is dramatic. According to Crawford (2002) “World Bank data show that the number of Moroccans living on less than a dollar a day, what the Bank calls ‘below the absolute poverty line’ has increased 50 per cent since 1991 to nearly a fifth of the population” (2002 p. 64). He explains that the extremely poor are disproportionately found in the rural and mountainous areas of Morocco, which are predominantly Tamzight-speaking.

Crawford also recognizes the link between educational attainments and national capacity development. Quoting Remy and Leveau he states that “Morocco has a 60 per cent illiteracy rate and in 1998 it ranked 125<sup>th</sup> in the world on the United Nations Human Development Index. It is a long way behind Algeria and Tunisia, and even behind Egypt and Syria, looking at the statistics for schooling, health care and per capita GDP” (2002 p. 65). He notes that while these statistics already paint a grim picture for Morocco as a whole, the situation of the rural marginalized Imazighen must be much worse.

Although it would seem that the recognition that Morocco has been educating its large Amazigh population exclusively in Arabic would be a central consideration in discussions of the nation’s consistent educational and economic underperformance, this connection is hardly addressed in the literature on the Moroccan education system. A 1994 World Bank study found startling differences in educational participation and achievement among rural and urban Moroccans, including the statistic that of 200 children in rural areas, only 4 will graduate high school, 11 will graduate middle school and only 58 will graduate primary school (1994 p. 9; see

also UNESCO 2005). Moreover, the educational achievement of rural students is only 70 to 80 percent of that of urban students in both Arabic and math, and roughly half in French (1994 p. 9). The study attributes these dramatic differences in educational achievement between rural and urban students to the underdevelopment of rural sectors and overall poor quality of rural schools. While the connection between rural and Tamazight-speaking may seem obvious, the World Bank study did not mention language as a variable at all; instead it only looked at supply and demand factors such as electricity, irrigation, access to schooling, etc. Moreover, while the study does mention the importance of latent school quality, the variables observed recorded only include quantifiable factors such as teacher experience and class size. Thus, while the study is useful at making regional comparisons, it is unable to take into consideration a range of factors that help keep students in schools such as overall attitudes towards schooling and the teaching environment. This omission is telling; the importance of linguistic differences among Moroccans seems to be overlooked by both the country's government and international organizations.

Perhaps one of the only mentions made to the connection between educational achievement and language is found in Crawford's (2002) analysis of the political and economic import of the Imazighen: "An issue like education – fundamental to both World Bank attempts to ameliorate rural poverty and a major hope of people in rural villages – would seem obviously tied to the question of how to teach rural Berber speaking children an urban Arabic curriculum" (2002 p. 65). He explains that in his search of all World Bank studies on relevant issues, including rural education, he has found, "no reference to Berber speaking Moroccans at all" (2002 p. 65). Unfortunately, this omission not only denies linguistic differences, but potentially contributes to perpetuating educational and economic disparities in rural Tamazight-speaking Moroccans and urban Arabic-speaking Moroccans.

Minority-language education in Morocco could stand to dramatically improve educational attainments and quality of life for Morocco's rural Imazighen. The call for mother tongue education for minority-language speakers is based on research from numerous countries; there is strong evidence that minority language education improves educational outcomes in myriad ways including academic achievement, graduation rates and attitudes towards schooling (see Delpit 1995; Collier 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas 1999). In the case of Morocco, a mother language educational program that recognizes the unique language and traditions of Imazighen and the importance of the Imazighen in Moroccan history, while also teaching Arabic by stressing its religious, economic, political and social significance in contemporary Morocco, could potentially improve educational outcomes of Moroccan Imazighen students.

Considering the limited utility of Tamazight literacy in contemporary Morocco, the potential danger of moving too far towards Tamazight and away from Arabic and foreign languages and the lack of supportive literacy materials in Tamazight, perhaps the real purpose of a Tamazight language program should not be to build a strong foundation of first language literacy upon which students can then learn Arabic. Instead, a well-designed Tamazight language education program could recognize and affirm the home language and culture of Tamazight-speaking students, potentially enhancing student attitudes towards schooling. An additive Tamazight bilingual education program could allow students to retain their home language and culture, while simultaneously accessing important literacy skills of wider communication.

I will now attempt to provide some concluding insights into the Tamazight policy as it has been designed and implemented thus far. First, it is clear that the contradictory aims of the monarchy and the Ministry of Education have undermined the effectiveness of language

education. If true language education is envisioned then IRCAM and the Ministry of Education must work together to must lay out specific goals for Tamazight acquisition. This requires developing more than arbitrary numerical goals for schools in which the program will be introduced. Nonetheless, recognizing the importance of Tamazight should not exclude the importance of also recognizing the importance of Arabic language and literacy acquisition.

Second, there must be a sincere commitment to the policy at all levels of its administration and cooperation among those in charge of implementation. For Morocco, this would require the Ministry of Education to offer supportive oversight. Regional supervisors would need to examine achievement and support student and teacher progress in Tamazight language acquisition.

Third, culturally-sensitive bilingual teachers must be understood as essential to effective policy implementation. Almost all literature on minority-language education programs recognizes the importance of having well-trained bilingual teachers. Teachers must not only be bilingual, but must also be culturally sensitive to the home cultures of their students and must strive to understand and identify with the traditions and distinct needs of their students. Consequently, the nature of teacher training and school assignment must be considered an essential element of effective policy design, not an afterthought. In Morocco, this would require the structure of the teacher training and placement system to be overhauled; as of now, the least experienced teachers are sent to the least desirable schools for two years before being transferred to better schools.

Fifth, my research found that the centralized nature of the Moroccan education system cannot account for vast differences in educational experiences across the country. The needs of rural schools and Tamazight speakers are entirely foreign to the needs of urban Arabic-speaking

schools. Unfortunately, the centralized education system of Morocco designs the curricular week, academic curricula, textbooks and policies from the perspective that all schools are the same. The many suggestions for improvement that arose in my interviews include: permission to design their own schedule so that teachers can attend *suq*, increasing public transportation to and from school, targeting curricula programs and teacher training to deal with the demands of multi-grade classrooms and having more time to meet with administrators and other local teachers. The situation of Morocco would suggest that the distinct needs of rural schools in implementing educational programs must be considered and that national educational systems should consider decentralization.

In short, the dramatic changes that Morocco faces in the coming decades cannot be ignored; the importance of ensuring that all Moroccans have access to both educational and economic opportunities will be closely linked to how the nation deals with educating its rural Imazighen and its urbanizing population. While Tamazight language education is important for all students, regardless of geographic or ethnic origin, we must also recognize the unique potential of Tamazight-language education for rural Imazighen, in which development of a decentralized, culturally sensitive educational program could contribute greatly to the development of the nation as a whole.

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