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## Debate over the Use of Mother Tongue Moroccan Arabic (Darija) in Early Instruction

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**Abstract** In Morocco, the pre-independence language policy did not recognize the mother tongue languages, instead it fostered French as the single medium of instruction in public schools. Since Morocco obtained its independence in 1956, Arabization, the monolingual policy, has promoted the use of Modern Standard Arabic (Fusha) as the sole medium of instruction in public schools. While this policy promotes Fusha, the national language, Berber, and Moroccan Arabic (Darija), the two mother tongues were neglected. In 2000 with the launch of the educational Charter, Berber was introduced in public schools. Also, in recent years, there has been a growing interest in advocating for the use of Darija in early instruction. This article seeks to report conflicting views of policy makers, politicians, and educators on this recent policy, and presents challenges of implementing it. It also offers recommendations for using Darija along with Fusha in schools to alleviate the boundaries between the two varieties of Arabic.

**Keywords** Mother tongue languages in Morocco---Moroccan educational policies---Fusha vs. Darija—Use of Darija in early instruction-- Views on the use of Darija in early instruction

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## 1. Introduction

Upon their independence, colonized countries faced myriad issues and challenges such as infrastructure, economic instability and dependence, ethnic rivalries, and lack of resources. But one of the major issues is the return to national identity and use of mother tongue language as the sole medium of instruction in schools, a language that was eradicated and replaced by the language of the colonizer. This paper reports opposing views and opinions of policy makers, politicians, linguists, educators, and others on the current educational reform that advocates for the use of mother tongue - Moroccan Arabic in early instruction in Moroccan public schools. It consists of five sections. First, a presentation of local and foreign languages spoken in Morocco that characterizes a linguistically diverse and complex society will be followed by an examination of past and present linguistic and educational policies that have influenced the choice of language(s) in schools. The third section consists of reporting conflicting and contradictory views of policy makers, activists, politicians, educators, and others on the recent educational reform that supports the use of mother tongue – Moroccan Arabic (MA) or Darija<sup>1</sup> in early instruction in public schools. In the fourth section, challenges of implementing this recent policy will be considered, and in the fifth and last section, recommendations for using MA as the language of instruction in Morocco along with Standard Arabic (SA) to bridge the boundaries between the two varieties of Arabic and to help students' with learning the Standard variety will be proposed.

## 2. Moroccan Linguistic Situation

Morocco is a multilingual country that boasts a rich linguistic diversity characterized by a presence of local languages (two mother tongues MA or Darija and Berber, Classical Arabic, and (SA), and foreign languages particularly French, Spanish, and English. All these languages have a different status and do not benefit from equal footing in Moroccan's society, particularly in the educational domain.

First, "Berber is considered the indigenous language spoken by the inhabitants of Morocco because its arrival predates all other known languages" (Zouhir, 2013, p.271). In Morocco, as well as in other countries of North Africa, people who speak Berber call themselves Imazighen and refer to their language as Tamazight which is also used in reference to a particular variety of Berber in Morocco, of which there are three dialects: Tarifit spoken in Rif mountains in the North, Tashelhit spoken in the Southwest, especially in the Souss Valley, and Tamazight spoken in the Middle Atlas and the eastern half of the high Atlas Mountains. At least 30% of Moroccans speak one of the three Berber dialects and deem it their mother tongue (Elmraoui, 2007).

Second, Arabic was introduced to Morocco in the seventh century during the Arab invasion and was adopted by Berbers as the language of administration, legislation, and education during that time. Today, three varieties of Arabic co-exist in a triglossic situation (Youssi, 1995) in which they bear a functional and hierarchical relationship. Classical Arabic, the high variety, is the language of the Qur'an and is taught in religious schools and used in religious functions. SA, the modern version of Classical Arabic, is the official language of Morocco. It is used in formal settings, in government and administration. The third variety, MA or Darija, is the mother tongue of all Moroccans, except in Amazigh-speaking area, and the language for everyday communication by both Arabic and Tamazight speakers. It is the low variety since it is a spoken and non-standardized language.

In addition to these local languages, three major foreign languages (French, Spanish, and English) are added to Moroccan repertoire. Among these foreign languages, French is still prevalent in Morocco even after sixty-seven years of independence from French occupation. It is used significantly in many spheres of Moroccan public life, overshadowing local languages in official and unofficial communication. Spanish, on the other hand, is spoken mostly in the North of Morocco because of its geographic proximity to Spain, and in the South of Morocco. The last foreign language is English which occupies a considerable place near French due to globalization. It is used particularly in the fields of tourism, media, and finance. In education, it is taught as a foreign language in high schools and universities, but for several private institutions for higher education, it is the only language of instruction.

## 3. Pre- and Post-independence Educational Policies

During the French protectorate in Morocco from 1912 to 1956, French was imposed and instituted as the main language of instruction at all levels of education in schools, and SA as a foreign language. According to Ezzaki and Wagner (1992), the French colonizers "pursued a policy based on what they perceived to be their *mission*

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the paper, both terms MA and Darija will be interchangeably used to refer to the Moroccan Arabic dialect.

*civilisatrice*" (p.216). This means spreading their language and values by educating Moroccans to believe in the universality and superiority of the French culture and language, which they then imposed in the cities and certain selected rural areas as "the only language of civilization and advancement" (Bourhis 1982, p.14). This French educational policy was intended to weaken the status of SA, the perceived symbol of national and cultural identity by promoting mother tongues (Berber dialects and Arabic vernaculars) through formal teaching, and by closing Arabic Koranic schools in Amazigh-speaking regions. (Redouane, 1998, p.198)

In a similar way, Spanish was introduced by the Spanish colonizer at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the north and south of Morocco. During the Spanish occupation, Spanish was the official language and the language of administration and education. Even though the Spanish followed the same language policy as French in advancing their language and culture in Morocco at the disadvantage of Arabic culture, it did not influence the linguistic situation of Morocco as French did because "there was not any sort of Spanish-style "civilizing mission" directed toward the local population. Its penetration in Morocco was neither pervasive nor as organized as that of French" (Zouhir, 2013, p.274). After the independence, Spanish slowly lost its official status, and its use has decreased because of its absence in the educational system. (Ait Dada, 2011, p.18)

Since Morocco obtained its independence in 1956, it has been a national priority to decrease the use of French and promote SA as a component of national identity, and as the sole medium of instruction and wider communication (Redouane, 1998). Arabization policy was adopted by the newly independent state. Its main goal has been to restore Morocco's Arabo-Islamic identity and assert Morocco's pre-colonial culture through a development of the national, culturally unique educational system – one that provides "an education that is Moroccan in its thinking, Arabic in its language and Muslim in its spirit" (King's speech from the throne, 1958, as quoted by Zartman 1964, 155-56). Arabization policy "denied any interest in mother tongues which were relegated to everyday use only with a devalued and denigrated status" (Loutfi, 2020, p.2).

In the early years following independence, even though a consensus supported Arabization as one of the principal goals of educational policy, its implementation has proven an arduous process. This is because of the political debate between the proponents of a modern and Westernized trend who favor balance bilingual education and the supporters of the Arabo-Islamic culture who advocate for radical Arabization (Redouane, 1998, p.199). The pace and scope of Arabization has depended largely on which of these groups has had more power in the government at a given time. Arabization was at first implemented sporadically, as teachers and funds were available. During the second year of independence, complete Arabization of the first year of primary education was completed. A bilingual policy was adopted for the remaining four years. But Arabization was halted in the mid-sixties and put on a back burner until the 1970s. By the end of 1990-1991 Arabization was completed for all primary and secondary levels in the public schools (Redouane, 1998, p.199). This policy was carried on until 2000, a year that marked the launching of the national Charter of Education and Training by King Mohamed VI.

This Charter provided important changes and reforms in education and introduced a new educational policy that stressed a multilingual education in Morocco by improving the teaching and use of SA, and by promoting the diversification of foreign languages for teaching science and technology. Most importantly, it called for the openness to teaching all the three Berber dialects (Tarifit, Tamazight, and Tashelhit) to satisfy the regional needs of the heterogeneous population, and to give local independence to schools. (Daniel and Ball, 2010, p.131). For the first time in many decades, Tamazight language is officially recognized and deemed as a valued component of Moroccan identity, and "part of the country's cultural inheritance" (COSEF, 2000, p.43). Tamazight was constitutionalized by a Royal Dahir decree as a national language, and declared in 2011 as an official language of Morocco besides SA as proclaimed in Article 5 of Morocco's constitution:

"Tamazight [Berber/amazighe] constitutes an official language of the State, being 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". (Morocco's Constitution, 2011)

In 2001, under the patronage of King Mohamed VI, the Institut Royal de la Culture Amazigh (IRCAM) was established to promote and strengthen Tamazight culture in education and the media and oversee its use and teaching locally and regionally (Benzakour, 2007, p.49). IRCAM's vital role was to standardize and codify Tamazight language. As part of the standardization process, IRCAM chose Tifinagh script, and teaching Tamazight under this script officially occurred in 2003 in 317 public primary schools, first through sixth grade (Errihani, 2008, El-Boukri, 2018). But the

instruction of Tamazight is still hindered by the insufficiency of trained teachers as well as the lack of political interest to implement it in all Moroccan schools (Zakhir and O'Brien, 2019).

Although Moroccan Arabic or Darija is the mother-tongue that most Moroccans learn to speak since their birth, it is not taught in schools. Formal learning in public schools is conducted in Standard Arabic; a language considered a second language for Arabic and non-Arabic speaking Moroccan students. A Moroccan child, whether Berber or Arab, it is within his family that he learns gradually, without even being aware of it, his mother tongue Moroccan Arabic or Berber (Tamazight). Once he gets to school, he will learn Standard Arabic and other foreign languages. The educational system includes three levels: 6 years of primary, 3 years of lower-middle and 3 years of upper secondary. Most Moroccan families enroll their children for two to three years in a pre-school and in a Quranic pre-school. In this latter, they learn the Arabic alphabet and Quran verses until they are of age to attend primary school. At the ages of 5 to 6, children will then attend a primary school for the following 6 years where they are taught in SA and French. English is introduced in public schools until the seventh grade. In the middle school, students also learn another foreign language either English, Spanish, or German. But, in recent years, there has been a call for the use of Darija (MA) in instruction at the elementary level to ease the learning of SA. This interest in reinforcing the significant role played by the mother tongue languages remerged after King Mohammed VI's speech on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013, in which he urged for an educational reform because of the crisis and the problems facing education in Morocco.

Right after the King's speech, Nourredine Ayouch, a well-known Moroccan businessman, philanthropist, and founder of foundation of Zakoura Education<sup>2</sup>, organized an international conference, "Le chemin de la réussite" (The Path to success) on October 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 2013 in Casablanca. This conference gathered policy makers, scholars, linguists, and educators to talk about different areas of educational reform. One of the recommendations made by Ayouch and his team to the King was the use of a codified form of mother tongue MA as the language of instruction from preschool through the first two years of primary school with a gradual transition to SA in the third grade, thus preparing the way for developing reading and writing skills in SA (Hall, 2015, p.278). A rationale behind this proposal was that Moroccan children struggle and drop out of school because they are taught in a language they do not speak at home. So, since Darija is the mother tongue of most Moroccan children and is spoken and understood by most Amazigh-speaking children, its use in the educational system in early years of education might be beneficial for early leaning because it would facilitate and ease the acquisition of SA.

The use of mother tongue as medium of instruction has been found by researchers and educators to be valuable for school learners, especially in the first years of primary school. According to a report of the Hong Kong Education Department (1965), the use of mother tongue in teaching and learning facilitates the intake of knowledge, mastery of concepts, and discussion in the classroom. Also, in 1984 a Commission Report of the same department indicated that mother tongue is the best instructional medium for teaching and learning (Ejeh, p.73).

Various research studies on mother tongue education carried out in different contexts (e.g., Ndamba, 2008; Iyamu, 2005; Ejeh, 2004; Abiri, 2003; Mohanlal, 2001, among others) reveal that the best medium for teaching a child is the mother tongue because this is the language that children understand best and express themselves freely in (Ndamba, 2008; Njoroge & Gathigia, 2011).

#### 4. Reactions to the Use of Darija in Early Instruction in Moroccan Public Schools

The proposal to standardize mother tongue MA or Darija and use it in early instruction in public schools, however, was met with resentment and skepticism and initiated heated debates among policy makers, politicians, activists, educators, and linguists. While some advocate for Darija's early instruction, others firmly oppose this idea. The paragraphs below report the views and positions of different Moroccans regarding the legitimacy and efficiency of using Darija at public schools in early instruction.

Following the October colloquium, a debate between Nouredine Ayouch and the historian Abdellah Laroui took place on November 27, 2013 in a televised program called "Moubacharatan Maâakoum" for Ayouch to defend his proposal and for Laroui to defend the use of SA. Ayouch's argument for using Darija as a language of instruction is that it is the main mother tongue and more than 89% of Moroccans use it to communicate. He endorsed his argument

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<sup>2</sup> The foundation of Zakoura Education, a local educational foundation, was founded in 1997. Its aim is to look after literacy courses in the rural areas and on the high drop-out rates among children in Moroccan public schools. [https://www.fondationzakoura.org/notre\\_histoire.html](https://www.fondationzakoura.org/notre_histoire.html)

by referring to the UNESCO's (2008) recommendations, which propose that children who begin their instruction with their mother tongue continue to perform better than children who must acquire another language when they enter school (Ball, 2010).

Laroui, on the other hand, expressed his opposition to this policy during the debate by stating that Darija should not be used into the scholarly domain because it "is not sufficiently rich to be utilized as a part of the educated community and is not able to offer the information base that [standard] Arabic is right now giving." (The complex language debate in Morocco – al Jazeera English, 2015, p.2). He added that since teaching and learning are essentially associated with written textbooks, and that the main role for oral communication in school is to access these written books, Darija cannot fulfil this role. He also claimed that Darija cannot be used as a medium of instruction for higher learning because it cannot be classified at the same level as other foreign languages (Hall, 2015).

Among those who support Ayouch's claim is Khalil Mgharfaoui, a professor in linguistics at Chouaib Dokkali University in Al-Jadida, who claims that advancing for Darija in education system "is not to get rid of SA, but to give Darija the status it deserves. SA is and has been a reality for a long time in Morocco and there is no plot against it." (El Boukri, 2018, p.32). Ahmed Najim, Chief executive of Goud, an online magazine is another advocate for this policy who asserts that "Darija is fascinating in the sense that it is very close to the Moroccan psyche. It simply strikes a chord with readers and has a huge impact". (The complex language debate, 2014, p.2). For him, the use of Darija in early instruction could help improve Morocco's education dilemma because Moroccan students are often baffled by the switch from Darija at home to SA at school.

However, Fouad Abou Ali, president of the National Coalition for the Defense of Arabic Language, a grassroots advocacy organization, and Moqri Abouzayd, member of the Justice and Development Party (PJD) party and of the Parliament, join Laroui in opposing this proposal by asserting that the problem is not simply linguistic but political, averring that this is another ploy to divide Moroccan society and deprive it of its Arab and Islamic heritage (The complex language debate, 2014, p. 2). Similarly, Abouzayd and Laroui also argue that adopting an unwritten tongue with a regional variation in instruction is an attempt to divide Moroccan society and culture. For instance, Fouad Abou Ali states that SA is "the language of Islam and endeavors to estrange its focus on the social and religious quality framework it speaks to, and will strip away Morocco's Arabic and Islamic characters" (The complex language debate in Morocco, al Jazeera English, 2015, p.2). Moqri Abouzayd, on the other hand, criticizes this policy and condemns it as "an endeavor to obliterate the establishments of the country and a scheme against Islam." (The complex language debate, 2014, p. 2)

Besides these two conflicting groups, there are those who consider the two varieties SA and MA as compatible and should function harmoniously in Moroccan educational system. While "Darija assumes an open part, ... Fusha [SA] is all the more unmistakably utilized as a part of training, organization, and the media." (The complex language debate in Morocco – al Jazeera English, 2015, p.2)

For example, Mohammed Balboul trusts that both varieties of Arabic language should be a source of dignity and sense of worth for Moroccans, not an origin of disputes and divergences. He adds that the two varieties represent "who we are as Moroccans", and "we should equally take care of both of them and not use one at the expense of the other." (The complex language debate, 2014, p.4) Taoufik El Yazidy, a sociolinguistics professor at Mohammed V University's Arabization Institute, also argues that from a linguistic and etymological point of view, both SA and Darija should be viewed as paired because they share many similarities, offer a considerable Arabic vocabulary, and have a comparative structure. According to El Yazidy "Darija plays a communicative role, while Fusha [SA] is more prominently used in education, administration, and the media". He adds that Darija should be limited only to colloquial settings, as it is "is not rich enough to be used in academia and is unable to offer the knowledge base that standard Arabic is currently providing." (Mermelstein, 2018, p.6)

In September 2018 there was a vast protest among Moroccans, especially parents when the Ministry of Education published some elementary school Arabic textbooks with words in Darija, the unwritten MA dialect, instead of SA to name Moroccan traditional dishes like "ghriyba" (a Moroccan cookie), "baghrir" (Moroccan crepes), and "briouat" (a sweet/savory puff pastry) (Ben Saga, 2018). Moroccans criticized this incorporation of these MA words in the textbooks, claiming that Darija is an impure variety of Arabic and inappropriate for children's successful mastering of SA. But, Said Amzazi, a politician and Minister of National Education, approved of the use of these words in Darija and said, in a statement to Akhbar Alyaoum (an electronic newspaper), that the use of Darija for naming Moroccan dishes in the textbooks is simply for educational purposes. (Ben Saga, 2018)

The above reactions reveal that the reform for using Darija in early instruction has not received full support because it is perceived as an oral variety which is not valued. Notwithstanding that Darija, nowadays, is gaining popularity in different domains and sectors such as advertising and marketing, online media, television, and radio for broadcasting programs. It has also become a functioning and operational language in debates and conferences between intellectuals and politicians about political subjects and issues. These new roles which Darija is playing in society are considered by many as a major change in the status of languages in Morocco, which might require a revision of the language policy in the future.

## 5. Challenges of Implementation of this Policy

Most educational policies face challenges that hinder their implementation and this policy is no exception. One of the challenges could be attributed to practical factors. Individuals who called for this policy seem to act alone and are driven by ideological considerations rather than by educational values of the policy and real needs and concerns of individuals. Ayouch, one big proponent of this policy and mostly known as “an adamant francophone” has been accused by critics of “trying to serve a foreign agenda against the Arabic and Islamic identity of the country, though creating a dis-unified society whose communities would have different views shaped by their distinct languages, which would eventually lead to the alienation of SA” (Loutfi and Noamane, 2020, p.3). He was even attacked by Abdelilah Benkirane, the former Prime Minister of Morocco, who called him a businessman who continuously tries to find someone to sell his country to (Al Raji, 2014). In addition, the proposal for this reform was not supported by the Ministry of Education. Until now no partnership has been established between this governmental entity and Ayouch to carefully study this proposal and test its validity. The only initiative undertaken by the Ministry of education has been the defense of the use of words in Darija in the primary school textbooks as mentioned in section III.

Another challenge could be appertained to an attitudinal factor. A considerable number of studies have reported that most Moroccans hold negative attitudes towards their mother tongues -Darija and Tamazight (e.g., Loutfi, 2020; Loutfi et al., 2020; Belhiah and Lamallam, 2020; Ait, Dada, 2011; El Kirat, Hajjam & Blila 2010; and Errihani, 2008 among others). For example, in Loutfi’s study (2020) that examined the status of language in use in Morocco and the impact of Arabization on the status of mother tongues, the findings reveal that most respondents (teachers and students) express negative attitudes towards their mother tongues and disapprove of the idea of introducing them in education because these languages might undervalue the status of Arabic. “For them, Arabic is the language which represents them and with which they project their identity in the world. The nature of this negative attitude is motivated by the fact that these mother tongues, particularly MA, are neither officially recognized by the state nor the language guarantees economic returns” (p.10).

Also, findings of Belhiah et al.’s study (2020) which examined students’ and teachers’ perceptions on the use of Amazigh and Darija as medium of instruction in Morocco show that “while teachers and students alike agree that mother tongues can facilitate learning, mother tongues are less likely to be adopted as official media of instruction due to economic and socio-political factors” (p.92). In addition, the results of Ait Dada’s study (2011) about Moroccan’s attitudes towards their mother tongues reveal that Darija is perceived as “corrupt and incorrect form of Arabic, which is associated with poverty and downgrade and therefore considered to be inferior to Classical Arabic for it is neither codified nor standardized” (p.19). Furthermore, in El Kirat et al.’s study (2010), about language attitudes towards the mother tongues and the language in use in Morocco among the students at Mohammed V University in Rabat, it was revealed that respondents’ language choice and attitudes are determined by their language instruction and by the importance of global impacts of the language. Several respondents have expressed an instrumental attachment to French and English through their use for social promotion, a sentimental attachment to SA. However, the use of mother tongues was associated with communication in informal domains for the use of mother tongues (p.348).

Even though Darija is one of the mother tongues along with Tamazight, Moroccans hold negative attitudes towards it because they consider it not a significant and valuable language to be used in instruction in schools. Moroccans who are for bilingual education in two languages might appreciate the principles behind teaching Darija, but, for practical reasons, they prefer foreign languages, mainly French because of their value, and because they guarantee success in the job market. Others, however, hold a favorable attitude toward teaching and learning MA, feeling that using MA is somehow the right thing to do, and that there is an obligation for them to promote the merit of MA.

Another factor that could cause hindrance to a successful implementation is the nature of MA. In Morocco there are an abundance of regional variations of MA (e.g., Rabati, Fassi, Marrakshi, Shamali, etc.). So, the question which



regional variation of Darija should be resorted to for instruction in schools? Another problem is the lexicon of MA which is deemed distant from that of SA due to lexical borrowings from French, Spanish and Tamazight. This makes MA and SA two distinct and separate languages rather than varieties on a continuum which will make the transition from one to the other uncertain and difficult. Loutfi et al., (2020) argue that since MA is a corrupt form of Classical Arabic and its lexicon is not rich enough to cover fields that are represented by SA, it should be thus limited only to everyday communication.

## 6. Recommendations for the Use of Darija in Early Instruction

In the remaining pages of this paper, I will recommend some steps towards the use of Darija in early instruction in public schools. First more attention should be paid to the way SA is presented to the students. Since it is not the first acquired language, but is formally taught in school, an alternative approach to its teaching should integrate MA in the classroom context. A significant merit of this approach is that it takes advantage of the fact that MA and SA are varieties of the same language which share a number of linguistic features and alleviates some of the problems between the dialect and the standard in instructing and explaining the language would ease some of the problems facing the students in learning SA and facilitate their understanding as it was expressed by primary and secondary teachers who were observed by Loutfi in his (2020) study. Even though teachers expressed negative attitudes on their questionnaire answers, their classroom observation showed the opposite. MA was extremely used as the language of introduction and explanation in both schools because it makes students “feel at ease and have access to the information being delivered easily” (Loutfi, 2020, p.10).

Another suggestion is offering instruction in a suitable form of MA and developing adequate terminology compatible with the modern world. Both Ayouch and Laroui recommend a new form of MA as the language of instruction that would be easy for children to learn and understand. Laroui called for a simplified form of Darija “Lugha mubassata” only for oral use. This simplified form of Moroccan Arabic “will keep its Arabness but with a Moroccan touch making it easier for the students to understand MSA” (El-Boukri, 2018, p.30). Ayouch, on the other hand, calls for the use of “Lugha mubassata” that will keep its Moroccanness but with an Arabic touch. “Both Ayouch and Laroui wish for a development in language but with different grounds. One wants to bring SA closer to the students in an easier manner to understand, using traits that the students can recognize from their daily speech, and the other want to implement darija in school and bringing closer the similar factors of the two varieties focusing more on the Moroccan variety” (El-Boukri, 2018, pp.30-31).

Committing to his beliefs, Ayouch launched a project in 2012 by opening a Center for Developing Darija within his foundation Zakoura Education in Casablanca. The goal of this center is to prepare the necessary means and materials to facilitate teaching Darija at school. The first assignment of the center was a creation of a MA dictionary where Moroccan words are written with Arabic letters as the director of the center Khalil Mgharfaoui confirmed in an interview.

Also, the Moroccan variety used for the dictionary is the one used in two central Moroccan regions (Casablanca-Settat and Rabat-Salé-Kenitra). This MA regional variety represents the largest population group and is understood in all Morocco. (Chebal, 2016, p.2).

Upgrading teaching methodology for Darija would be another worthwhile step for successful transition to SA. Most textbooks that have been used to teach SA focus mainly on writing and reading, ignoring the oral aspect of the language. Teachers teach grammatical structures and use traditional practice exercises and activities. In teaching Darija, textbooks should deal with everyday life situations and reflect meaningful real situations and contexts, and teachers should use authentic materials, communicative-based tasks, and activities to focus more on the oral skill. Since most Arabic and Berber-speaking Moroccan children, before reaching the age of formal schooling, attend Koranic pre-schools from age 4 to 6 where they learn Arabic alphabet and some reading skills in SA. So, this written and reading knowledge in SA gained in Koranic schools should be used as early as kindergarten to foster oral competency along with Darija (Daniel & Ball, 2010, p.133). Also, teachers in kindergarten and the first two years of primary schools should be encouraged to modernize their use of mother tongues MA and Tamazight based on the origin of students to make them familiar with the school life and maximize their benefit from education (Zakhir et al., p.74).

Providing competent and suitably trained local teachers who could work through the medium of same variety of MA would help implement this reform successfully. This must begin with the preparation of competent teaching staff, so that the teaching of MA can continue through the system. Before planning to introduce MA at early instruction, it

would seem reasonable to make sure that enough teachers at the higher level are given timely preparation. This would avoid the problem of having students, upon achieving a more advanced level, face the problem of not continuing with the same variety.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper described the Moroccan linguistic landscape and examined past and present linguistic and educational policies that have influenced the choice and the vehicle of language(s) in schools. Most importantly, it highlighted Moroccans' views and positions towards the recent reform that advocates for the codification of mother tongue Darija and its instrumentation in early instruction in public schools. Policy makers, politicians, activists, educators, and scholars openly expressed their views and their personal agenda regarding this reform. Their arguments and positions indicate that this reform is not only about an instructional problem, but it also concerns broader social and political issues such as national identity, religion, political economy and belonging. The question of using mother tongue or any local language in education is crucial not only because it reflects the value of this language in society, but it also raises questions about speakers' perceptions and attitudes towards this language and its agency. What the future holds for the use of MA is uncertain, but obviously its use in education depends, not only, on the ability of policy makers to promote its use, but also on reducing the linguistic tensions between the languages that exist in the society and giving each language the right and place it deserves in education.

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