

## Translation and the Promotion of Tamazight in Morocco: A Reanalysis of Language Attitudes in Light of Post-2011 Developments

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**Abstract:** This article revisits data collected in 2009 on attitudes towards the role of translation in promoting Tamazight in Morocco. The original study was based on a questionnaire administered to Amazigh activists, teachers, and university students and examined perceptions of translation into and out of Tamazight, preferred text types, and perceived obstacles to language promotion. Using contemporary theoretical frameworks from sociolinguistics, language revitalisation studies, and translation studies, the article reanalyses these findings in light of the 2011 Moroccan Constitution, which recognised Amazigh as an official language. The results indicate that while translation is widely perceived as culturally and symbolically valuable, it is not viewed as sufficient for effective language revitalisation in the absence of standardisation, education, and institutional support. The article argues that translation functions primarily as a mechanism of symbolic recognition rather than linguistic normalisation and discusses implications for current language policy and cultural planning in Morocco.

**Keywords:** language attitudes, language revitalisation, minoritised languages, Morocco, Tamazight, translation, standardisation

### 1. Introduction

Across the globe, minority and indigenous languages continue to face significant challenges arising from historical marginalisation, state language hierarchies, and the dominance of global languages. In response, research in sociolinguistics, language policy, and cultural studies has increasingly focused on language revitalisation strategies that extend beyond formal education and institutional planning to include cultural production, media, and translation. Translation, in particular, has gained ground not only as a linguistic activity but also as a social and symbolic practice capable of enhancing the visibility, legitimacy, and circulation of minoritised languages.<sup>1</sup>

In multilingual societies, translation occupies an inherently ambivalent position. On the one hand, it enables access to dominant languages and facilitates intercultural exchange; on the other, it may either empower or marginalise minority languages depending on the direction of translation, the genres involved, and the institutional conditions under which it is produced. Consequently, translation has become a key site for examining language ideologies, power relations, and community attitudes towards linguistic diversity.

The Moroccan sociolinguistic context offers a particularly relevant case for exploring these dynamics. Morocco is characterised by the coexistence of several languages and varieties, including Standard Arabic, Moroccan Arabic, French, and Tamazight (Amazigh)<sup>2</sup>. Despite being spoken by a substantial proportion of the population,

<sup>1</sup> The classification of Tamazight as a “minority language” is contested, given the substantial number of Moroccans who identify as Amazigh and the language’s recent recognition as an official language. In this study, the term *minoritised language* is used to emphasise socio-political processes of marginalisation rather than demographic size. Tamazight is therefore treated as minoritised insofar as its use remains limited in formal domains and, significantly, because a considerable number of Amazigh individuals do not use Tamazight as a language of daily communication. This analytical choice does not deny the language’s demographic or symbolic importance but reflects its constrained functional status within contemporary Moroccan society.

<sup>2</sup> The terms *Tamazight* and *Amazigh* are used interchangeably in the literature and in this article. However, Tamazight is used more precisely to refer to the language, while Amazigh refers to the speakers of the language and, by extension, to cultural

Tamazight was historically excluded from formal domains such as education, administration, and publishing. This long-standing exclusion contributed to its widespread perception as an oral, regional, or cultural language rather than as a fully functional national language.

Within this context, translation has frequently been proposed as a mechanism for promoting Tamazight. Translating religious texts, oral literature, and literary works into and out of Tamazight has been viewed by activists, scholars, and cultural practitioners as a means of preserving Amazigh heritage, asserting linguistic identity, and enhancing the symbolic status of the language. At the same time, such initiatives have generated heated debates regarding their actual effectiveness, particularly in light of persistent challenges related to standardisation, literacy, and readership.

A major shift in the official status of Tamazight occurred with the adoption of the 2011 Moroccan Constitution, which recognised Amazigh as an official language alongside Arabic. This constitutional recognition was widely celebrated as a milestone in the struggle for linguistic and cultural rights and was followed by organic laws intended to facilitate the integration of Amazigh into education, public administration, and the media. Nevertheless, more than a decade later, the practical impact of these legal measures remains uneven. Many of the structural issues identified prior to 2011, including limited standardisation, insufficient educational resources, and weak translation infrastructure, continue to shape language practices and public attitudes.

Against this backdrop, revisiting earlier empirical studies on language attitudes is both timely and analytically valuable. Attitudes towards translation reveal how speakers and non-speakers conceptualise the role of language in society, what expectations they place on translation as a tool of promotion, and how these expectations intersect with broader language ideologies. Rather than viewing pre-2011 data as outdated, such data can illuminate enduring constraints that constitutional recognition alone cannot resolve.

This article revisits a questionnaire-based study conducted in 2009 among Amazigh activists, teachers, and university students in southern Morocco. The original study examined perceptions of translation as a means of promoting Tamazight, preferences regarding translation into versus out of the language, preferred genres of translated texts, and perceived obstacles to the effectiveness of translation. At the time, Tamazight had not yet been granted official status, making the data particularly revealing of grassroots perceptions formed in the absence of formal state recognition.

The present article does not seek to replicate the original analysis but rather to reinterpret its findings through contemporary theoretical frameworks in sociolinguistics and translation studies. By situating the data within current debates on language revitalisation, language ideology, and translation as symbolic capital, the study reassesses the role attributed to translation in the promotion of Tamazight. In doing so, it highlights a key distinction that also underpins the article's conclusion: the difference between translation as a symbolic act of recognition and translation as an instrument of linguistic normalisation.

The central argument advanced here is that translation is widely perceived as culturally and symbolically significant, yet rarely regarded as sufficient for effective language revitalisation. Respondents' attitudes suggest that translation is valued primarily for its role in affirming Amazigh identity and disseminating cultural heritage, particularly through the translation of oral literature, rather than for expanding everyday language use or literacy. This perception remains consistent with post-2011 realities, where symbolic recognition has advanced more rapidly than functional implementation.

### 1.1. Problem Statement

Despite increased scholarly interest in translation as a tool for minority language promotion, there remains limited empirical understanding of how communities themselves perceive its effectiveness, particularly in contexts where languages lack full standardisation and institutional support. In Morocco, although Tamazight has gained official status since 2011, translation practices continue to operate within structural constraints related to dialectal

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and identity-related dimensions. This distinction is not always maintained in academic and political discourse, and both terms may overlap depending on context.

fragmentation, limited literacy, and uneven policy implementation. The problem addressed in this study lies in the gap between the symbolic recognition of translation as a marker of linguistic legitimacy and its limited capacity to function as an instrument of everyday language normalisation. By revisiting attitudinal data collected prior to constitutional recognition, this article seeks to identify persistent obstacles that continue to shape the role of translation in the promotion of Tamazight.

## 1.2. Rationale of the Study

The rationale for revisiting this study is threefold. First, attitudinal studies constitute a crucial yet often underutilised dimension of language policy and planning research. The original survey captured perceptions at a formative moment in the institutionalisation of Tamazight, shortly after the creation of IRCAM (The Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture) and before constitutional recognition. Second, translation has frequently been invoked in theoretical discussions of minority language revitalisation, yet empirical evidence on how communities perceive its effectiveness remains limited. The present study foregrounds community voices rather than institutional discourse. Third, revisiting earlier data enables a diachronic perspective. By examining attitudes formed prior to major policy shifts, the study contributes to understanding which challenges are structural and persistent, and which are policy-dependent.

## 1.3. Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several respects:

- It contributes to debates on translation as a tool of language revitalisation, particularly in multilingual and diglossic contexts.
- It sheds light on Amazigh community perceptions, often overlooked in top-down language planning frameworks.
- It highlights the asymmetry between translation into and out of Tamazight, an issue central to cultural circulation and symbolic capital.
- It provides historically grounded evidence that remains relevant to current discussions on standardisation, script choice, and readership.

## 1.4. Research Objectives

The study seeks to:

1. To examine attitudes toward translation as a means of promoting Tamazight.
2. To identify preferences regarding translation into and out of Tamazight.
3. To explore perceived obstacles to the effectiveness of translation.
4. To assess the perceived role of translating oral literature in disseminating Amazigh identity.
5. To analyse how the absence of standardisation shapes attitudes toward translation.

### 1.1. Research Questions

The article addresses the following research questions:

1. How do Amazigh activists, teachers, and students perceive the role of translation in promoting Tamazight?
2. Is translation into Tamazight viewed differently from translation out of Tamazight?
3. What types of texts are most valued in translation?
4. What obstacles are perceived as limiting the effectiveness of translation?
5. How does the absence of a standardised Tamazight affect attitudes towards translation?

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Translation and Language Revitalisation

Language revitalisation refers to deliberate efforts aimed at increasing the vitality, functionality and intergenerational transmission of languages that are endangered or have experienced long-term marginalisation. Within sociolinguistics and language planning research, revitalisation can be understood as a multidimensional

process involving education, policy, literacy, media, and community engagement (Fishman, 1991; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). Translation has increasingly been discussed as one of the cultural and symbolic mechanisms that may support such efforts, although its role remains contested.

Early work on language revitalisation tended to focus primarily on domains of use and intergenerational transmission, often privileging education and family language practices as central to reversing language shift (Fishman, 1991). From this perspective, translation occupies a peripheral position, as it does not directly generate new speakers nor guarantee everyday language use. However, more recent scholars have argued that revitalisation cannot be reduced to speaker numbers alone and must also address issues of prestige, legitimacy, and symbolic presence (Hornberger, 2008; Johnson, 2013). It is within this broader understanding that translation has gained renewed relevance.

Translation contributes to language revitalisation by increasing the visibility of minoritised languages in written and public domains. By translating prestigious or widely circulated texts, such as religious works, literature, or institutional documents, into a minority language, translation can challenge dominant ideologies which confine that language to oral or informal domains (Cronin, 2003). In this sense, translation operates as a form of symbolic elevation, positioning the target language as capable of expressing complex, abstract, or authoritative content.

Several scholars have emphasised that translation can function as a legitimising practice rather than a purely communicative one. Cronin (2003) argues that translation into minority languages often serves to “assert existence” in contexts where linguistic marginalisation has rendered those languages invisible. Similarly, Venuti (1998) mentions how translation participates in the politics of representation, shaping which languages are seen as worthy of circulation and recognition. For minoritised languages, translation may therefore act as a declaration of linguistic presence rather than as a tool of mass communication.

At the same time, research consistently warns against overestimating the transformative power of translation in the absence of structural support. Grenoble and Whaley (2006) note that revitalisation initiatives that focus heavily on symbolic measures, such as publications or translations, risk limited impact if they are not accompanied by sustained investment in education, literacy, and community-based language use. Translation may enhance prestige, but it does not automatically expand functional domains unless readers are able and motivated to engage with the translated texts.

This tension is particularly evident in contexts where the target language lacks full standardisation or widespread literacy. Hornberger’s (2008) integrative framework for language revitalisation stresses that ideological, implementational and educational spaces must align for revitalisation efforts to succeed. Translation initiatives that operate in isolation, without consensus on orthography, norms, or readership, may reinforce symbolic recognition while leaving everyday practices unchanged.

Empirical studies on minority languages have shown that translation is often valued more highly for translation out of the language than into it. Translating texts from a minority language into dominant languages enables cultural dissemination and external recognition, whereas translation into the minority language may face limited uptake due to restricted readership (McCarty, 2011). This asymmetry reflects broader power relations in multilingual settings and highlights the unequal distribution of linguistic capital.

From a critical perspective, translation in revitalisation contexts can therefore be understood as operating along a continuum between symbolic recognition and instrumental normalisation. Symbolic recognition refers to the affirmation of a language’s cultural and political legitimacy, while instrumental normalisation involves the expansion of its routine use across social domains (Bourdieu, 1991; Johnson, 2013). Translation tends to contribute more readily to the former than to the latter, particularly in early or transitional stages of revitalisation.

In the Moroccan context, these insights are especially pertinent. Prior to the 2011 constitutional recognition of Tamazight, translation into this language often functioned as a symbolic act of resistance and identity assertion. Even after official recognition, the effectiveness of translation remains constrained by issues of standardisation, literacy, and institutional implementation. Revisiting attitudes toward translation therefore provides a valuable lens through which to assess the limits and possibilities of translation as a component of broader language

revitalisation strategies.

To sum up, translation can play a meaningful but necessarily limited role in language revitalisation. It contributes to visibility, prestige, and symbolic legitimacy, yet it cannot substitute for comprehensive language planning or educational reform. Understanding translation as part of an interconnected ecosystem, rather than as an autonomous solution, allows for a more realistic assessment of its role in promoting minoritised languages such as Tamazight.

## 2.2. Language Attitudes and Ideology

Language attitudes refer to individuals' beliefs, evaluations, and emotional responses toward languages and their speakers. In sociolinguistics, attitudes are not treated as purely personal opinions but as socially constructed positions shaped by historical, political, and ideological forces (Garrett, 2010). Because attitudes influence language use, transmission and policy acceptance, they are widely recognised as a crucial factor in language maintenance and revitalisation.

Language ideology provides the conceptual framework for understanding how such attitudes are formed and sustained. Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) define language ideologies as culturally embedded beliefs about language that rationalise and justify particular social arrangements. These ideologies shape what languages are perceived as legitimate, modern, prestigious or useful, and which are relegated to the domains of tradition or folklore. In multilingual contexts, language ideologies often naturalise hierarchies between dominant and minoritised languages.

Attitudes toward translation are deeply intertwined with language ideologies. How speakers perceive translation into or out of a language reflects underlying beliefs about that language's capacity, status, and appropriate domains of use. If a language is perceived primarily as oral or symbolic, translation into it may be viewed as unnecessary or ineffective. Conversely, translation out of that language may be welcomed as a means of cultural representation rather than linguistic empowerment (Garrett, 2010; McCarty, 2011).

Empirical research has consistently shown that positive attitudes toward a language do not necessarily translate into support for its expanded use. Speakers may express pride in a heritage language while simultaneously doubting its suitability for education, administration, or written production (Fishman, 1991). This phenomenon, often described as "symbolic support without functional commitment", is particularly relevant to minoritised languages that have long been excluded from institutional domains.

In the Amazigh context, language attitudes have historically been shaped by state policies, colonial legacies, and competing nationalist ideologies. Prior to 2011, Tamazight was frequently framed as a cultural component of Moroccan identity rather than as a full-fledged language of public life. This ideological framing influenced attitudes toward translation, positioning it as a cultural activity rather than a mechanism for linguistic normalisation.

Attitudinal studies are therefore essential for understanding the limits of policy-driven language change. As Johnson (2013) argues, language policy is not implemented in a social vacuum; its outcomes depend on how policies are interpreted, negotiated, and resisted by communities. Revisiting attitudes toward translation allows researchers to assess whether ideological shifts accompany legal recognition or whether symbolic changes remain disconnected from everyday practices.

## 2.3. Translation as Symbolic Capital

The concept of symbolic capital provides a useful lens for understanding the role of translation in contexts of linguistic inequality. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1991) theory, symbolic capital refers to the prestige, recognition, and legitimacy that individuals or practices acquire within a given social field. Languages, like other cultural resources, possess varying degrees of symbolic capital depending on their institutional support, historical status, and perceived value.

Translation plays a central role in the circulation of symbolic capital between languages. Translating a text into a particular language implicitly affirms that language's capacity to convey meaning, authority, and knowledge. For minoritised languages, translation, especially of prestigious genres, can therefore function as a form of symbolic investment, enhancing their perceived legitimacy without necessarily altering their practical reach (Cronin, 2003).

Several scholars have emphasised that translation into minority languages often carries more symbolic than communicative value. Venuti (1998) argues that translation participates in cultural politics by determining which languages are visible and which remain marginal. In this sense, translation into a minoritised language may serve as an ideological statement rather than as a response to communicative demand.

At the same time, translation out of minoritised languages frequently generates symbolic capital externally rather than internally. When oral literature, folklore, or literary texts are translated into dominant languages, they gain access to wider audiences and academic recognition. However, this process may reinforce asymmetrical power relations if the source language remains marginal within its own community (McCarty, 2011).

This distinction between internal and external symbolic capital is particularly relevant to Amazigh translation practices. Translating Tamazight texts into Arabic, French, or English often increases cultural visibility and scholarly interest, yet it does little to expand Tamazight literacy or everyday use. Conversely, translation into Tamazight may symbolically assert equality with dominant languages but faces limited readership due to structural constraints.

Bourdieu (1991) cautions that symbolic capital cannot be converted into practical capital without institutional mechanisms. Applied to translation, this insight suggests that symbolic recognition through translated texts must be supported by education, publishing infrastructure, and policy implementation if it is to contribute to linguistic normalisation.

### 3. Sociopolitical Context: Tamazight after 2011

The recognition of Tamazight as an official language in the 2011 Moroccan Constitution marked a significant shift in the country's language policy. Article 5 of the Constitution stipulates that Tamazight constitutes a shared heritage of all Moroccans and commits the state to protecting and developing it. This recognition followed decades of activism and represented a major symbolic victory for Amazigh movements.

In the years following the Constitution, Organic Law 26.16 was adopted to define the mechanisms for implementing Tamazight's official status, particularly in education, public administration, and media. These developments signalled a transition from symbolic acknowledgment to institutionalisation. However, implementation has been gradual and uneven, revealing the complexity of translating legal recognition into everyday practice.

Scholars of language policy emphasise that official recognition does not automatically lead to functional equality between languages (Johnson, 2013). Without sufficient resources, trained personnel, and societal acceptance, official status may remain largely symbolic. In Morocco, challenges persist in areas such as curriculum development, teacher training, standardisation, and the production of written materials, including translations.

The post-2011 period has also highlighted tensions between symbolic inclusion and practical constraints. While Amazigh visibility has increased in public discourse, signage, and media, its use in administration and higher education remains limited. Translation initiatives have expanded, yet they continue to face issues related to dialectal variation, script choice, and readership.

Revisiting pre-2011 attitudes toward translation allows for a critical evaluation of post-constitutional developments. Many of the concerns expressed by respondents, such as scepticism toward translation into Tamazight and the prioritisation of translation out of the language, remain relevant in the current context. This continuity suggests that structural and ideological factors continue to shape the perceived role of translation despite changes in legal status.

From a policy perspective, the Amazigh case illustrates the limits of top-down language planning when not accompanied by grassroots engagement and ideological transformation. Translation can support institutionalisation by enhancing visibility and symbolic capital, but it cannot substitute for comprehensive language planning that addresses education, literacy, and community use.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Research Design

This study adopts a cross-sectional mixed-methods design based on a questionnaire investigating language attitudes toward the role of translation in promoting Tamazight. The design combines (a) descriptive quantitative elements, used to summarise response patterns to closed-ended items, and (b) qualitative elements, drawn from open-ended questions in which respondents justified or elaborated on their choices. The mixed-method approach is appropriate for attitudinal research because it documents both the distribution of positions across the sample and the expressed rationales that accompany them. Data were collected at a single point in time (2009) and therefore reflect respondents' perspectives within that specific sociolinguistic moment.

### 4.2. Participants

The study is based on a questionnaire administered to 60 respondents in Morocco, with data collected in Tinghir, Ouarzazate, and Agadir. Participants included Amazigh activists, teachers, and university students, selected to represent groups likely to have informed views on language promotion and translation. Over two-thirds of the respondents were Tamazight speakers, while the remaining participants were non-Amazigh Moroccans who reported academic, professional, or cultural interest in Tamazight. The sample therefore includes both insiders to Amazigh linguistic experience and respondents positioned as informed observers, allowing the study to capture a range of attitudes toward translation and language promotion.

### 4.3. Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a questionnaire comprising closed-ended and open-ended items designed to elicit respondents' perceptions and preferences regarding translation and the promotion of Tamazight. The instrument addressed the following areas:

- Perceived effectiveness of translation in promoting Tamazight
- Preferences regarding translation direction (translation *into* Tamazight vs. translation *out of* Tamazight)
- Preferred genres/text types for translation (e.g., oral literature, literary works, religious texts, technical texts)
- Perceived obstacles affecting translation and language promotion (e.g., standardisation, dialectal variation, script choice, readership, institutional support)
- Views on the future status of Tamazight and expectations regarding its development

Respondents were encouraged to provide brief written explanations for several items, which generated qualitative comments used to complement the descriptive reporting of closed-ended responses. The original questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix.

### 4.4. Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis of the questionnaire data was conducted in three complementary stages.

First, responses to the closed-ended items were subjected to descriptive analysis to identify overall response patterns. Frequencies and proportions were calculated to summarise participants' views regarding the perceived role of translation, preferred directions of translation, favoured text types, and perceived obstacles to the effectiveness of translation. The purpose of this analysis was to capture general tendencies within the sample rather than to establish statistical relationships or test hypotheses.

Second, responses to the open-ended items were analysed using thematic analysis. Written comments were examined to identify recurring themes and patterns across the dataset. Rather than focusing on individual responses, the analysis concentrated on common issues raised by participants, such as concerns related to standardisation, script choice, readership, and the symbolic value of translation. These themes informed the categorisation and synthesis of qualitative findings presented in the Results and Discussion sections, without reproducing direct quotations.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the original master's dissertation included charts and graphical representations to illustrate quantitative response distributions. Due to space limitations and journal formatting requirements, these visual materials are not reproduced in the present article. Instead, quantitative trends are reported descriptively and integrated into the narrative analysis.

## 5. Results and Discussion: Attitudes toward Translation and the Promotion of Tamazight

This section examines attitudes toward the role of translation in promoting Tamazight by combining survey data with relevant theoretical perspectives. Rather than presenting the questionnaire results in isolation, the analysis situates respondents' views within broader sociolinguistic and translation-studies debates concerning language revitalisation, language ideology, and symbolic capital. By linking empirical evidence to these conceptual frameworks, the section aims to provide a contextualised understanding of how translation is perceived, valued, and constrained within the sociopolitical conditions shaping the status of Tamazight.

### 5.1. Translation as a Supportive but Non-Primary Mechanism

A central finding of the study is that translation is generally perceived as a supportive but secondary mechanism in the promotion of Tamazight. While a majority of respondents acknowledge that translation can contribute to language promotion, relatively few consider it the most effective tool when compared with government policy, education, or media.

This perception reflects a pragmatic understanding of language revitalisation as a fundamentally institutional process. Respondents appear to recognise that translation, in the absence of formal education, policy enforcement, and media presence, cannot substantially alter language practices. From a sociolinguistic perspective, this aligns with research showing that symbolic measures, such as publications or translations, have limited impact unless embedded within broader language-planning frameworks (Fishman, 1991).

The finding also suggests that respondents do not hold unrealistic expectations regarding translation. Rather than idealising translation as a solution in itself, they situate it within a wider ecosystem of promotion, a stance consistent with contemporary revitalisation theory.

### 5.2. Directionality of Translation and Asymmetrical Valuation

One of the most striking patterns concerns the asymmetry between attitudes toward translation *into* Tamazight and translation *out of* Tamazight. Respondents express significantly greater interest in reading works translated from Tamazight into dominant languages than in reading works translated into Tamazight.

This asymmetry reflects a dominant language ideology in which Tamazight is primarily valued as a source of cultural content rather than as a target language for knowledge transmission. Translation out of Tamazight is perceived as facilitating cultural visibility, national and international recognition, and intercultural dialogue. In contrast, translation into Tamazight is often regarded as limited in usefulness due to restricted readership, dialectal variation, and script-related difficulties (Tifinagh).

From the perspective of symbolic capital, this pattern suggests that translation out of Tamazight generates external symbolic capital, enhancing the visibility of Amazigh culture beyond the speech community, while translation into Tamazight struggles to produce internal functional capital (Bourdieu, 1991). This finding echoes studies on other minoritised languages, where outward-oriented translation is prioritised over internal normalisation (McCarty, 2011).

### **5.3. Genre Preferences and Cultural Framing of Tamazight**

Respondents show a marked preference for cultural and folkloric genres, such as oral narratives, proverbs, riddles, and songs, when engaging with translated Tamazight texts. These genres are consistently viewed as appropriate and valuable objects of translation.

While this preference highlights the richness of Amazigh oral heritage, it also reveals an ideological framing of Tamazight as a language primarily associated with tradition, identity, and heritage rather than with modern institutional domains. Translation is welcomed insofar as it preserves and disseminates cultural memory, but less so when it involves technical, academic, or administrative texts.

This pattern reflects what sociolinguists have described as symbolic endorsement without functional expansion (Hornberger, 2008). Respondents express pride in the language and support its cultural transmission, yet remain sceptical about its suitability for domains that require standardisation, specialised terminology, and wide literacy.

### **5.4. Standardisation as a Structural Constraint**

Across multiple survey responses, the lack of a fully standardised Tamazight emerges as the most frequently cited obstacle to effective translation. Respondents emphasise that dialectal variation limits intelligibility and reduces motivation to read texts written in unfamiliar varieties. This concern is particularly salient in relation to translation into Tamazight. Many respondents express reluctance to engage with translations produced in dialects other than their own, suggesting that translation may currently reinforce fragmentation rather than promote linguistic cohesion. From a language-planning perspective, this emphasises the interdependence of translation and standardisation: without shared norms, translation cannot fulfil a unifying or normalising function.

Importantly, respondents do not reject translation itself; rather, they question its effectiveness under existing structural conditions. This distinction reinforces the argument that attitudes toward translation are shaped less by resistance to the language than by awareness of practical limitations.

### **5.5. Script Choice, Literacy, and Accessibility**

Attitudes toward translation are further influenced by issues of script choice. Respondents frequently report difficulties reading Tamazight in Tifinagh or Arabic script, even when the dialect itself is familiar. Latin-based scripts are often perceived as more accessible, particularly among educated readers.

These perceptions reveal the role of literacy practices in shaping the reception of translation. Translation into a language presupposes not only linguistic competence but also familiarity with its written conventions. Script-related barriers therefore compound the effects of dialectal variation and limit the potential readership of translated texts.

From a sociolinguistic standpoint, these findings illustrate how material aspects of writing systems intersect with ideology and policy to shape attitudes toward language use.

### **5.6. Translation, Identity, and Symbolic Recognition**

Despite scepticism regarding its practical impact, translation is widely valued for its symbolic significance. Respondents associate translation with dignity, recognition, and cultural affirmation. Translating religious texts, oral literature, or literary works into Tamazight is perceived as an act that challenges historical marginalisation and asserts linguistic equality.

This symbolic valuation aligns with Bourdieu's (1991) notion of symbolic capital. Translation functions as a marker of legitimacy, signalling that Tamazight is capable of expressing complex and prestigious content. However, respondents' comments also suggest an implicit understanding that symbolic capital does not automatically convert into everyday language use without institutional mechanisms.

### 5.7. From Constitutional Recognition to Everyday Practice

Although the data analysed in this study were collected prior to the 2011 Moroccan Constitution, respondents' attitudes toward translation display a remarkable degree of continuity with post-constitutional realities. This persistence suggests that changes in legal status do not automatically transform deeply embedded language ideologies or the structural conditions governing language use. Examining these continuities is therefore essential for understanding the limits of policy-driven language change in the Amazigh context.

The 2011 Constitution represented a major symbolic shift by recognising Amazigh as an official language of the state. From a policy perspective, this recognition was intended to signal a transition from marginalisation to institutional inclusion. However, as scholars of language policy have argued, official recognition alone rarely guarantees functional equality between languages (Johnson, 2013; May, 2012). Instead, it often marks the beginning of a prolonged and uneven process of implementation shaped by resource allocation, institutional capacity, and societal attitudes.

The attitudes expressed by respondents in 2009 anticipate many of the challenges observed after 2011. In particular, concerns regarding standardisation, limited readership, and the effectiveness of translation into Tamazight remain prominent in contemporary debates. Despite increased visibility of Amazigh in public discourse, education, and media, translation into Tamazight continues to face practical constraints related to dialectal variation, script choice, and literacy, factors already identified by respondents prior to constitutional recognition.

This continuity demonstrates the resilience of language ideologies that frame Tamazight primarily as a language of culture and identity rather than as a language of routine institutional use. While the Constitution has enhanced the symbolic legitimacy of Amazigh, it has not fully displaced earlier ideological hierarchies that privilege Arabic and French in domains such as administration, higher education, and technical communication. As a result, translation initiatives often continue to operate within a symbolic register, reinforcing recognition without necessarily expanding everyday use.

Moreover, the persistence of scepticism toward translation into Tamazight reflects a realistic appraisal of structural conditions rather than resistance to the language itself. Respondents' pre-2011 doubts about the effectiveness of translation anticipated post-2011 implementation challenges, including limited availability of standardised terminology, uneven teacher training, and restricted access to written materials. These constraints limit the capacity of translation to function as an instrument of linguistic normalisation, even in a context of official recognition.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, this situation illustrates the distinction between status planning and corpus and acquisition planning (Hornberger, 2008). While the Constitution addressed the symbolic status of Amazigh, it did not automatically resolve issues related to standardisation, literacy, and everyday use. Translation, which depends heavily on these latter dimensions, remains constrained by gaps in implementation rather than by lack of recognition.

Revisiting pre-2011 attitudinal data thus provides valuable insight into the structural nature of language minoritisation. The continuity of attitudes suggests that minoritisation is not solely a function of legal exclusion but is sustained through long-standing institutional practices and societal beliefs. Translation practices, situated at the intersection of policy, ideology, and literacy, are particularly sensitive to these enduring conditions.

In this sense, the Amazigh case illustrates a broader pattern observed in other minoritised language contexts: symbolic inclusion may advance more rapidly than functional transformation (May, 2012). Translation can contribute to visibility and symbolic capital, but its capacity to reshape language practices remains limited unless supported by comprehensive, long-term planning.

In a nutshell, the continuity between pre- and post-2011 attitudes reinforces the central argument of this study. Translation plays a meaningful but bounded role in the promotion of Tamazight. Its effectiveness depends not on legal recognition alone but on sustained investment in standardisation, education, and literacy, as well as on

gradual shifts in language ideology. Understanding these continuities allows for a more nuanced and realistic assessment of translation's place within Amazigh language revitalisation efforts.

### Conclusion

This article set out to reassess the role of translation in promoting Tamazight by revisiting attitudinal data collected in 2009 and reanalysing them in light of post-2011 constitutional developments. By situating these data within contemporary theoretical frameworks in sociolinguistics and translation studies, the study has demonstrated that many of the challenges identified prior to the official recognition of Amazigh persist despite significant legal advances.

The findings indicate that translation is widely perceived as culturally valuable and symbolically meaningful. Respondents consistently associated translation with the affirmation of Amazigh identity, the preservation of oral heritage, and the dissemination of cultural knowledge beyond Amazigh-speaking communities. In this respect, translation contributes to the visibility and symbolic legitimacy of Tamazight, particularly when applied to prestigious or culturally significant genres such as folklore, religious texts, and literary works.

At the same time, the data reveal a clear scepticism regarding the capacity of translation to function as an autonomous tool for language revitalisation. Translation into Tamazight was often viewed as limited in reach due to the absence of a fully standardised language, restricted literacy, and dialectal fragmentation. These constraints have resulted in a marked asymmetry between translation out of Tamazight, valued for cultural circulation, and translation into Tamazight, which remains marginal in terms of readership and practical impact.

Reinterpreted within the post-2011 context, these attitudes show a critical distinction between symbolic recognition and functional normalisation. While constitutional recognition has enhanced the formal status of Amazigh, it has not fully resolved the structural conditions necessary for translation to contribute meaningfully to everyday language use. Translation, therefore, operates most effectively as one component within a broader ecosystem that includes standardisation, education, media presence, and sustained institutional commitment.

The study suggests that expectations placed on translation must remain realistic. Translation alone cannot compensate for deficiencies in language planning, nor can it substitute for comprehensive literacy and educational policies. However, when strategically integrated into a coordinated framework of language promotion, translation can play a supportive role by reinforcing symbolic legitimacy, fostering cultural pride, and facilitating intercultural dialogue.

By revisiting pre-constitutional attitudinal data, this article illustrates the enduring relevance of community perceptions in evaluating language policy outcomes. Future research would benefit from longitudinal studies examining whether attitudes toward translation have shifted in response to recent policy initiatives and from comparative analyses with other minoritised languages facing similar challenges. For policymakers and practitioners, the findings emphasise the need to align translation initiatives with broader structural reforms if Tamazight is to move beyond symbolic recognition toward sustained linguistic vitality.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

- 1) What is the best way to promote Tamazight? Is it through
  - Translation
  - Media
  - Government
  - Others (please explain)
- 2) Can translation help to promote Tamazight?
  - Yes
  - No
  - May be  
(Please explain how?)
- 3) Have you ever read a work translated into or out of Tamazight?
  - Yes (indicate what it was)
  - No
- 4) If yes, what do you think of the quality of these translations?
  - Good
  - Bad
  - No opinion
- 5) What do you think is the most serious obstacle standing in the way of the promotion of Tamazight?  
(Multiple answers)
  - The state
  - Non-standardized Tamazight
  - Inadequacy of works in Tamazight
  - Others (please explain)
- 6) Can you read in all Tamazight dialects?
  - Yes
  - No
  - A little
- 7) Do you think that it is useful to start translating into Tamazight before standardizing the language?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Do not know
- 8) Do you think that the meaning is well conveyed when translating into or out of Tamazight?
  - Yes
  - No
  - May be
  - Do not know
- 9) What kind of translations do you like to read?
  - From Tamazight
  - Into Tamazight
  - Both
  - None
 (In all cases, please explain why?)  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....
- 10) People do not like to read Tamazight translations because:
  - They are not interesting
  - They are unreadable
  - Others (.....)
- 11) Do you think that translation of Tamazight oral literature will spread the Amazigh identity?
  - Yes (please how?)
  - No (please why?)
  - May be

- Do not know

**12) Do you think that the reason behind Tamazight revitalization now is**

**(Multiple answers)**

- Translation
- The state's policy
- The determination of the Imazighen
- There is no revitalization

**13) Are you in favour of translating works into Tamazight?**

- Yes
  - No
  - Do not know
- (Please explain)

**14) Are you in favour of translating works out of Tamazight?**

- Yes
  - No
  - Do not Know
- (Please explain)

**15) Do you think Tamazight will enjoy the same status of Arabic in the future?**

Yes (Please explain how?)

No (please explain why?)

May be

Do not know

**16) Do you think that teaching translated texts into or out of Tamazight in schools will help to promote Tamazight?**

Yes (please how?)

No (please why?)

May be

Do not know

**Thank you very much for cooperation.**