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Language Policy and the Pursuit of a New Linguistic Identity in Morocco: A Critical Analysis of Pro-English Discourse on Twitter

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A B S T R A C T

Morocco's sociolinguistic landscape has been shaped by enduring historical, political, and ideological forces that continue to structure public discourse on language policy. Moroccan language policy has fluctuated between the unassailable dominance of French in economic, educational and political domains and Arabisation initiatives to reinstate Arabic as the language of national identity. Recently, online campaigns, particularly on social media platforms like Twitter, called for the displacement of French in favour of English as the primary foreign language in the country. Drawing on a corpus of tweets posted between 1 September 2021 and March 2023, this paper uses corpus-assisted discourse studies to examine language ideologies articulated in Arabic, English, French, and Tamazight posts. Findings reveal that English, on one hand, is framed as a language of global opportunity, related to scientific advancement, professional mobility, and cultural modernity. On the other hand, French is portrayed as a colonial remnant, indicative of restricted economic horizons and historical inequality. Concurrently, Arabic and Tamazight emerge in the data not only as symbols of national identity but also as ideological anchors, invoked by some users to advocate for linguistic sovereignty. However, these official languages remain discursively marginal concerning science, technology, and international communication. This paper sheds light on the digital negotiation of Morocco's linguistic future, where public discourse blurs the boundaries between language policy, colonial past, economic aspirations, and globalisation. By tracing these discursive struggles, this study adds substantially to the understanding of the evolving role of social media in shaping language planning and language ideologies.

I. INTRODUCTION

The common use of English has gained notable prominence recently, mirroring its global status as a crucial instrument for international communication in commerce, research, and technology. Long theorised as a powerful 'language of wider communication' (Edwards, 1994), English gained official language status in various regions, making it an ever more compelling choice for learners worldwide. The widespread use of the Internet has

further reinforced its worldwide ubiquity (Thành et al., 2023).

Language policy in Morocco is influenced by socio-political and economic factors, notably shaped by its colonial past, which made French the dominant language (Boutieri, 2016; Ennaji, 2005). The neoliberal economic policies and globalisation have, nevertheless, triggered a steady change by increasing the belief that the mastery of English is required to integrate into the global

market (Commission Spéciale sur le Modèle de Développement [CSMD], 2021; Duchêne & Heller, 2012).

Emerging conditions and the evolving landscape of technology breakthroughs progressively influence these macro-level language policies. Due to these conditions, Internet usage has markedly increased in Morocco, further influencing linguistic practices. In 2023, approximately 21 million individuals, 56.6% of the population, utilised social media, while an estimated 88.1% of the population had Internet access. This increased young exposure to multilingual content and English in particular. (DataReportal, 2023; High Commission for Planning [HCP], 2014; World Bank, 2015; United Nations, 2015). Digital media have emerged as important platforms for language learning (Hikmah, 2019; Khazhgaliyeva et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023), social networking (Onwuchekwa, 2014), and the diffusion of linguistic trends across various demographics (DiMaggio et al., 2001; Kim, 2011; Morris & Ogan, 1996), reinforcing and accelerating ongoing shifts in Morocco's linguistic landscape (Bouziane & Saoudi, 2021; Zakhir, 2018). Existing scholarship has highlighted that Morocco's evolving linguistic landscape, particularly the increased visibility of Moroccan Arabic, as a battlefield of language ideologies (Zakhir & O'Brien, 2019), in urban areas like Hamriya (Meknès), reflects shifting sociolinguistic hierarchies (Moustaoui, 2019, 2022).

Following Morocco's independence in 1956 (Laâbi, 2013), many advocates of Arabisation challenged the dominance of French (Zakhir & O'Brien, 2017). However, modernists position French as the gateway to international communication (Vetchinova, 2022). In recent years, Morocco's linguistic landscape has evolved to recognise the importance of its native languages while promoting multilingualism and cultural diversity (Ennaji, 2005; Daniel & Ball, 2009).

Since the late 1990s and early 2000s, economic liberalisation, including structural adjustments (promoted by institutions like the World Bank and IMF) and deeper market integration, has further elevated the perceived necessity of English for trade, investment, and tourism, and has legitimised its profile as a lingua franca for international business communication (Boutieri, 2016; Ennaji, 2005).

Morocco's 2021 New Development Model further expedited this change by placing a clear priority on digitalisation, human capital development, and integration into global value chains (Commission Spéciale sur le Modèle de Développement [CSMD], 2021). Within a neoliberal frame that commodifies linguistic skills, English fluency is regarded as a need for entering competitive global markets (Duchêne & Heller, 2012; Elkhayma & Ezzaidi, 2024; Laaguid, 2024).

More recently, the debate has shifted towards advocating for English. From September 2021 to March 2023, A social media-driven movement has emerged to challenge the legitimacy of French and promote English as a preferable alternative for international communication, turning microblogging sites into sites of language planning "from below". This surge in "digital activism" (Fuentes, 2025) is linked to rising Morocco-France political tensions (Atalayar, 2023; Ghouli, 2024; McKenna, 2022) and to ministerial initiatives to introduce English at the middle-school level (Billings, 2023; Dahbi, 2023). In these debates, advocacy for English frequently questions the inherited hierarchy that privileges French.

Linked to this framing is a narrative of French's declining symbolic capital, particularly in higher education. Dissatisfaction with French-medium instruction has grown, driven by the sense that French is insufficient for the Anglophone knowledge economy and that it narrows international visibility for students and scholars (Loutfi & Noamane, 2020). As Morocco attempts to internationalise its universities and connect with global economic shifts that favour English, the historically attached capital to French has started to decline. These dynamics have contributed to the emergence of new bottom-up shifts in language policy (LP), wherein individual actors, educational institutions, and civil society mobilise discursively and practically in favour of English.

True to form, issues of language policy and planning arise both locally (Liddicoat & Jr, 2008; Wiley & García, 2016; Civico, 2021) and globally (Hanna, 2011; Jr, 2012; Chua, 2017), as government institutions decide which languages can be used (Cardinal & Léger, 2018; Fishman, 2017; Spolsky & Shohamy, 2008; van Els, 2001), taught (Spolsky, 2004; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2005), or promoted (Bertrand, 2003; Ngcobo, 2009;

Romaine, 2017; Roy-Campbell, 2005; Williams, 2013). Whilst making these choices, language planners may empower some languages at the expense of others (Fishman, 1994), consequently, affecting how languages are acquired, developed, and utilised in society.

From the establishment of the French Protectorate in 1912 until Morocco's independence in 1956, the French language was imposed as the principal medium of administration and public life (Bahij, 2013; Boulahnane, 2018; Lawson, 1957; Segalla, 2009; Shahu, 2014; Wyrzten, 2009). Even after independence, the French language retained a strong presence in economic, financial, and political spheres. Boukous (2013) observes that "the presence of the French language weighs heavily on the linguistic market" (p. 13), underscoring France's enduring role as Morocco's leading economic partner and foreign investor. The broader framework of Francophonie has often been criticised for privileging elite reproduction over mass education (Barclay, 2006) and for constraining linguistic equity while reinforcing a stratified social order (Blommaert, 1999).

After gaining its independence, Morocco adopted a new language policy commonly known as Arabisation (Ennaji, 1988, 2013; Errihani, 2024; Loutfi, 2020; Marley, 2004; Moustou, 2017; Strengholt, 2009; Tomaščík, 2010; Zakhir & O'Brien, 2017; Zouhir, 2008). Early works in this area noted that policymakers meant to preserve the country's Arab-Islamic heritage by reinstating the Arabic language in education (Ennaji, 2005; Moatassime, 1974), media (Zaid, 2009), and administration (Yacine, 2015). Despite its efforts to strengthen national identity and cultural cohesion within the country, this policy drew criticism for implicitly marginalising Amazigh communities (Crawford, 2002; Spaulding, 2023). Observers note that the emphasis on Arabic risked overlooking Morocco's diverse historical and cultural references (Miller, 2013), thereby undermining national unity rather than reinforcing it (Dines, 2021; Elboubekri, 2013; Lounnas & Messari, 2018; Naguib, 2020; Qasmi, 2023).

The state also has invested in Amazigh recognition and standardisation. The Royal Speech of Ajdir (2001) and the establishment of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) marked a major symbolic and institutional shift toward

valorising indigenous language and heritage, with subsequent proposals for an organic law to implement Tamazight's official character across education and priority public domains (Ennaji, 2005; Errihani, 2023; Kruse III, 2013; Redouane & Sabiri, 2024). As the implementation lags, Amazigh organisations continue to decry the slow pace and unevenness of institutionalisation (Bourhrous, 2013; Ghilani, 2022). Scholars describe a pattern of fragmentation across ministries, weak regulatory enforcement, and regional disparities that keep ambitious provisions aspirational (Boukous, 2013; Ennaji, 2005). In Bamgbose's (1991) terms, policy can appear as a "do-nothing" stance that rhetorically supports mother tongues while underdelivering on concrete measures. Overall, language policy in Morocco is laden with paradoxes. In essence, these policies often fail to establish cohesive, sustainable frameworks for equitable implementation across sectors.

Against this background, English was introduced in a noticeable way during World War II with Military presence (Conway, 2019; Dworak, 2011). English is widely perceived – even among French-educated elites – as the language of science, technology, business, and cyberspace (Sadiqi, 1991, 2006; Elbiad, 1985). In addition, the youth increasingly rely on English for online research and social media use (Putra & Nopember, 2020). These perceptions go hand in hand with critical research that views the spread of English as a part of enduring and historical structures of political and economic hegemony (Phillipson, 1992), a perspective that is necessary to keep in analytical tension with accounts that emphasise agency, aspiration, and strategic choice (Ennaji, 2005; Salomone & Salomone, 2022; Belhiah, 2020; Belhiah et al., 2020; Kachoub, 2021).

These changes bear the possibility of English serving as Morocco's new primary gateway to the modern world. However, English remains largely absent from Moroccan television (Ennaji, 2005, p. 119). Concerning education, Morocco's recent educational reforms have introduced a multilingual program known as "language alternation" (LA), which promotes the use of French, English, and Spanish as mediums of instruction for science subjects at the secondary level. In spite of the ambition for plurilingualism, teachers highlight a policy gap in classrooms (Ben Hammou & Kesbi, 2024).

Although there is a global demand, English still does not enjoy its rightful status, reflecting broader tensions in Morocco's evolving linguistic landscape, particularly with French's deeply rooted position.

To further explore these developments, this paper addresses the following research questions:

1. In what ways are English and French discursively represented within Twitter discourse related to language policy in Morocco?
2. What discursive roles do Morocco's official languages—Arabic and Tamazight—play within the broader linguistic movement observed on Twitter?

II. METHODS

Study Design

This study adopts a qualitative corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) design (Baker, 2006; Baker et al., 2008; Partington et al., 2013; Putri & Mardiah, 2024) to examine how language ideologies are articulated, contested, and reimagined in Moroccan social-media discourse, focusing on campaigns advocating English as a replacement for French as the primary foreign language.

Source of Data

The data for this study were drawn primarily from social media posts. Twitter served as a social media platform that reflects language ideologies circulating in Morocco's digital discourse. The dataset consists of user-generated Twitter posts produced between 1 September 2021 and March 2023, a period of heightened online activism around language choice in Morocco, particularly for the adoption of English and the decline of French as Morocco's primary foreign language.

Data Collection

We chose to study the discourse of Anglophonomism advocates on Twitter for two main reasons. First, Twitter's brevity-constrained format (140, later 280 characters) affords compact ideological positioning and rapid exchange (Rosen & Ikuhiro, 2017); second, its public/semi-public interaction facilitates observation across diverse users. Platform conventions like @-mentions and hashtags function as organisational devices and affiliative markers that assemble issue publics. Zappavinga (2011) notes that hashtags function as

linguistic markers that foster social affiliation, as if saying: "Search for me and affiliate with my value!" (p. 2). In this way, Twitter users create micro-discourses around shared interests, ideologies, or language movements. Prior research shows that Twitter's relational patterns are shaped by offline spatial proximity and across social geographies (Quercia, Capra, & Crowcroft, 2021; Takhteyev, Gruz, & Wellman, 2012). We therefore frame the platform as polymedia - one choice within a communicative ecology - which guides our sampling and interpretation (Madianou & Miller, 2013).

Collection proceeded by tracking predefined hashtags/keywords associated with English advocacy and French decline in Morocco; results were deduplicated and anonymised. We used *Keyhole* (<https://Keyhole.co>) to retrieve historical data and real-time snapshots, distinguishing original tweets from retweets to avoid amplification bias, and applying language and geolocation filters where available (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2013; Graham et al., 2014). We followed ethical norms for public-data research and platform terms (Boyd & Crawford, 2012; Kwak et al., 2010), while remaining attentive to retrieval biases (e.g., bots, algorithmic surfacing) noted in the literature (Morstatter et al., 2021).

Posts were taken into consideration if they (a) were in Arabic, English, French, or Tamazight and (b) had at least one of the relevant hashtags: #Oui_pour_anglais_au_lieu_du_français_au_Maroc, نعم_للإنجليزية_بدل_الفرنسية_بالمغرب, or #Yes_for_English_instead_of_French_in_Morocco. We included originals and quote-posts and excluded retweets without added text. As Zappavinga (2011) observes, hashtags are searchable features that increase a tweet's "loudness," making online texts more "bondable" through shared topics or communities. Posts were labelled multilingual when at least two languages appeared within the same post, based on mixed scripts from a second language; for example: "#Yes_for_English_instead_of_French_in_Morocco الجامعة خاصها تعتمد الإنجليزية [‘universities should adopt English’]" → EN + AR. The final linguistic corpus comprises 540 public tweets and retweets, with a total of over 10,000 words, posted on Twitter during the same period.

Data Analysis

In this present study, we adopt a corpus-

based discourse studies approach (Baker, 2006) to analyse these tweets. In corpus linguistics, researchers often begin with frequency analysis, assuming that words used or avoided with notable frequency may indicate particular functions within a community (McEnery & Hardie, 2011). However, meaning does not stem from isolated words alone, but rather from their repeated usage and broader textual patterns. As Baker (2006) notes, analysing multiple texts (or a large corpus) allows discourse analysts to identify intertextual and contextual cues that shape meaning. Although discourse theory underlies our research, the focus here lies predominantly on how corpus-linguistic methods and findings reveal key facets of language ideologies within the collected tweets. Prior to analysis, tweets were minimally cleaned (and user mentions) while preserving hashtags verbatim; in this corpus, users consistently preserve word boundaries in hashtags with underscores, which we retained during processing (e.g., #Yes_for_English_instead_of_French_in_Morocco).

We operationalised CADS through a staged workflow: (1) frequency profiling and keyword clouding (via *Keyhole*) to surface high-salience lexical items (Rayson & Mariani, 2009); (2) collocation and concordance Key Word in Context (KWIC) reading to trace recurrent patterns; and (3) interpretive discourse analysis linking lexicogrammatical patterning to language-ideological stances (Baker, 2006; Baker et al., 2008; Partington et al., 2013; McEnery & Hardie, 2011). While exploratory frequency outputs were obtained with *Keyhole*, the co-occurrence network was computed independently in *Google Colab* (<https://colab.research.google.com/>) using Python, with NetworkX to build an undirected graph (nodes = keywords, sized by term frequency; edges = within-tweet co-occurrences, optionally weighted by pair counts) and to compute node positions via the `spring_layout` Fruchterman–Reingold force-directed algorithm; the figure was rendered and exported at publication quality with Matplotlib (savefig, JPEG).

In this study, IPA transcription was chosen to maintain consistency and uphold an academic approach throughout the paper. Rather than presenting the original tweets in Arabic or Tamazight, which might introduce inconsistencies in script usage and formatting, IPA transcription offers a standardised representation of the text

(Wei & Moyer, 2008). This method ensures that the linguistic data is systematically recorded while allowing for precise analysis. Additionally, a translated version in English is provided alongside the transcription to ease interpretation and accessibility. Tweets originally in French were retained in standard orthography, given adequate intelligibility for the study audience. Following best practice, transcription was treated as an analytic, non-neutral act, and decisions were documented through reflexive memos and an audit trail (Roberts, 1997).

III. RESULTS

Frequency and distribution of hashtags

One of the most immediate findings to emerge from the data pertained to frequency. The most frequently occurring lexical items are English, French, language, Francophonie, Morocco, and official languages. These items indicate that the dominant themes centre on language policy issues in Morocco. This aligns with earlier studies on digital discourse, where frequently used lexical items reflect key thematic concerns in online activism (Baker, 2006). However, among the most frequently occurring terms, words like “https,” “com,” “www,” “org,” and “ma” appear disproportionately. These terms are typically associated with URLs, suggesting a significant presence of external links in the tweets. The findings reveal that the frequency of “com” and “ma” (150 occurrences) indicates that over one-third of all tweets contain at least one website link. This finding is consistent with previous research on digital activism and information-sharing behaviours, where external links are often used to confirm claims or provide further context (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015). Similarly, frequently occurring clusters such as Facebook (21), YouTube (24), and TikTok (15) highlight the role of other social media platforms in disseminating and popularising this linguistic movement, supporting findings by Zappavigna (2011), who argued that social media affordances amplify collective discourses.

The use of polling as a technique for interactive participation is a remarkable finding. The term “polling” appeared twice, but was crucial in encouraging public involvement in Twitter polls. In addition to allowing users to vote for the languages they preferred, these polls promoted conversations regarding linguistic ideology and

policy. Twitter polling serves as an engagement strategy that surfaces viewpoints and mobilises collective opinion (Zappavigna, 2011). This highlights the role social media as a discursive platform of active participation rather than passive consumption (Graham et al., 2014).

The frequency analysis also revealed that tweets were written in a variety of languages, with Arabic and English being the most commonly used languages. Not unexpectedly, these two languages were used to create the majority of these hashtags. Nonetheless, a number of functional terms were present in both French and Tamazight, indicating that multilingualism influenced discourse. Multilingual hashtags align with findings that multilingualism enhances the interpretability and reach of digital activism (Bruns & Stieglitz, 2013). In Tamazight, either in Tifinagh script or Romanised letters, words such as “awal” (speech, 27), “Berber” (10), and “Tifinagh” (36) appeared. In French, notable clusters included “l’anglais” (15), “oui” (10), “au lieu” (10), and “non” (15 occurrences). The patterns indicate the movement drew linguistically diverse users and that multilingual practices co-constructed meaning in the discourse, consistent with work showing social-media language indexes cultural positioning and ideological stance (Boyd & Crawford, 2012).

As we relied on using *Keyhole* and *Google Colab* for key clouds, Figure 1 represents the most co-occurring words that emerged from the analysis. As shown in Figure 1, the co-occurrence network reveals the complex and ideologically charged discursive landscape of Moroccan Twitter concerning language and identity. English emerges as the most frequent and centrally connected node, discursively associated with themes of modernity, education, science, and globalisation. This centrality underscores English’s symbolic function as a language of progress and international engagement, potentially aligned with grassroots calls for linguistic shift (Zouhir, 2013). In contrast, French is clustered with terms like colonial, Francisation, and imperialism, reflecting its contested status as a remnant of colonial hegemony and a target of postcolonial resistance (Youssi, 1995). Meanwhile, Tamazight’s co-occurrence with concepts such as culture, multilingualism, and identity points to ongoing assertions of indigenous linguistic rights and symbolic inclusion within Moroccan national identity. The associations between language, policy, and power further highlight awareness of institutional language planning and its socio-political ramifications (Tollefson, 2006). Thus, the visualisation not only captures lexical proximities but also maps the ideological terrain in which

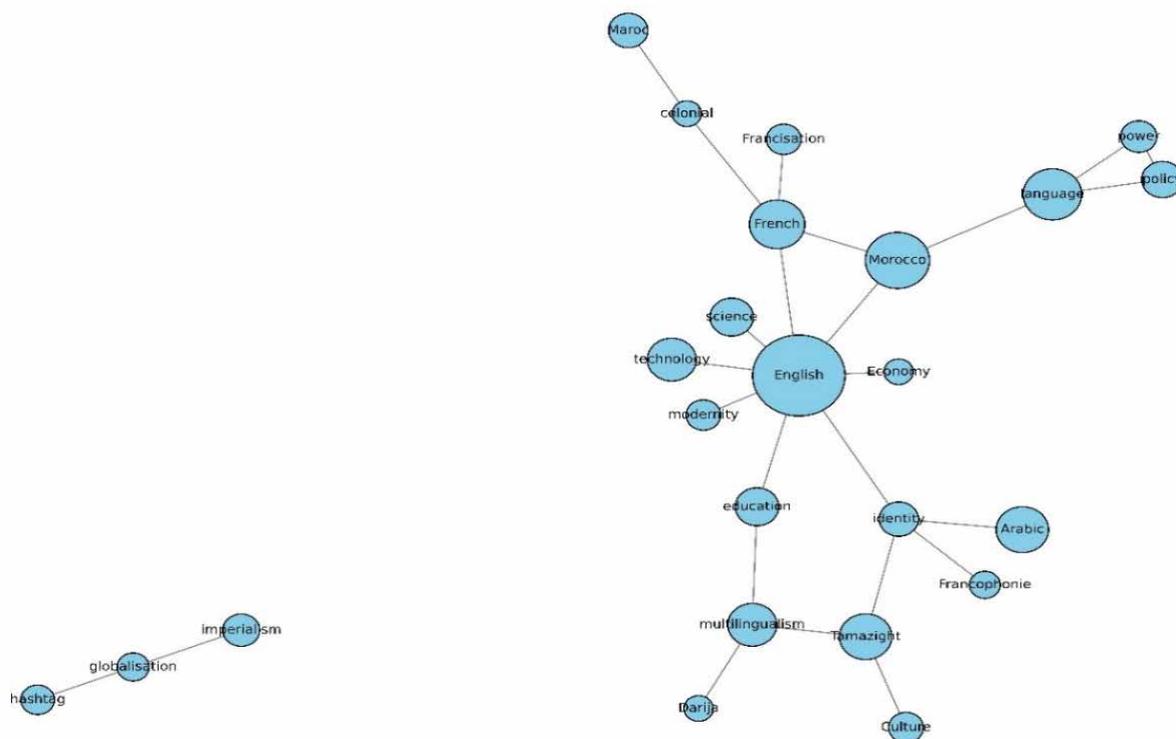


Figure 1. Co-occurrence Network of Language Discourse Keywords

languages are imbued with historical, cultural, and political meaning.

The hashtags in this study were grouped into four major thematic groups. The first two groups consist of hashtags advocating for the integration of English and those devaluing French and the Francophonie ideology in Morocco. The role of the remaining two groups will be elaborated upon in the subsequent sections.

The hashtags (Table 1) represent different expressions of preference for English over French in Morocco. The most frequently used hashtag was #Yes_To_English_No_To_French (25 occurrences, 4.6%), followed by #Yes_To_English (20 occurrences, 3.7%). The hashtag #Yes_for_English_instead_of_French_in_Morocco appeared 16 times (3.0%). Other hashtags with notable frequency include #No_To_French (14 occurrences, 2.6%) and #English_instead_of_French (10 occurrences, 1.9%).

The hashtag #Oui_pour_anglais_au_lieu_du_français_au_Maroc appeared the least frequently in this dataset, with 5 occurrences (0.9%), the same

frequency as #English_time. Other hashtags with relatively lower frequencies include #No_To_French_Yes_To_English (6 occurrences, 1.1%) and #Morocco_instead_of_Maroc (8 occurrences, 1.5%).

These hashtags (Table 2) include different expressions related to English advocacy and opposition to French in Morocco. The most frequently used hashtag was لا للفرنسية (No to French) (106 occurrences, 19.63%), followed by لا للفرنسية (No to Francisation) (101 occurrences, 18.70%). The hashtag نعم للإنجليزية بدل الفرنسية بالمغرب (Yes to English instead of French in Morocco) appeared 96 times (17.78%). Other hashtags with notable frequency include نعم للإنجليزية (24 occurrences, 4.4%) and نعم للإنجليزية لا للفرنسية (Yes to English, No to French) (14 occurrences, 2.59%). The hashtag لا للفرنكفونية (No to Francophonie) appeared the least frequently in this dataset, with 13 occurrences (2.4%).

The first group of hashtags shows that Arabic-language hashtags advocating for English accounted for 65.5% of the total tweets, a higher proportion than tweets using English or French hashtags to advocate for the same language.

Table 1. Frequent Hashtags in English and French

Hashtag	Translation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
#Yes_To_English	-	20	3.7
#Yes_To_English_No_To_French	-	25	4.6
#No_To_French_Yes_To_English	-	6	1.1
#No_To_French	-	14	2.6
#English_instead_of_French	-	10	1.9
#Morocco_instead_of_maroc	-	8	1.5
#YES_to_ENGLISH_NO_to_French_LANGUAGE	-	9	1.7
#Oui_pour_anglais_au_lieu_du_français_au_Maroc	Yes to English instead of French in Morocco	5	0.9
#English_time	-	5	0.9
#Yes_for_English_instead_of_French_in_Morocco	-	16	3

Table 2. Most Repeated Hashtags in Arabic

Hashtag	Translation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
نعم للإنجليزية	Yes to English	24	4.4
نعم للإنجليزية بدل الفرنسية بالمغرب	Yes to English instead of French in Morocco	96	17.78
لا للفرنسية	No to Francisation	101	18.70
لا للفرنسية	No to French	106	19.63
لا للفرنكفونية	No to Francophonie	13	2.4
نعم للإنجليزية لا للفرنسية	Yes to English, No to French	14	2.59

The second group of hashtags (Table 3) was related to geographical locations. Morocco was the most frequently mentioned location across three languages: Arabic, French, and English. Other Moroccan cosmopolitan cities were also present, along with international locations such as France and Guinea-Bissau. Additionally, Ghana was mentioned in some tweets.

The third group of hashtags shown in Table 4 was related to media outlets, particularly news sources. In addition to Moroccan news sources, mentions included Middle Eastern, American, and British media outlets. A variety of news outlets appeared in the dataset, including the Moroccan English-language e-newspaper MWN, which was frequently referenced.

Another significant group of hashtags (Table 5) was associated with politics, social movements, and international events. In reference to politics, the hashtags #Parti_RNI (RNI Party) and #RNI were linked to the Moroccan political party *Rassemblement National des Indépendants (RNI)*. Additionally, individual politicians' accounts, such as @ChefGov_ma and @Aziz_Akhnnouch, were mentioned alongside these hashtags. Furthermore, some hashtags in this group referred to economic concerns, such as #7dh_Gazoil (7 Dirhams Diesel) and #8dh_Essance (8 Dirhams Gasoline), which appeared in the dataset alongside other politically oriented hashtags. Other hashtags referenced

national and international events, including #Moroccan_Sahara and #World_Cup.

All the hashtags amplifying this linguistic movement appeared in multiple languages, with Arabic, English, French, and Tamazight being the most prominent. Notably, users across both tweets and retweets frequently employed the same hashtags across different languages, reinforcing the multilingual nature of the discourse. Overall, all tweets (450) were either: (a) promoting the adoption of English, (b) critiquing the dominance of French, or (c) advocating for the protection of official or national languages.

Analysing the tweets: qualitative insights

In the qualitative analysis of the study, several users expressed support for making English the first foreign language in the country. To better understand the ideological underpinnings of the tweets, the analysis is restructured around three key axes: (i) *internationalisation*, (ii) *the market economy*, and (iii) *the colonial legacy of the French*. These leitmotifs frequently recur in users' arguments and function as discursive strategies that legitimise the preference for English.

Internationalisation

In the first example, the tweeter advocates for wider English usage to provide new opportunities for the current generation. This reflects the view of English as a tool of power, where those proficient

Table 3. Frequent Geography Hashtags

Hashtag	#Morocco	#Maroc	#المغرب	#المغرب_اولا	#France	#Ghana	#Casablanca	#Guinea-Bissau
Translation	-	Morocco	Morocco	Morocco First	-	-	-	-
Frequency	48	34	33	25	6	3	6	2

Table 4. Common Repeated News Outlets Hashtags

Hashtag	#CNN	#Al-Jazeera	#AJEnglish	#BBC Arabic	#Hespress	#2M	#MWN
Frequency	5	4	2	4	7	6	12

Table 5. Political, Social and International Hashtags

Hashtag	Translation	Frequency
#Parti_RNI	RNI Party	15
#RNI	RNI (Abbreviation for Rassemblement National des Indépendants)	7
#7dh_Gazoil	7 Dirhams Diesel	13
#8dh_Essance	8 Dirhams Gasoline	13
#Moroccan_Sahara	-	23
#World_Cup	-	12

in it have greater access to opportunities than those who are not.

Example 1:

It is time to officially include English language as a 1st foreign language in education & other fields to develop the horizons of this generation and make it able to open up to the world, armed with a language that crosses all borders.

This tweet (example 1) advocates for the formal prioritisation of English as Morocco's primary foreign language in education and other institutional domains. It constructs English as a developmental asset, symbolically linked to opportunity, openness, and global mobility. The phrase 'a language that crosses all borders' casts English as a universally accessible medium, implying ideological neutrality and global dominance. This framing naturalises English's prominence while obscuring the geopolitical and historical power relations that sustain it.

The tweet adheres to the instrumentalist ideology of language in which linguistic value is determined by perceived economic and global utility. It draws on militaristic imagery ("armed") to imply empowerment and readiness, while simultaneously invoking the global hegemony of English, a language constructed here as neutral, universal, and unbounded by political or cultural barriers. Simultaneously, the appeal to "develop the horizons of this generation" embeds a temporal contrast between a past limited by current policies and a future enabled by English, thereby indexing a narrative of modernisation and transformation.

The absence of any reference to French or other languages reflects a strategic silence that indirectly critiques existing Francophone dominance in Morocco. French becomes the unstated opponent, its status implicitly challenged without being named. There is also a monoglossic tendency that ignores Morocco's multilingual reality, since Arabic and Tamazight are completely left out of the anticipated linguistic future. Moreover, The tweet uses a macro-level development frame to link language policy to "open up to the world." This reflects an ideological alignment with neoliberal globalisation, where English is not merely a medium of communication, but a gateway to economic opportunity, international legitimacy, and modernity.

The rhetorical structure—beginning with "It is

time"—invokes a call to action rooted in temporal urgency and policy reform. This forward-looking stance, framed around youth empowerment and national progress, aligns English with modernity and advancement, while positioning alternative linguistic choices as barriers to global integration.

A number of Twitter users expressed support for English while also voicing dissatisfaction with French. Example 2, while deceptively brief, encapsulates a rich ideological orientation that constructs a stark symbolic dichotomy between English and French. It operates through a binary alignment strategy, in which English is positively valorised and French is openly rejected. The tweet's minimalism amplifies its rhetorical impact, distilling sociohistorical and political tensions into a pitchy, emotionally charged formulation.

Example 2:

Yes to English, Ugh to French.

The interjection "Ugh" is especially salient. As a paralinguistic marker, it conveys embodied affect that indexes a visceral rejection of French that transcends logical criticism by expressing embodied feelings such as disgust, annoyance, or fatigue. Here, the affective stance does ideological work: it delegitimises French not by argument but by emotional dismissal. This linguistic choice importantly presupposes a shared cultural schema wherein the referential and symbolic weight of French and English are already understood by the intended audience. Furthermore, the tweet also performs a kind of indexical reversal: historically, French has indexed prestige, education, and modernity in Moroccan public life. This utterance inverts that indexical chain—French now signals alienation, frustration, and obsolescence, while English inherits the symbolic capital of cosmopolitanism and future potential. Of note, the exclusion of Arabic and Tamazight from this binary implies a foreign-language-centric framing of linguistic legitimacy.

Example 3:

Imagine our country dropping French as number one foreign language and replacing it with English, that would be a dream come true not only for me but for so many people like me.

The user imagines a cultural and linguistic change in Morocco in Example 3, where English takes the place of French as the most dominant foreign language. The phrase "a dream come true"

conveys emotional investment, while “so many people like me” implies a shared sentiment among Moroccan users who support this change. The tweet casts English as a symbol of international integration and national advancement. “Imagine” invites readers into an envisioned future, aligning them with the user’s stance. It opens a space of counter-hegemonic imagination, wherein the current linguistic order, anchored in French, is seen as outdated or misaligned with the speaker’s aspirations.

English is portrayed as a sign of rebirth, global connectedness, and national advancement, whereas French is portrayed as a holdover from colonial rule. This implicit binary logic is performed by the juxtaposition of “dropping French” and “replacing it with English.” The speaker’s position is extended to a community imagined group by the use of the phrase “not only for me but for so many people like me.” This use of affiliative stance-taking (Du Bois, 2007) constructs a collective subjectivity around linguistic aspiration, suggesting support for English is not an isolated opinion but a growing ideological current among Moroccans. Therefore, this tweet functions not only as personal testimony but rather as an implicit mobilisation towards this linguistic vision.

In this dataset, the linguistic and social backgrounds of users are unclear because Twitter does not usually give demographic information. The themes that appear often in these instances, however, imply that English is seen as a sign of modernity and advancement in addition to being a language of opportunity and movement.

This tweet in Example 4 advances a statistical and oppositional framing of linguistic legitimacy, positioning English as the hegemonic global language and French as its diminished rival. The tweet draws on quantitative data, such as, “1.35 billion people” and “67 different countries”, as a rhetorical strategy of legitimisation. By citing numerical scope, the speaker constructs English as globally ubiquitous and, by implication, universally valuable. The phrase “all together against ‘French language’” conveys a sense of alignment among English supporters, invoking a collectivist stance, while the preposition “against” is especially ideologically charged. It injects a combative tone into the tweet, implying that the global proliferation of English entails the marginalisation, if not

replacement, of French.. The tweet also leverages enumeration as an argumentative strategy. The quantitative precision gives the appearance of objectivity, yet it is mobilised in the service of a clearly ideological position. It implies that linguistic superiority is measurable and that French falls short on a global scale.

Example 4:

There are 1.35 billion people and 67 different countries who speak English around the world, all together against “French language”.

The structure of this statement consists of three declarative sentences, with the final sentence summarising the previous points to reinforce the perceived global dominance of English.

In Example 5, the user adopts a direct and assertive tone, suggesting a shift from Francophonie to Anglophonism:

Example 5:

Sorry dear; it’s time for Anglophones now.

The expression “Sorry dear” introduces a tone of mock politeness or ironic courtesy, which functions as a mitigating device to soften the force of the assertive declaration that follows. However, this politeness does not undermine the speaker’s ideological stance; rather, it renders the utterance more rhetorically strategic, implying that the shift being proposed is self-evident or inevitable, and thus no longer open to debate. The phrase “*it’s time for Anglophones now*” explicitly signals a temporal and ideological rupture, positioning English—or more precisely, English speakers—as the new locus of linguistic authority and prestige. This phrasing may indicate a broader discourse on shifting language policies, implying that English should now take precedence in Morocco. The speaker’s use of “Anglophones” is particularly notable. It shifts the focus from language to identity, suggesting that the linguistic shift involves more than the adoption of English as a communicative tool. In other words, it entails a symbolic realignment of cultural and ideological belonging.

A significant number of tweets (357) were written in Arabic, highlighting the prevalence of the language in discussions about English language advocacy.

In Example 6, the tweet emphasises the importance of English for Moroccan students, presenting it as a language that facilitates learning,

knowledge acquisition, and career growth. The phrase “*providing them with self-learning opportunities beyond description*” conveys a strong endorsement of English as a means of academic and professional advancement.

Example 6:

*itqa:n əllac:γə ləɪglzɪ: mən tæ.ɪaf ə tələbæ əlməyɑ:bæ
kəfi:l bən jə tɪj:h ləhɒm fu.ɑ:s tɑfləm dæ:ti la: tɒsæf,
wən jə fɪeh ləhɒm a:fa:qɑ: məstəqbəlɪjæ w məsrəfɪjæ
kəbrɑ: soɑ: a:lə əlməstɔwi: əl fɪxi: ʔəw əlmiħɑ:ni:*

[*Mastering the English language by Moroccan students is instrumental in providing them with self-learning opportunities beyond description and opening up great knowledge and future horizons for them, both on a personal and professional level.*]

The tweet’s structure employs collective referentiality—using third-person pronouns such as “*them*” and “*their*” to speak of Moroccan students as a unified category. This collective positioning constructs a national subjectivity, whereby the advancement of students is framed not simply as personal development but as a matter of broader societal progress. The tweet thus contributes to a nationalist educational discourse, wherein mastery of English becomes a vehicle for producing modern, globally integrated Moroccan citizens. The use of hyperbolic language, “*opportunities beyond description*”, is also rhetorically significant. It suggests that English possesses almost limitless potential, portraying it as a transformative force capable of opening “*great knowledge and future horizons*”.

In Example 7, the user presents English as the dominant global language, arguing that it has surpassed French in relevance. The phrase “*French has lost its place as an international language!*” suggests a declining status for French, positioning English as more relevant in science, commerce, and global communication.

Example 7:

*əs.təγərəbə mə.man ju:se.ru:n ʕɑ.lɑ: tʕɑ.li:mət ʔæt.
fɑ.'lɑ:həm əl.'lɑ.yat ər.ʔej.si:jə əl.ʔadɟ.nə.bi: əl.ʔu:l.
'lɑ əl.fər.nan.si: ʕu 'li:s əl.ʔin.kəl.'i:zi: 'nɑ.ʕɑm 'ləl ʔin.
dʒəl.'i:zi: bə.dal əl.fər.nan.si:ə ʕəf ʕən hæ'zəm.mən
kəl.'yat ʕɑ.ləm.j əl.ʔin.kəl.'i:ziə 'ʕu məs.tɛf.bə.'lən
əl.se.niə: 'lu:.'yat əl.ʕu.laom 'wə tɪzɑ.'rɑ 'wə di.'rɑ:.'sə
'wə se.'jɑ:.'hə 'wəl məs.tɛq.bə.'lə*

[*I find those who insist on teaching their children the first foreign language as French instead of English so astonishing! French has lost its place as an international language! English and, in the future, Chinese, are the languages of science, commerce, study, tourism and the future.*]

The use of adjectives such as “*international*” and “*future*” highlights English as a forward-looking language, while the mention of Chinese as an emerging language acknowledges global linguistic trends. The user expresses astonishment at the continued preference for French, framing it as an irrational and outdated choice in an era where English dominates the domains of science, commerce, education, and tourism. The tone is not only evaluative but also normative, prescribing a new linguistic order in which English (and eventually Chinese) should supplant French as the default foreign language in Morocco. Once again, the tweet is silent on Arabic and Tamazight, reflecting a broader pattern of erasure of national and indigenous languages from discourses about economic advancement and global integration. The perceived competition is framed exclusively between foreign languages, revealing the extent to which global language ideologies overshadow local sociolinguistic realities.

In Example 8, the tweet supports English over French while advocating for the preservation of Arabic and Tamazight as Morocco’s national languages.

Example 8:

Don't speak French ✗ speak English ✓ ...Arabic and Tamazight and nothing else baby.

This statement prioritises Arabic and Tamazight as core components of Moroccan identity. The use of imperatives (“*Don’t speak*” / “*Speak*”) conveys a strong rejection of French, reinforcing the user’s preference for English alongside national languages.

Following other tweets that advocate for English in scientific and academic contexts while critiquing Arabisation and French linguistic dominance. These examples illustrate attitudes towards linguistic hierarchy, research accessibility, and language policy discussions in Morocco.

In Example 9, the tweet challenges Arabisation policies in Moroccan universities, questioning the extent to which research is produced in Arabic. The phrase “*but the shock comes when you know the number of research and discoveries presented in Arabic language*” conveys a sense of surprise regarding the limited availability of Arabic-language academic research. The statement contrasts support for Arabisation in education with a critique of its effectiveness in producing scientific

contributions, reinforcing the argument that English is better suited for research and higher education.

Example 9:

*jadʕun litaʕri:b aldza:miʕa:t, jada:ʕuwn ʕan si:sa:t
attaʕri:b hatta an-niha:ja, lakin aʕ-ʕadma hi:n tʕrif
ʕadad albaħuwθi wal-iktishaafaat almuqaddama bil-
luya-ti-lʕarabi:a.*

[They call for Arabisation of universities, defending Arabisation policy until the end, but the shock comes when you know the number of research and discoveries presented in Arabic language.]

Lexically, the tweet (example 9) deploys language associated with scientific output (“research,” “discoveries”), embedding the discussion within discourses of higher education and epistemic productivity. The rhetorical strategy juxtaposes ideological persistence (“until the end”) with evidence-based surprise (“the shock comes”), producing a dissonant stance. The tweet omits reference to any alternative language, but the contrast between ideology and academic productivity implies a hierarchisation of languages based on epistemic utility. The absence of Arabic’s presence in scientific knowledge domains is foregrounded as the basis for challenging its appropriateness as the main medium of instruction in Moroccan universities. The tweet also suggests implicitly that shifting gears towards using English language at universities would be of great use.

The market economy

The second axis concentrates on the market economy to support the internationalisation dimension. In this regard, French is presented as being out of step with the needs of the market, whereas English is usually presented as the language of economic opportunity, employment, and access to international enterprises. Tweets invoking this axis often reflect a utilitarian view of language, where linguistic value is determined by its capacity to generate socioeconomic mobility and facilitate integration into competitive labour markets.

In Example 10, this tweet captures a discursive negotiation between ideological aspiration and structural or institutionalised constraint. On the one hand, the user acknowledges the practical and desirability of English, but this enthusiasm is tempered by an awareness of the institutional dominance of French, particularly in the labour market. Interestingly, the statement “Labour

market imposes French as a priority” uses the verb “imposes” to frame the relationship between the individual and the job market as coercive rather than elective. This lexical choice implies that language choices are subject to external regulation, revealing a system of institutional language planning driven more by market pressures than by governmental or educational regulations. In this case, French maintains its symbolic and commercial significance despite its ideological contestation in public discourse because it is positioned here as a necessary requirement for employment rather than a cultural choice.

Example 10:

I think that is a good idea, but Labor market in Morocco imposes French as a priority Think of it, at All we have to say That English is to learned [sic] in Morocco.

In Example 11, the user highlights English as an essential language for economic and scientific advancement:

Example 11:

Il est temps de se projeter vers l'anglais comme 2ème langue, même si ça va prendre bcp de temps mais c mtn, les français même apprennent l'anglais pr avoir plus d'opportunités c la langue de science et d commerce mondial.

[It is time to project towards English as the second language, even if it will take a lot of time, but it's now, the French even learn English to have more opportunities and the language of science and world trade.]

The phrase “*se projeter vers l'anglais*” (to project ourselves towards English) suggests a forward-looking perspective, reinforcing the notion of English as a language of future growth. The use of “*même si*” (even if) and “*c mtn*” (it’s now) conveys a sense of urgency, while “*les français même apprennent l'anglais*” (even the French are learning English) implies that English has become a necessity rather than a choice in global markets. This statement performs reversal and irony: the former colonial power, historically associated with linguistic prestige, is now portrayed as subordinating itself to English. This inversion serves to delegitimise French indirectly, while bolstering the symbolic authority of English through the perceived actions of the French themselves. It suggests that if the centre of Francophonie is shifting towards English, then Morocco’s continued prioritisation of French is both irrational and anachronistic. This tweet aligns with broader economic narratives that associate English with employment, commerce, and science.

In Example 12, the tweet explicitly supports English as the preferred language for scientific and academic fields while simultaneously expressing a reluctance to alter the official language policy. The phrase “*we want English to be the language of science, engineering, medicine, and economics*” conveys a clear preference for English in technical and professional fields, reinforcing its perceived role as the language of modernity and progress. However, the tweet also includes “*but I don’t support changing the official language*”, which suggests a desire to maintain the status quo regarding national language policies.

Example 12:

*nari:d əl lusuə əl, mɔʒəli:ziə kæləgə əlwəm wən ,hendəs:
wən tæb wən ɪ,ketʃɑ:sɑ:d la: a: de:ɟəm tə ʔi:r əl luyə
res'miə:*

[We want English to be the language of science, engineering, medicine, and economics, but I don't support changing the official language.]

The tweet’s structure reflects both linguistic advocacy and policy conservatism, suggesting that while English is seen as a necessary tool for academic advancement, it does not need to replace existing official languages.

The colonial legacy of the French

The third axis centres on the colonial legacy of the French, which emerges as a recurrent theme in users’ critiques. In this discourse, French is not merely a language but a symbol of historical domination, elitism, and postcolonial dependency.

In Example 13, the user explicitly articulates a forceful rejection of French as a legitimate linguistic resource in Morocco, deploying a range of ideological, rhetorical, and affective strategies to construct a postcolonial critique of the Francophone legacy. The first clause foregrounds a historical framing, where French is explicitly cast as a colonial remnant, thereby delegitimising its contemporary institutional presence. French as a colonial language and argues that its continued use in Morocco hinders progress. The statement “*French is not an international language*” introduces a strategic devaluation of French by contrasting it with the presumed universality and functional superiority of English. While the empirical claim is debatable, its ideological function is clear: to reposition French as parochial, declining, and geographically limited (“only people in France speak it”). The tweet also utilises affective and rhetorical devices to mobilise

support for linguistic reform. The phrase “you know what has to be done!” carries an imperative tone, inviting the reader to share in a presumed collective awareness and urgency. This tactic establishes solidarity through presupposition, implying that the only rational and progressive course of action is to abandon French in favour of English. The ellipsis (“...”) and informal structure amplify the emotive and conversational register, which aligns the speaker with a grassroots and populist stance rather than institutional discourse. The rhetorical question conveys urgency and a call for linguistic reform. The mention that “*Even the French people admit the importance of English*” is a particularly notable reference to the idea that the symbolic authority of the former coloniser is reversed and repurposed to validate the argument for English. The concluding rhetorical question, “*why don’t we just move on?*”, operates as a discourse marker of closure and impatience. It suggests coercion under the guise of commonsense reasoning, presupposing that “moving on” necessarily entails linguistic realignment towards English and away from French.

Example 13:

Sticking to the colonial language is not gonna get us anywhere since French is not an International language. because only people in France speak it because if we wanted to accomplish something you know what has to be done!Even the French people admit the importance of English so why don't we just move on ?

In Example 14, the user references Shakespeare and Molière, juxtaposing English and French linguistic traditions. *Shakespeare* symbolises the Anglophone world and, by extension, globalisation, innovation, and modernity; *Molière*, in contrast, evokes the Francophone legacy, historical ties to France, and the cultural weight of “*la Francophonie*”.

Example 14:

Shakespeare versus Molière : A mesure que le fossé se creuse avec la France et les pays de la francophonie, cet intérêt pour la langue anglaise au Maroc évolue vers une autre réflexion qui gagne du terrain...

[Shakespeare versus Molière: As the gap with France and the countries of the Francophonie deepens, this interest for the English language in Morocco evolves towards another reflection that is gaining ground...]

The phrase (example 14) “*le fossé se creuse avec la France*” (the gap with France is widening) suggests a perceived shift in Morocco’s relationship

with the Francophone world, while “*cet intérêt pour la langue anglaise... évolue*” (this interest in the English language is evolving) indicates a gradual movement towards English. By contrasting Shakespeare with Molière, the user presents a symbolic comparison between English and French cultural legacies. This framing may contribute to wider discussions on language preferences in Morocco, particularly regarding the cultural and educational implications of linguistic change. The statement “*cet intérêt pour la langue anglaise... évolue vers une autre réflexion*” constructs the rise of English as a gradual and reflective process, rather than a reactive or oppositional one. This signals that the increasing preference for English is not merely a rejection of French, but rather the emergence of a new cultural orientation, underpinned by reconfigured linguistic ideologies. The phrase “*gagne du terrain*” (gaining ground) underscores the idea that this shift is expanding in scope and influence, suggesting the gradual institutionalisation or normalisation of English in Moroccan society.

In Example 15, the tweet, written in Tamazight (using Tifinagh script), questions the necessity of French in Moroccan education, arguing that English has become the dominant global language for knowledge production. The use of Tamazight (written in Tifinagh script) is itself a politically meaningful act, indexing both linguistic identity and discursive resistance to the historical marginalisation of indigenous languages in Morocco. By making this argument in Tamazight, the user implicitly asserts linguistic sovereignty, repositioning the Amazigh voice within debates often dominated by Arabic-French or French-English binaries. The rhetorical question “Why do we need French?” implies that French no longer holds the same relevance in Moroccan academia. It does not seek information but rather challenges the continued institutional prominence of French by presupposing its functional obsolescence. Additionally, the phrase “The world speaks English” presents English as the universal language of communication. It constructs English as a de facto global lingua franca, naturalising its role in international communication, science, and education. Moreover, the tweet critiques French universities for teaching knowledge in English, suggesting a contradiction in their linguistic policies.

Example 15:

*mæ nræ tɛfrænsist? ʔmædæn ər isæwəl tɛŋglizɛyt.....
tisdawɪ.n n frænsæ ʔr sqræn tu.snæ sə tɛŋglizɛyt.*

*[Why do we need French? The world speaks English.
French universities teach knowledge using English.]*

The linguistic data also reveals that hashtags in Arabic, English, French, and Tamazight, among other languages, were used to resist Arabisation, protect English advocacy, and criticise French domination. The analysis shows that a large number of users reproduced the same hashtags in many languages, illustrating the multilingual nature of language policy conversation. The tweets commonly frame English as a gateway to global mobility and modernity (axis i), as a vehicle for economic competitiveness and individual advancement (axis ii), and as a linguistically and politically neutral alternative to French, whose status remains tied to Morocco’s colonial past (axis iii). Out of the 450 tweets analysed, most either:

- Advocated for English as the primary foreign language,
- Criticised French linguistic dominance, or
- Emphasised the importance of preserving Arabic and Tamazight as national languages.

Multilingual engagement indicates that Morocco’s language-policy debates span diverse communities and mirror wider discussions about linguistic identity and education reform.

IV. DISCUSSION

Interestingly, the findings of this study show a notable change in linguistic attitudes on Moroccan Twitter, with English being the most popular foreign language and French encountering opposition since it is frequently presented as a colonial artefact rather than a requirement. Although they still have a minor role in the academic and commercial spheres, Arabic and Tamazight are nevertheless recognised as identity markers. One important digital tool for expressing, amplifying, and arguing these language preferences and ideological arguments is throughout hashtags. This discussion will explore the implications of English advocacy, the rejection of French, the positioning of Arabic and Tamazight, and broader sociopolitical dimensions of linguistic activism.

The corpus shows strong advocacy for English over French, framing English as a global language

of technological development, professional opportunity, and economic mobility. Hashtags such as #Yes_To_English_No_To_French and #English_Instead_of_French present English as an instrument of empowerment rather than a mere linguistic preference. This aligns with Phillipson's (2009) claim that English operates as the dominant global lingua franca within a system of linguistic imperialism. The findings also go hand in hand with conclusions offered by Kirkpatrick's (2007) work on English as a global asset, highlighting how non-Anglophone countries more and more favour English in education, business, and diplomacy.

However, French seems to be framed as an outdated or imposed language, particularly through hashtags such as #No_To_French and لا_للفرنسية (No to French). Users critique the continued dominance of French in Moroccan education and the labour market, attributing it more to historical colonial ties than to practical necessity. These findings confirm those of earlier studies, such as Calvet's (1998) findings on postcolonial Francophonie, where French is often maintained not for its inherent value but due to political and institutional inertia. Contrary to what has been reported by Djité (2008), these results indicate in Francophone Africa, where French remains deeply embedded in political and educational structures (Djité, 2008), Moroccan Twitter discourse signals a clear preference for English as an alternative. Given that a large proportion of these posts expressed strong disapproval of French's status, this may indicate that a loosely coherent set of language ideologies is shaping public discourse (Vessey, 2016)

Furthermore, the rejection of French is not merely linguistic but political, as seen in the frequent use of #No_To_Francophonie, reflecting a broader discourse of detachment from the Francophone sphere. Our findings support Sadiqi's (1991) claim that English is perceived as a neutral language, unburdened by Morocco's colonial history with France. These findings suggest that Moroccan digital discourse is contributing to a sociolinguistic shift, where public sentiment is increasingly challenging the institutional dominance of French.

Beyond the English vs. French debate, our study interestingly finds a strong commitment to Arabic and Tamazight as national identity markers. Hashtags and tweets indicate that language

activism is not only about promoting English but also about reaffirming national linguistic identity. These findings are consistent with Ait Laaguid and Khaloufi's (2023) study, which reports that Moroccans view Amazigh use on social networking sites as an effective means of promoting and improving the language. The collected data are consistent with Ennaji's (1999) concept of "official discourse," where Arabic and Tamazight serve as ideological pillars of national unity.

However, despite this strong ideological attachment to Arabic and Tamazight, the dataset suggests that they are not positioned as practical alternatives to French in scientific or economic domains. This is consistent exactly with Ennaji's (2005) argument that language policy in North Africa is seemingly paradoxical, where national languages are mainly celebrated in rhetoric but remain secondary in professional and academic settings. The findings suggest that while Arabic and Tamazight are valued for identity preservation, English is favoured for economic and educational advancement.

One interesting aspect that emerged from the analysis is the emerging discourse on Mandarin Chinese, though it remains marginal in the dataset. A small number of users acknowledge that China's economic presence in North Africa could lead to increased interest in Mandarin. While this does not currently represent a significant linguistic shift, it reflects a growing awareness of China's role in global economic realignments (Djité, 2008).

The hashtag analysis largely confirms that digital discourse on Twitter is not just about communication but also about activism and policy critique. Hashtags are used as performative speech acts (Austin, 1962), where their mere usage signals ideological alignment. The multilingual replication of hashtags—appearing in Arabic, Tamazight, French, and English—suggests that language activism is not constrained to one linguistic group but rather spans diverse user bases.

Comparable insights emerge from Zappavigna's (2011) examination of hashtags as digital affordances, showing how they operate as searchable discursive markers that bring digital communities together around shared ideological stances. The widespread use of hashtags opposing French linguistic hegemony indicates that Moroccan Twitter users are actively participating

in a larger sociopolitical debate, rather than merely expressing passive opinions.

Moreover, the dataset reveals that linguistic debates are entangled with political and economic grievances. The presence of hashtags such as #Parti_RNI (RNI Party) (15 occurrences) and #7dh_Gazoil (7 Dirhams Diesel) (13 occurrences) suggests that language is not an isolated issue but intersects with broader concerns about governance and economic reform. This is consistent with Maly's (2020) analysis of digital activism, wherein linguistic discussions frequently intersect with economic and political tensions, producing interconnected discursive movements.

The increasing preference for English over French suggests that Moroccan language policies may need to evolve to align with public sentiment. Currently, Moroccan institutions continue to favour in scientific and technical disciplines, despite growing calls for English-medium instruction. The findings indicate that if public demand for English persists, policymakers may need to consider expanding English-language education in different institutions and professional training.

This situation contrasts with Rwanda's linguistic transition, where French was officially replaced by English in 2008 (Samuelson & Freedman, 2010). While Morocco has not enacted similar legislative changes, the digital discourse signals a social shift towards English that may eventually influence policy decisions. The increasing critique of French also suggests that the role of Francophonie in Morocco may weaken in the coming decades, requiring policymakers to reevaluate linguistic frameworks in governance, diplomacy, and education.

Additionally, the findings reinforce that Arabic and Tamazight remain essential components of linguistic nationalism, suggesting that language planning should balance globalisation with the protection of national languages. If policymakers fail to address these shifting linguistic attitudes, public discourse may continue to outpace institutional policies, creating further tensions between linguistic identity and economic pragmatism.

Furthermore, the emergence of these linguistic movements on Twitter posits a rising public dialogue on Morocco's language policy, namely about the role of English and the declining

use of French. As Morocco deepens its global economic and diplomatic engagements, these findings highlight potential emerging changes in linguistic preferences that might, eventually, affect official language policies. Nevertheless, it remains uncertain whether these digital discourses will translate into institutional changes or remain confined to online activism.

Even though this paper provides new valuable insights into linguistic activism on Twitter, it was limited in several ways. First, Twitter users stand for a specific demographic—young, educated, and digitally literate individuals—which may not necessarily reflect broader linguistic attitudes across Moroccan society. Future studies should incorporate surveys and interviews to compare online discourse with offline perspectives. Second, Twitter's algorithmic biases may have exacerbated specific perspectives, complicating the evaluation of their representativeness among various socioeconomic groups (Ye et al., 202). The present study has only examined hashtags and their associated tweets. Therefore, A broader dataset incorporating Facebook, YouTube, and other social media platforms would provide a more comprehensive picture of language attitudes in Morocco.

V. CONCLUSION

This study has investigated language ideologies on Twitter, with an emphasis on the representations of English and French and the positioning of Arabic and Tamazight in Morocco's digital linguistic landscape. In reference to the first research question, English is all the time more perceived as a language of international prestige, economic opportunity, and modernisation, whilst French is often portrayed as a colonial remnant that hinders Moroccans' linguistic and economic mobility. The findings also imply that Twitter users who support Anglophonism over Francophonie emphasise English as a worldwide language for commerce, education, and communication, underpinning the language's increasing instrumental importance in language planning debates in Morocco. Regarding the second research question, many Twitter users support the preservation and promotion of Arabic and Tamazight, which continue to be essential components of national identity. However, despite this symbolic importance, neither Arabic nor Tamazight is frequently positioned as a reasonably

viable alternative for professional, scientific, or international communication. Rather, the tweets advocates English as the preferred foreign language, which reflects a pragmatic approach to linguistic and economic adaptation in a globalising world.

Studying language ideology in digital contexts eventually yields important insights into shifting linguistic views and societal changes. The findings contribute to our knowledge of digital activism, postcolonial language change, and language-policy debates while highlighting social media as a key space for negotiating and contesting changing language-identity-power relations.

Future study should take into account the possibility of longitudinal studies in order to evaluate how digital discourse on English and French changes over time. Furthermore, the findings are promising and ought to be confirmed by a bigger sample size. Last but not least, we suggest that comparative studies with other Francophone countries undergoing linguistic shift could provide valuable insights into whether these trends are specific to Morocco or indicative of a wider regional pattern.

ETHICAL STATEMENT

This study adheres to ethical standards for social media research by focusing on publicly available tweets, ensuring no private or sensitive data is collected. User anonymity is maintained, and

no identifying information is disclosed. While some tweets referenced public figures and official political accounts, such as the account of the Prime Minister, these mentions are treated as part of the public discourse relevant to the study's focus on language ideologies and policy debates. The analysis respects the original context of the tweets, avoiding misrepresentation. Additionally, the research ensures transparency in data collection and analysis, aligning with ethical guidelines for digital discourse studies.

CREDIT AUTHOR STATEMENT

Elbourkhissi: Conceptualisation, literature review, study design, data collection, data analysis, manuscript writing, translation, and editing, **Houssaini:** Study design, methodology, supervision, critical revisions, manuscript writing, proofreading, and editing.

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DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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