



The Linguistic Rivalry Between English and French in Morocco: Analyzing Representation and Attitudes

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ABSTRACT

The global distribution of languages is shaped more by socio-political and historical forces than by any inherent linguistic qualities. In Morocco, rising interest in English, seen as a potential rival to French, has ignited debates in both scholarly and public circles. This study employed a qualitative content analysis to analyze articles and reader comments from Hespress, a leading Moroccan online newspaper, to explore how English-French competition is portrayed. It also considers the tension between these foreign languages and Morocco's official tongues, Arabic and Amazigh. Findings indicate that Hespress largely favors English, with most commenters endorsing it as a replacement for French due to its colonial legacy. Yet some argue that merely switching from one foreign language to another will not resolve Morocco's deeper educational challenges. While English appears more practical, the study suggests it must be approached critically, given its own potential to serve as an imperial tool.

Keywords: English-French rivalry in Morocco, language policy, foreign languages, language attitudes, challenges to local languages, cultural identity

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ENGLISH AS A GLOBAL LANGUAGE: PRAGMATISM OR ELITISM?

The most widely spoken native languages globally include Mandarin Chinese, used by 20% of the world population, followed by Hindi-Urdu at 8.5%, English at 7.3%, Arabic at 6.4%, Spanish at 5.4%, and Bengali at 3.4% (CIA, 2021). Among the 7,100 languages spoken worldwide (Rymer, 2012), English has become dominant in scientific research, business, diplomacy, and technology. In particular, scientific literature is largely published in English, with more than three-quarters of current research papers appearing in this language (Deng, 2015; Montgomery & Crystal, 2013). In disciplines such as the natural and social sciences, over 95% of research articles are published in English (Liu, 2017). Furthermore, approximately 80% of all indexed journals are in English (Gordin, 2015; van Weijen, 2012), including the world's top 50 journals (Huttner-Koros, 2015).

Prior to World War I, scientific publications were approximately divided among three main languages—English, French, and German—each accounting for about one-third of total output (Bahji et al., 2023). As more scientists from Europe and other regions migrated to the United States, English became increasingly used as a common language among researchers. During the 1960s, about 40% of scientific publications were still written in French, German, or Russian (Deng, 2015). Nevertheless, the status of French, the language introduced to Morocco through colonialism, declined significantly and opened the way for English, prompting Moroccan scholars to publish in English as well. French researchers have increasingly prioritized publishing in English to gain greater international visibility, a shift reinforced by a 1994 court ruling that overturned restrictions on publishing publicly funded research in French, thereby allowing scholars to engage more freely in global academic discourse (Butler, 2000). At the same time, French researchers are increasingly pressured to publish in English-language journals to secure academic success, yet they face substantial linguistic and stylistic challenges in adapting to English-specific conventions, particularly in citation practices (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2013).

However, this global dominance of English should not be uncritically celebrated. It is crucial to acknowledge that the spread—or more accurately, the dominance—of a language is far from a natural process, and it does not stem from any inherent linguistic superiority. Historically, languages such as Greek and Latin expanded their influence through the conquests of Alexander the Great and the Roman legions respectively. In a similar vein, “English ... has been no exception” (Crystal, 2012, p. 9). Historical evidence indicates that the United States and the United Kingdom have actively promoted English monolingualism through organizations such as the United States Information Agency, the British Council, and various ELT initiatives. This effort has fostered “linguicism,” a phenomenon akin to racism or sexism, wherein one language is elevated over others, reinforcing and normalizing a monolingual worldview (Phillipson, 2013).

Despite the pragmatic argument that learning English is essential worldwide due to its scientific relevance, only around 17% of the global population speaks English, and the majority of these speakers use it as a second language (Lane, 2019; Lyons, 2021). Consequently, the dominance of English in scientific publishing restricts access and participation in academic literature for approximately 80% of the global population (Frayne et al., 1996). Multiple studies indicate a bias wherein research published in languages other than English is often excluded, making English an unofficial requirement for academic success (Jackson & Kuriyama, 2019; Neimann Rasmussen & Montgomery, 2018; Lillis & Curry, 2010). Although no clear solution exists to mitigate English's dominance in scientific publishing, five potential strategies have been proposed: encouraging journals to accept non-English papers, providing affordable translation services, allowing duplicate publication in multiple languages, leveraging AI-powered translation tools, and developing citation metrics that fairly represent non-English journals. Implementing these measures could enhance linguistic diversity while preserving accessibility and global impact (Bahji et al., 2023).

Nonetheless, while English can indeed pose a barrier for some within academia, it may also be viewed pragmatically as an advantage. Although the spread of English is often represented as a form of imperialism, one cannot overlook the two-way dynamic between its promoters and its receivers (Pan & Seargeant, 2012, p. 61). A romanticized view of local languages may obscure the fact that individuals who wish to learn English for its benefits—such as upward social mobility—could be restricted to their locality if discouraged from acquiring it (ibid.). Furthermore, while the aforementioned solutions involving translation and new technologies offer possibilities, it must be reiterated that these are suggestions rather than definitive plans for changing the present reality, in which learning English has effectively become a requirement.

THE MOROCCAN LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE

Morocco is a multilingual society where individuals typically grow up exposed to three or four languages, primarily Arabic, Amazigh, French, and Spanish. Rather than being an exception, code-switching—often referred to as polylingual languaging (Jørgensen, 2008)—is the norm. Moroccans select linguistic elements from different codes based on their language proficiency to communicate effectively and establish mutual understanding.

The 2011 Moroccan constitution designates Arabic and Amazigh as co-official languages, although the term “Arabic” encompasses various forms, including Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Moroccan Darija. While MSA dominates formal domains such as education, media, and administration, Moroccan Darija—shaped by Amazigh, French, and Spanish—is widely spoken. Nonetheless, many Moroccans do not recognize Darija as a language in its own right and may prefer French in public spaces. Despite this preference, Arabic retains significant prestige due to its association with Islamic liturgy and national identity.

During the French Protectorate (1912–1956), French served as the primary language of education in mission schools, which aimed to “civilize” the colonized population under the ideology of *la mission civilisatrice* (Conklin, 1997). It was also mandated as the official language of administration (Ager, 1999). After independence in 1956, Morocco implemented the Arabization policy to remove French from education and public life, thereby reinforcing Islamic values and resisting Western influence (Mouhssine, 1995). However, Arabization did not eliminate French, partly because it failed to offer a viable alternative for economic and workforce integration. Paradoxically, many advocates of Arabization—including political elites—continued to send their children to French mission schools and universities abroad, which perpetuated the dominance of French in elite circles (Spolsky, 2018). At present, French remains the de facto language in business, science, engineering, and medicine, fulfilling a critical role in higher education and public administration. It functions as a form of linguistic capital, offering access to political, economic, and social mobility, opportunities generally not afforded by indigenous languages, which lack equivalent prestige and economic value.

English was introduced as a foreign language in Moroccan public schools and universities. Responding to its growing global significance, the Ministry of Education mandated English instruction starting in Grade 5 rather than Grade 10 (Dahbi, 2004) and launched the English Baccalaureate in 2014, increasing the number of instruction hours and integrating science courses in English. While public higher education continues to rely on Arabic and French, there is a growing trend to teach science and engineering in English to enhance research visibility in international journals (Belhiah & Abdelatif, 2016). In the private sector, universities such as Al-Akhawayn University, the International University of Rabat, and British and American institutions have further expanded English instruction. Unlike French, English does not carry colonial associations (Ennaji, 1991), contributing to positive learner attitudes (Buckner, 2011; Errihani, 2017; Marley, 2004; Sadiqi, 1991). Boukous (2009) predicts that English may eventually overtake French

as Morocco's dominant foreign language, partly due to nationalist distrust of the French colonial past and to English's central role in globalization, science, technology, and internationalizing higher education.

In Morocco, the linguistic landscape reflects an ongoing power struggle between local and foreign languages (Boukous, 2009; Zouhir, 2013). Arabic, Darija, and Tamazight are traditionally linked to cultural authenticity, local identity, and heritage (Marley, 2004), while French and English are considered prestigious languages associated with modernity and socio-economic mobility (Jaafari, 2019; Bentahila, 1983; Chakrani, 2011; Chakrani & Huang, 2014; Mouhssine, 1995). In recent years, English has become a strong competitor to French, gradually reducing the latter's linguistic dominance (Zouhir, 2013). This shift has significantly diminished the influence of French in various sectors, particularly education, suggesting that English may eventually become Morocco's primary foreign language (Marley, 2004).

Although English now permeates multiple arenas in Morocco, it has gained particular favor among younger generations (Chakrani, 2013). Recent enrollment data indicate a steady and substantial rise in the number of students choosing English studies at Moroccan universities, whereas French studies programs continue to decline. Over the past few years, English has become the most popular and influential language among Moroccan students, while French now ranks second (Jebbour, 2019).

In higher education, the move toward English is increasingly evident, supported by policy decisions that have bolstered its presence nationwide (Sadiqi, 1991, p. 106). Efforts to internationalize and raise the standard of higher education have prompted growing calls to replace French with English as the main language of instruction (Belhiah & Abdelatif, 2016; Ben Haman, 2020; Kachoub & Hilgendorf, 2019). Rising enrollments in English programs at Moroccan universities confirm this expanding interest (El Kirat & Laaraj, 2016; Jebbour, 2019). Scholars attribute this trend to factors such as modernity's influence on language attitudes (Chakrani, 2013; Chakrani & Huang, 2014), socioeconomic aspirations (Buckner, 2011; Jaafari, 2019; Ouakrime, 2016), and the instrumental value of English (Marley, 2004), as well as its lack of colonial associations for Moroccans (Ennaji, 1991; Zouhir, 2013). Positive attitudes, career opportunities, global accessibility, and an interest in self-expression foster a growing preference for English among university students. By contrast, Arabic and French are sometimes viewed as outdated, challenging, or restrictive, especially in academic and professional contexts (Belhiah, 2020). Chakrani (2013) observes that students' linguistic choices are influenced by their alignment with ideologies of modernity, noting that both French and English are strongly linked to modernity and open-mindedness, whereas Moroccan Arabic, Standard Arabic, and Amazigh do not elicit the same perceptions (Chakrani, 2013, p. 433). This suggests that the dominance of French—and increasingly English—is reinforced by their connection to a modern way of life (Chakrani, 2011, p. 172).

Moreover, evidence from diverse contexts consistently indicates that younger populations, especially university students, hold positive attitudes toward English (Lin, 2012; Menking, 2015; Sung, 2018). The same demographic also plays a key role in integrating English into their communities, thereby broadening its impact (Lee & Choe, 2019, p. 2).

Moroccan youth, in particular, are inclined to learn English because it is aligned with improved educational and socio-economic opportunities, as well as with notions of modernity. Meanwhile, Darija and Tamazight, Morocco's native languages, remain tied to tradition, religion, and conservatism. A key factor driving the growing popularity of English in Morocco is a sense of dissatisfaction with Moroccan culture and social structures (R'boul, 2022). Exposure to English-language popular culture shapes the view among young Moroccans that their local languages and cultural norms hinder their ability to embrace more cosmopolitan lifestyles. This perception often fuels a gravitation toward Western, more liberal values, which are seen as modern and permissive (ibid.).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative content analysis of articles and reader comments published on *Hespress*, an Arabic-language online newspaper in Morocco. The primary aim was to investigate public perceptions of language policy and linguistic preferences—particularly regarding Arabic, Amazigh, French, and English—in the Moroccan education system. Below are the specific procedures followed in data collection and analysis.

Data Selection

To capture a broad range of perspectives over time, the study identified *Hespress* articles published between 2019 and 2024 that explicitly addressed language instruction and policy in Morocco. Articles were selected if they met the following criteria:

- **Relevance to Language Policy:** Articles had to discuss educational reforms, language policy decisions, or debates about adopting or expanding specific languages (French, English, Arabic, Amazigh) within Morocco.
- **Public Commentary:** Articles needed to include an accessible comments section, allowing insight into readers' reactions and opinions.

From these criteria, five key articles were chosen:

- **May 13, 2019:** “Languages of Education in Morocco... The Present for French and the Future for English,” by Moha Ennaji.
- **October 19, 2023:** Article by Sakina Essadiqi featuring announcements by Minister Chakib Benmoussa on language instruction for the 2023–2024 academic year.
- **November 13, 2023:** “Teaching Foreign Languages in Morocco: Is It Time for English to Replace French?” by Abdelkhaleq Rachidi.
- **August 13, 2023:** Opinion piece by Mohamed Bouddahane on expanding English instruction in middle schools.
- **November 15, 2024:** Coverage of Morocco’s 2024 English Proficiency Index results by Education First.

Data Collection and Analysis

In total, comments ranged from 15 to 36 per article, providing a diverse set of perspectives on language use, policy, and educational reforms. A systematic coding framework was developed to analyze themes within the articles and comments. The coding proceeded in three stages:

1. **Initial Reading and Open Coding:** the articles and their comment sections were read in full to identify broad themes, such as:
 - **Language Preferences and Attitudes:** Mentions of Arabic, Amazigh, French, and English as either positive, negative, or neutral.
 - **Colonial Legacy vs. Global Modernity:** References to French as a colonial remnant versus English as a global necessity.
 - **Educational Policy and Structural Issues:** Discussion of teacher shortages, policy reforms, governance, and resource constraints.
 - **Cultural Identity and National Values:** Concerns regarding the preservation of Arabic and Amazigh as integral to Moroccan identity.

2. **Refinement of Codes:** After this initial pass, the coding categories were refined, collapsing overlapping themes and clarifying distinctions between different language attitudes (e.g., pro-English, anti-French, pro-Arabic/Amazigh, etc.). This led to a final coding scheme that captured both language-related and systemic educational concerns.
3. **Frequency and Thematic Analysis:** The refined codebook was systematically applied to each comment, noting the frequency of particular themes. Approximate percentages were calculated by dividing the number of comments referencing a specific theme by the total comments for each article. Qualitative memos were also created to document patterns, nuances, and contextual factors (e.g., references to colonial history or globalization).

Interpretation and Synthesis

After coding, the study compared the thematic distributions across the five articles. Patterns that emerged—such as strong public support for English, continued rejection of French, or the insistence on maintaining Arabic or Amazigh as a cultural bedrock—were documented as key findings. In addition, commentary on broader systemic issues (teacher strikes, unstable policies, resource inequities) was noted as equally significant in shaping public opinion on language reforms. These convergent and divergent viewpoints were then synthesized to form the basis of the *Findings* section.

FINDINGS

In an Arabic-language article entitled “*Languages of Education in Morocco... The Present for French and the Future for English*” published on May 13, 2019 in *Hespress*, Moha Ennaji emphasizes that, despite the constitutional recognition of Arabic and Amazigh as Morocco’s official languages, French remains the dominant medium for scientific and technical education, while English is generally taught as a secondary foreign language. Ennaji attributes the enduring influence of French to a powerful Francophone lobby and Morocco’s historical, economic ties to France, factors which have largely impeded any decisive shift to English—despite recent government measures requiring doctoral students to demonstrate proficiency in English. He argues that Arabic and Amazigh should be preserved for literary and cultural instruction, whereas French (and, eventually, English) should be used for scientific disciplines to improve overall educational quality and reduce unemployment.

Commenters on this *Hespress* article show a strong inclination toward English as the primary foreign language. Approximately 35% of participants favor English for its global economic and scientific importance, advocating that Morocco align more closely with international markets rather than remain tethered to French. In contrast, 18 comments 37% reject French as a colonial burden that hinders Morocco’s development, viewing the proposed transition to English as long overdue, given young Moroccans’ growing familiarity with it through digital media. However, 9 commenters 19% insist that Arabic should remain central to the educational system, warning that foreign language emphasis may compromise national identity and cultural heritage. A smaller fraction 8% highlights Amazigh and Darija, promoting a more localized educational approach. Beyond language policy, 12 comments 25% underscore deeper systemic issues—such as teacher strikes and weak governance—raising doubts about whether the education system is prepared for a major linguistic overhaul.

In a subsequent article published on October 19, 2023, *Hespress* journalist Sakina Essadiqi reports on announcements by the Moroccan Minister of National Education and Sports, Chakib Benmoussa, concerning language instruction and teacher recruitment for the 2023–2024 academic year. According to this report, 1,154,813 middle-school students will study English, supported by 2,794 current teachers and 665 new hires, while 745,615 students will study Amazigh. An additional 18,000 recruits will bring the total teaching workforce to 283,662, and 4,700 new classrooms and 6,000 new educators will be introduced at schools. The Ministry also plans to tighten partner association criteria, assess first-grade students for

learning gaps, and adopt new teaching methods and digital tools to support instruction in Arabic, French, English, and Amazigh.

Comments on Essadiqi's article reveal divergent views on language policy and on broader structural challenges in Moroccan education. Approximately 6 commenters 25% strongly support expanding English instruction, citing its significance for science, technology, and global collaboration, while 4 commenters articulate anti-French sentiments, portraying French as a colonial vestige that deprives students of broader academic and professional opportunities. Conversely, 4 commenters (17%) argue that Arabic must remain the foundation of instruction, contending that prioritizing English or French undermines native language proficiency. Although Amazigh is officially gaining ground, it receives limited attention in the comments, which predominantly center on the transition from French to English. A handful of commenters also emphasize practical barriers—such as teacher shortages, insufficient textbooks, and inadequate pedagogical resources—that may obstruct an effective shift to English. Meanwhile, at least 6 commenters 25% highlight systemic faults, including teacher strikes and a persistent gap between public and private education, suggesting that such ingrained problems overshadow any language reforms.

On November 13, 2023, *Hespress* featured another Arabic-language article entitled “Teaching Foreign Languages in Morocco: Is It Time for English to Replace French?” by English instructor Abdelkhaleq Rachidi. According to Rachidi, students often struggle with French and would benefit more from English, given its broader global relevance. He stresses that any policy shift should be grounded in a comprehensive, long-term strategy rather than short-term political motivations. Of the 36 commenters, 21 (58%) advocate for an immediate and decisive pivot to English, frequently describing it as the only globally viable option for Morocco's future, particularly in areas of science, technology, and AI. By contrast, 23 commenters (64%) criticize French for its colonial legacy and perceived lack of contemporary value. Only 2 comments 6% defend French, highlighting its historical role or challenging assumptions about the simplicity of English for Moroccan learners. Although the French–English debate is predominant, 8 commenters affirm the importance of Arabic for religious and cultural identity, and 2 references to Darija suggest using the local dialect as another medium of instruction. Furthermore, 8 comments 22% call attention to deeper systemic deficiencies—such as corruption, inadequate funding, or political interference—that they believe cannot be solved solely through language policy changes.

In an article from August 13, 2023, also published in *Hespress*, writer Mohamed Bouddahane critiques Morocco's plan to expand English instruction in middle schools, as outlined in ministerial memorandum No. 23-030 (May 23, 2023). Although welcomed as a step toward strengthening Morocco's position in science and technology, he argues that simply adding English as a subject will not make it a language of knowledge acquisition and production. He places this debate in the historical context of Moroccan linguistic policies, citing the 1970s Arabization initiative and 2019 Law 51.17, which reintroduced French as the principal medium for teaching science. Bouddahane contends that for English to be truly transformative, it must replace French in education, administration, and the professional sphere, paralleling Rwanda's model. He notes, however, that French has functioned as Morocco's de facto official language since 1912, while Arabic remains symbolically protected. Diminishing French influence could, in his view, indirectly benefit Amazigh, which has been historically marginalized. Yet he maintains that any genuine shift to English depends on strong political will to restructure Morocco's educational, administrative, and economic frameworks.

Out of 15 comments on Bouddahane's article, 7 (47%) address the French–English rivalry, generally labeling French as a vestige of colonialism and praising English for its worldwide importance in technology and science. Another 5 (33%) emphasize the central role of Arabic, citing already low levels of Arabic literacy among students. While 3 (20%) reference Amazigh, they advocate for recognizing local languages rather than exclusively focusing on foreign tongues. Approximately 5 (33%) draw attention to systemic

issues—including under-resourced schools and inadequate teacher training—that they believe will hinder any replacement of French with English unless more fundamental reforms are undertaken.

Lastly, in a November 15, 2024 article, *Hespress* reports on the 2024 English Proficiency Index published by Education First, which ranks Morocco 76th globally, indicating “weak” English proficiency. Although Morocco’s score improved slightly, its overall ranking remains unchanged. Casablanca-Settat achieves the highest regional performance, followed by Rabat-Salé-Kénitra and Marrakech-Safi, while Guelmim-Oued Noun and Drâa-Tafilalet lag behind. Among cities, Rabat, El Jadida, and Casablanca show the strongest English skills. Morocco ranks ninth in Africa, behind countries such as South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria. The article notes that women exhibit greater proficiency gains than men and that private-sector workers generally have stronger English skills. *Hespress* further highlights Education First’s recommendations for enhanced teacher training, the adoption of communicative teaching methods, and mandatory English proficiency standards for university graduation.

Of the 24 comments on this latest report, about 5 (~21%) question whether English mastery is a valid metric for assessing national development, asserting that knowledge of English alone does not guarantee progress. Nevertheless, 7 commenters (29%) endorse expanding English instruction, portraying it as essential for competitiveness in science, technology, and international engagement. They emphasize young Moroccans’ familiarity with English through social media, online gaming, and digital platforms, framing this language shift as overdue. In contrast, 8 commenters 33% focus on French’s continued predominance, criticizing it as colonial baggage that prevents Morocco from fully participating in the global sphere. Only 2 commenters (8%) defend French, noting its historical importance or questioning whether English is genuinely more accessible for Moroccan learners. An additional 6 commenters highlight Arabic’s centrality to religious and cultural identity, cautioning that an excessive focus on foreign languages undermines the mother tongue. Amazigh is mentioned once as an integral part of Morocco’s heritage, while 2 remarks advocate adopting Darija, along with English, to increase inclusivity. Finally, 5 comments (~21%) underline persistent structural hurdles—including insufficient research funding, flawed educational policies, and political inertia—as more pressing obstacles to educational improvement than the choice of instructional language.

DISCUSSION

A cursory review of *Hespress* articles indicates a pronounced inclination toward English replacing French in Morocco. A simple Google search using the Arabic keywords (تدريس اللغات الأجنبية في المغرب) reveals, on the first page, several titles highlighting English instruction, including:

- “Teaching English Reaches More Than One Million Students at the Lower Secondary Level” (تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية يصل إلى أكثر من مليون تلميذ في المرحلة الإعدادية)
- “Teaching Foreign Languages in Morocco” (تدريس اللغات الأجنبية في المغرب)
- “Calls to Generalize the Experience of Teaching English in Primary Schools Across Morocco... Has the Time Come for English to Replace French?” (مطالب بتعميم تجربة تدريس الإنجليزية في الابتدائي على جميع (هل حان الوقت للإنجليزية مكان الفرنسية..مدارس المغرب)
- “Replacing French with English... A Recurring Demand at the Start of the School Year in Morocco?” (مطلب يتجدد مع بداية الموسم الدراسي في المغرب؟..استبدال الفرنسية بالإنجليزية)

Accompanying illustrations also underscore this shift. In Figure 1, a Moroccan man discards a French textbook while holding an English textbook (As-Sunouni, 2025a), and Figure 2 depicts a Moroccan man looking out of a window framed by Union Jack shutters (As-Sunouni, 2025b). Together, these articles and images convey the growing appeal of English as Morocco’s primary foreign language for science, technology, and global engagement. Commenters often characterize French as a colonial relic rather than a useful tool for modern development. While a minority still defends French on historical or economic grounds, the predominant perspective favors a decisive move to English, citing young Moroccans’

familiarity with the language through digital platforms and the perceived necessity of English proficiency in international labor markets.



Figure 1

A Moroccan man discarding a French language book while holding an English textbook (As-Sunouni, 2025a).



Figure 2

A Moroccan man looking out of a window with Union Jack shutters (As-Sunouni, 2025b).

Across these five articles, there is broad convergence on the growing appeal of English as Morocco's primary foreign language for science, technology, and global engagement, with many commenters portraying French as a remnant of colonial influence rather than a practical tool for modern development. While a small minority still defends French on historical or economic grounds, the overriding sentiment favors a decisive pivot to English, highlighting young Moroccans' familiarity with the language through digital media and the perceived necessity of English skills in international job markets. At the same time, Arabic remains central to the debate: commenters across all articles emphasize its cultural and religious importance, cautioning against reforms that might sideline the official mother tongue. Mentions of Amazigh and Darija, although fewer, similarly call for preserving local identities and languages in the face of foreign-language expansion.

However, this apparent consensus around English does not obscure the systemic obstacles frequently cited as more significant than the language choice itself. Commenters in every article point to underfunded schools, erratic policy shifts, teacher shortages, and broader governance issues that hinder any meaningful curriculum reform. Many suggest that unless these structural concerns—such as labor disputes, inadequate training, and chronic resource gaps—are addressed, neither English nor French can adequately transform Morocco's educational outcomes. Thus, many commenters believe that while English enjoys a strong public mandate to replace or at least diminish French, the data consistently show that deeper institutional reforms will be crucial for ensuring the efficacy and sustainability of any linguistic policy shift.

The findings from the *Hespress* articles and comment sections closely mirror established scholarly perspectives on the appeal of English among Moroccan learners. In particular, researchers have noted that English generally does not carry the overt colonial associations attached to French (Ennaji, 1991), thus engendering more positive attitudes toward learning it (Buckner, 2011; Errihani, 2017; Marley, 2004; Sadiqi, 1991). In higher education, this preference is reinforced by policy decisions aimed at internationalizing Moroccan universities, prompting greater reliance on English for instruction (Belhiah &

Abdelatif, 2016; Ben Haman, 2020; Kachoub & Hilgendorf, 2019; Sadiqi, 1991). Comments emphasizing English's utility in economics and science align with research attributing its growing popularity to aspirations for social mobility, modernity, and global connectivity (Buckner, 2011; Chakrani, 2013; Chakrani & Huang, 2014; Jaafari, 2019; Ouakrime, 2016).

Nevertheless, some commenters expressed concern that English could replicate forms of cultural and linguistic imperialism, echoing scholarly findings that highlight the potential for English to displace local languages and cultures. This ambivalence is reflected in calls to maintain or return to Standard Arabic—demonstrating the ongoing tension between the perceived promise of English and the desire to safeguard national and religious identities. Along similar lines, R'boul (2022) notes that dissatisfaction with certain social and cultural aspects of Moroccan life may encourage youth to adopt Western norms, including liberal values and permissive attitudes closely associated with English-speaking popular culture. Consequently, while many young Moroccans perceive English as a pathway to modernity and broader opportunities, others remain apprehensive about its potential to overshadow native languages such as Darija and Tamazight, which are traditionally linked to religion and heritage.

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