Language policy and planning of Amazigh languages in Morocco: a study of the language ideology of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM)

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4. "MOROCCAN AMAZIGH": A CENTRAL CONCEPT IN IRCAM'S LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY

4.1. The Origin of the Idea

In previous discussions, it has been established how the Moroccan authorities defined *l'Amazighité* as belonging to "tous les Marocains sans exclusive," aiming to prevent an ethnic-based politicization of the Amazigh issue. Consequently, if Amazigh is to be taught across the country, it would become a compulsory subject for all Moroccan students, without exception, as demonstrated by the convention between IRCAM and MEN: "L'enseignement doit être généralisé à tous les établissements scolaires du pays, et à tous les élèves, qu'ils soient amazighophones ou non."[396] Thus, both the ideological orientation and the practical need for teaching the language necessitate the development of a "national Amazigh" for Morocco, which must be homogeneous to align with IRCAM's fundamental ideology of promoting a national identity characterized by "homogeneity, unity, and originality."

Ahmed Boukous once weighed in on the question of what form of Amazigh should be taught—whether it should be "le berbère commun" or "les dialectes régionaux (les parlers locaux)"—in a 1995 article written before the establishment of IRCAM, in which he pondered:

> "Faudrait-il enseigner le berbère commun, les dialectes régionaux ou les parlers locaux? Opter pour l'enseignement du berbère commun répond à l'objectif de l'unification de la langue berbère mais pose le problème des modalités de la codification d'une koinè dont l'existence est plus idéelle que réelle. Enseigner les dialectes ou les parlers, c'est faire acquérir un objet familier au locuteur mais cette décision a l'inconvénient d'entériner la dialectalisation du berbère et, partant, risque d'aggraver la non-intercompréhension entre les locuteurs natifs de dialectes distincts."[397]
> ("Should we teach common Berber, regional dialects, or local varieties? Opting to teach common Berber aligns with the goal of unifying the Berber language but raises the issue of how to codify a koine whose existence is

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[396] Nachef, L. (2016). p. 217.
[397] Boukous, A. (1995a). p. 16.

more ideal than real. Teaching dialects or local varieties means providing learners with a familiar object, but this decision has the drawback of entrenching the dialectalization of Berber and, consequently, risks exacerbating the lack of mutual understanding among native speakers of distinct dialects.")

This discussion shows that Boukous once viewed the "dialectalization" of Amazigh as undesirable and expressing a desire for "unification of the Berber language." However, despite this desire for a unified language, he acknowledged that an "Amazigh koine" was "more ideal than real." He understood that the practical reality was to teach "regional dialects," but this choice was ideologically undesirable, as it would risk "exacerbating the lack of mutual comprehension" between Amazigh speakers. The establishment of IRCAM and the inclusion of Amazigh in the national education system resolved this dilemma by categorically negating the second option, as Moroccan students, who were being shaped with a homogeneous national identity, could not be left to study different languages. The concern was no longer limited to "exacerbating the lack of mutual comprehension" between Amazigh speakers alone, but also the potential creation of a linguistic barrier between Moroccan people as a whole.

This was evident at the first CAL seminar on the standardization of Amazigh held on December 8-9, 2003, where Boukous revisited the question of planning Amazigh as either "a common standard language transcending regional particularities" or "a set of standard geolects."[398] As the new rector of IRCAM, Boukous warned that the second option would imply managing Amazigh within the framework of regionalization, retaining "the principle of territoriality." This would mean that "the practice of learning and using Amazigh would be confined to specific regions." Boukous further emphasized that "the objective that seems to demand attention for political reasons, as it responds to a strong social expectation, is the standardization of a common Amazigh language for the entire national community."[399] Along with highlighting the problem of planning "standard geolects," Boukous simultaneously

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[398] Boukous, A. (2004). La standardisation de l'amazighe: Quelques prémisses. In *Standardisation de l'amazighe. Actes du séminaire organisé par le Centre de l'Aménagement Linguistique à Rabat, 8-9 décembre 2003*, 11-22.
[399] *Ibid*. pp. 17-18.

outlined the merits of planning for "a national Amazigh language." This approach would be suitable for use in national education, media, and administration, ultimately serving as an institutionalized official language of Morocco—the ultimate goal for the Amazigh movement.[400]

The idea of planning "a national Amazigh language," as discussed by Ahmed Boukous, thus aligned with the political expectations of the Amazigh movement and was consistent with the ideology of IRCAM, which mentioned no terms other than *l'amazigh* in its founding documents. This soon became a principle within IRCAM, as members testified in an interview with Lahcen Nachef that "il était 'politiquement incorrect' de parler de dialectes ou de parlers différents. On était quasiment dans 'l'idéologie de la langue amazighe.'"[401] It is important to note that "la langue amazighe" of IRCAM did not reflect the one nation–one language ideology of Amazigh nationalism, which envisions a "pan-Amazigh" for intercomprehension among all Amazigh speakers, called "le berbère commun" by Boukous (1995: 16). Rather, it aligned more closely with the ideology of Moroccan nationalism, aiming to establish a Moroccan Amazigh for the Moroccan people.

This idea was reflected more explicitly in the mission for CAL: "met en œuvre rapidement un processus de sélection permettant de capitaliser les convergences et dépasser les divergences pour parler de 'l'amazigh marocain.'"[402] In a more concrete way, Boukous established that the standardization of Moroccan Amazigh involves a comprehensive approach addressing its pronunciation, morphology, grammar, and lexicon. This effort aims to ultimately reduce divergences and eliminate "non-functional dialectal features," which are perceived as hindrances to mutual comprehension.[403] Guided by this ideology, CAL began its work, with outcomes such as the 2008 publication *La Nouvelle Grammaire de l'amazighe*, which particularly emphasized that "elle n'est pas une grammaire particulière d'une variété (parler ou dialecte), mais plutôt une grammaire de l'amazighe marocain."[404]

The project of standardizing a Moroccan Amazigh was extraordinary, as the concept had not been seriously discussed in print before. It was only vaguely

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[400] *Ibid*. p. 17.
[401] Nachef, L. (2016). pp. 164-165.
[402] Abrous, N. (2017). p. 220.
[403] Boukous, A. (2004).
[404] Boukhris, F., Boumalk, A., El Houssaïn. M, & Souifi, H. (2008). p. 5.

embodied in the works of Mohamed Chafik, as discussed previously, who presented an Amazigh dictionary of terms from all three main Amazigh varieties in Morocco without specifying their origins. Additionally, in his Amazigh textbook, he occasionally treated the features of these three main varieties as synonyms within a single Amazigh language. Despite this, Chafik refrained from using the term Moroccan Amazigh.

Now, with the innovative idea of planning towards a standard Moroccan Amazigh set as a principle of IRCAM, immediate challenges arose. The concept of Moroccan Amazigh could be understood as essentially a berbère commun on a national level. This idea introduced a new classification of Amazigh varieties based on national borders. According to this classification, the "national dialects" within a national border were meant to be converged and standardized into a national berbère commun. Or, in the words of Boukous: "la construction du standard national à partir de la capitalisation des convergences interdialectales."[405]

This approach of standardizing a berbère commun contradicted the conclusions reached by many Amazigh linguists, who, during the 1998 workshop at INALCO on *Aménagement linguistique de la langue berbère*, emphasized that "The development of a common Berber standard cannot be considered an immediate objective. It is necessary to avoid creating a new diglossic situation in the Berber context, similar to that of Classical Arabic/dialectal Arabic, which would be entirely counterproductive to the goal of promoting the Berber language, particularly its widespread adoption." Instead, they proposed that, "Dans l'immédiat, et sans doute pour plusieurs décennies, on visera à établir une forme standard (écrite) de chaque variété régionale du berbère (kabyle standard, tachelhit standard, etc.)."[406]

It is interesting to note that the example given by the workshop to advise against the creation of a berbère commun and the diglossic problem following was the situation between Classical Arabic and Arabic dialects. Whereas in Ahmed Boukous's later theory, formulated within a different political context, it was exactly the lack of a high Amazigh, akin to Classical Arabic, and the only existence of "dialects," or being "une langue dialectalisée" in his words, that was hindering mutual intelligibility and

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[405] Boukous, A. (2012). p. 245.

[406] Chaker, S. (1998). Orientations générales pour l'aménagement de la langue berbère: Urgence et réalisme. *Atelier aménagement linguistique de la langue berbère*. INALCO.

detriment to the weight of the language.[407] In the English version of Boukous's *Revitalisation de la langue amazighe: Défis, enjeux et stratégies*, the national languages of North Africa are introduced as "Amazigh ('Berber' in the Western tradition) and Arabic, with its variety and its standard dialects (called 'Moroccan', 'Algerian', 'Tunisian', 'Libyan' Arabic, etc.)."[408] This framing reflects Boukous's intent to present Amazigh as a language with a unified high version, whereas Arabic is portrayed as suffering from a dialectal situation. This seems to be an ideological attempt to invert the perceived situation or status of the two languages.

How, then, can the discrepancy be explained between IRCAM, which pursued the planning of a berbère commun, and the linguists at the INALCO workshop, who warned against it, even going so far as to call it "un monstre normatif supplémentaire"?[409] The explanation may lie in the fact that the two arguments stem from different perspectives. The INALCO workshop focused on corpus planning and cautioned that a berbère commun would inevitably create a language "très éloigné de tous les usages réels."[410] In contrast, Boukous was primarily concerned with the status and prestige planning of the Amazigh language, viewing the elimination of its "dialectalization" as essential to enhancing its weight. Additionally, both positions addressed acquisition planning for Amazigh. The workshop considered a berbère commun counterproductive for the "promotion de la langue berbère et notamment à sa généralisation."[411] Meanwhile, IRCAM saw a national berbère commun as fundamental for acquisition planning, as explicitly stated in CAL's *Initiation à la langue amazighe* (2004): "L'introduction de l'enseignement de la langue amazighe dans le système éducatif marocain implique le choix d'une langue standard commune à enseigner."[412]

Therefore, it can be concluded that IRCAM's push toward standardizing a

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[407] Boukous, A. (2009a). Poids des langues: De la métaphore au paramétrage. Le cas de l'amazighe. *M. Gasquet-Cyrus et al.(Eds.), Le poids des langues: Dynamiques, représentations, contacts, conflits, Coll. Espaces discursifs*, 123-140.

[408] Boukous, A. (2011). *Revitalizing the Amazigh language: Stakes, challenges, and strategies*. IRCAM. p. 18.

[409] Chaker, S. (1998).

[410] *Ibid.*

[411] *Ibid.*

[412] Ameur. M., Bouhjar. A., Boukhris. F., Boukous. A., Boumalk. A., Elmedlaoui M., Iazzi. E. & Souifi. H. (2004). p. 13.

Moroccan Amazigh originated from the urgent need for acquisition planning of the Amazigh language in Morocco, which would ultimately contribute to its status and prestige planning. In comparison, the corpus planning of this "Moroccan Amazigh," along with its potential drawbacks, was considered secondary and subordinate. This understanding is concisely reflected in the following discourse by Ahmed Boukous on the LPP of the Amazigh language, which may initially seem confusing and paradoxical, but can now be better understood:

> "Ma conviction est que la standardisation est assurément une condition sine qua non du développement de l'amazighe dans le cadre de sa constitutionnalisation, de son institutionnalisation et de son opérationnalisation. Elle devrait avoir des conséquences bénéfiques sur sa situation aussi bien en termes de changement relatif à son statut qu'en termes de codification de ses structures grammaticales et lexicales, et d'extension du répertoire de ses fonctions sociolinguistiques. Or, il s'agit d'une opération dont la réussite dépend de la volonté politique et d'une adhésion réelle de la société en vue d'une implantation sociale effective. […] Par le fait d'une demande sociale organisée et d'une volonté politique résolue, l'amazighe devrait connaître une situation inédite dans son histoire. Les défis à relever par la langue et la culture amazighes sont importants et les enjeux qu'implique l'aspiration à un nouveau statut sont considérables."[413]

This discourse shows that for Boukous, the primary motivation behind the standardization of (Moroccan) Amazigh stemmed from its envisioned officialization, or standardization as a *sine qua non* for status planning—a task he believed to be as crucial as corpus planning. The key issue in this standardizing process, which would lead to "*un nouveau statut*" for Amazigh, was its reliance on "*la volonté politique et […] une adhésion réelle de la société*." Due to concerns over securing this political will, the planning of a standardized "Moroccan Amazigh" became a strategic move. It was within this framework of status planning that Boukous began to address the corpus planning of the language, as he continued:

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[413] Boukous, A. (2009b). *Phonologie de l'amazighe*. IRCAM. pp. 422-423.

L'aménagement de l'amazighe s'inscrit dans ce contexte. C'est une tâche urgente mais l'urgence ne devrait pas mener à l'improvisation et à la précipitation qui conduiraient soit à l'émiettement de l'amazighe par excès de régionalisme et de communautarisme soit à l'appauvrissement de l'amazighe par excès de volontarisme irrédentiste et par standardisation irréaliste. Il s'agit d'un processus équilibré qui devrait, idéalement, s'étaler dans la durée, sans pour autant souffrir de blocage; son enclenchement devrait encore moins être remis aux calendes grecques. La réalisation de cette tâche gagnerait, en tout cas, à adopter une approche rationnelle, progressive et flexible intégrant la démarche de la chaîne vertueuse alliant vision, implémentation et régulation dans la recherche constante de l'équilibre entre la tendance localiste privilégiant les données lectales et géolectales et la tentation globaliste imposant une norme standard arbitraire."[414]

In this complex discourse, what can be understood is that the corpus planning of the standard Moroccan Amazigh is less concerned with what it is as a real language, which, as Boukous states, can only be revealed "over time." Instead, it is more about what it is not: it is neither a process of standardizing regional varieties that leads to "localist tendencies," nor an arbitrary and unrealistic attempt to impose a berbère commun. It was in continuously supporting the ultimate aim of a successful status planning, which could not be achieved without "political will and genuine societal acceptance," that the corpus planning of the standard Moroccan Amazigh was designed to adopt "a rational, progressive, and flexible approach." However, the progressive planning method "over time" presented a problem, as pointed out by Boukous, it could neither be left to the calendes grecques, meaning it couldn't be postponed indefinitely. This implies that while "flexibly" avoiding the two "extreme tendencies" in standardizing Moroccan Amazigh in the long run, it was still crucial to make standard Amazigh tangible, ideally as a homogeneous national language, without obviously disrupting language practices—and this is where the advantage of adopting a Neo-Tifinagh by IRCAM becomes evident.

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[414] *Ibid.* p. 423.

4.2. The Neo-Tifinagh IRCAM

4.2.1. The Three Script Choices for Writing Amazigh for IRCAM

The Amazigh language has a writing tradition that appears in three different alphabets: Arabic, Latin, and Neo-Tifinagh. Arabic is an important language in Islam, and thus its script was known to many people. Introduced to the Maghreb during the Arab-Muslim conquest, Arabic served as the basis for the earliest traces of writing in Amazigh during the Islamic period. The use of Arabic scripts to write Amazigh varieties is evident in the Maghreb, with numerous manuscripts produced throughout the region, likely beginning in the 15th century.[415] These texts, covering a wide range of topics and representing various Amazigh varieties, are highlighted by Mohamed Meouak: "Il suffit par exemple de se pencher sur les écrits ibadites du ğabal Nafūsa, les kanouns et les actes notariés de Kabylie, les œuvres littéraires, juridiques, religieuses et botaniques de l'Atlas et du Souss, voire même des textes médiévaux en berbère du nord du Mali localisés dans les régions de Tombouctou et de Gao, à l'est du pays."[416]

Existing manuscripts show that use of the Arabic alphabet for writing Amazigh became a real tradition in the Djebel Nefousa in Libya and in the Souss region in southern Morocco.[417] For the latter, research by Nico van den Boogert demonstrates the continuity of an established written tradition in Tashelhiyt through the study of manuscript texts dating from the late 16th century to the mid-18th century.[418] More recently, in the early 1970s, new generations of Tashelhiyt authors continued to rely on the Arabic script in their literary and scholarly writings, with Mohamed Chafik's Arabic-Amazigh Dictionary standing out as a notable example.[419]

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[415] Meouak, M. (2015). *La langue berbère au Maghreb médiéval: Textes, contextes, analyses*. Brill. pp. 7-8.

[416] *Ibid.* p. 8.

[417] For the tradition of writing Amazigh in Arabic letters in Djebel Nefousa, see, for example, Calassanti-Motylinski, A. D. (1898). *Le Djebel Nefousa. transcription, traduction Française et notes avec une étude grammaticale*. Paris, Ernest Leroux. pp. 1-2.; See also Meouak, M. (2015). pp. 314-316.

[418] Van den Boogert, N. (1997). *Berber literary tradition of the Sous — with an edition and translation of "The Ocean of Tears" by Muḥammad Awzal (d. 1749)*. De Goeje Fund, Vol. XXVII. Leiden: NINO.

[419] Pouessel, S. (2008). Écrire la langue berbère au royaume de Mohamed VI: Les

However, despite its practical tradition and relatively good phonetic correspondence, the Arabic script was not favored by all scholars and activists. This opposition stemmed mainly from the symbolic meaning attached to the script: Arabic was perceived as an imposed and exogenous language, representing cultural, political, and religious dominance, which Amazigh activists sought to resist. In this context, as seen in the case of Kabylia, the Latin script emerged as the preferred choice. On the one hand, it symbolized a break from Arabization and a connection to broader modernist and secular ideals, while on the other, it was considered the most appropriate scientific choice, allowing for the maintenance of links with international languages written in the Latin alphabet.[420]

The Latin alphabet was introduced to the Maghreb through the French conquest, via Amazigh texts collected by Western missionaries, soldiers, and researchers, which laid the foundation for Amazigh studies and the linguistic description of its variations.[421] It later became widespread in Kabylia and was also present in Morocco, becoming dominant in most university research, both abroad and within the Maghreb.[422] The use of Latin letters for writing Amazigh was perceived by Arabists and Islamists as a tradition imposed by the West, symbolizing a lingering influence of Western colonialism. They instead favored the Arabic script, both as an anti-colonial, local solution and as a way to shape and reinforce the subordinate status of Amazigh to Arabic, an effort driven by the ideology of Arab nationalism, as well as by the religious belief in the sacred nature of the Arabic script.[423]

Besides these two ideologically opposing choices for writing Amazigh was the option of Neo-Tifinagh. This innovation began to be promoted as late as in the late 1960s by the *Académie Berbère* as a symbol to assert the existence of Amazigh history and civilization, which long predated the spread of Arabic and Islam. Though not much used in practical writings, the symbolically significant Neo-Tifinagh was cherished by activists in both Algeria and Morocco. It was considered a choice for writing and standardizing the Amazigh language by scholars, including those who would later join IRCAM, as evidenced by the inclusion of a Neo-Tifinagh table in

enjeux politiques et identitaires du tifinagh au Maroc. *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la méditerranée*, (124), 219-239.

[420] *Ibid.*

[421] *Ibid.*

[422] Abrous, D. (1996). Le passage à l'écrit. *Encyclopédie berbère*, (17), 2583-2585.

[423] Pouessel, S. (2008).

Tamawalt Usegmi (1993) by Boudris Belaïd, and as discussed in a 1994 article by Meftaha Ameur on writing and standardizing Amazigh, where Tifinagh was presented alongside Arabic and Latin as one of the three options.[424]

With the establishment of IRCAM and the immediate incorporation of Amazigh into national education in Morocco, it became urgent to decide which script among the three choices would be officially used for teaching and standardizing the Amazigh language.

4.2.2. The Voting and Adoption of Tifinagh

The issue of choosing the official writing system for Amazigh in Morocco sparked heated debate as IRCAM approached its decision. The Islamist bloc lobbied for the adoption of the Arabic script; for instance, Ahmed Raïssouni, President of the Islamist party *Mouvement de l'Unicité et de la Réforme* (MUR), sent a letter directly to the Rector of IRCAM, advocating for the Arabic script.[425] Meanwhile, the Amazigh movement strongly opposed the Arabic option. Seventeen members of IRCAM's *Conseil d'Administration* (CA) even threatened to resign if the Arabic script was adopted.[426] Regarding the Latin and Tifinagh options, both had support among activists, though the general trend among Latin-script supporters was also to appreciate the symbolic value of Tifinagh. AMREC, one of the most influential Amazigh associations, publicly backed the Tifinagh plan in an article titled *Enseignement de la langue amazighe: pour une officialisation de l'alphabet Tifinagh*.[427]

The alphabet issue was formally discussed at a session of the CA held in Rabat on January 30 and 31, 2003. After speeches and presentations on each of the alphabets, the floor was opened for CA members to express their opinions. The subsequent voting process involved two rounds, with a script requiring a two-thirds majority for the decision to be valid. In the first round, Tifinagh received 14 votes, the Latin script 13, and the Arabic script only 5. After further debate, the second round resulted in a clear victory for Tifinagh, with 24 votes in its favor and only 8 remaining for the Latin

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[424] Ameur, M. (1994). Diversité des transcriptions: Pour une notation usuelle et normalisée de la langue berbère. *Etudes et documents berbères*, (1), 25-28.
[425] Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). p. 158.
[426] *Ibid.* p. 159
[427] *Ibid.*

script, giving Tifinagh a comfortable majority. The decision was later endorsed by King Mohammed VI, who sent a letter of congratulations to the CA members and convened representatives of political parties to inform them of the decision.[428]

When faced with the choice between Arabic and other scripts, CA members first tended to choose either Latin or Tifinagh in opposition to Arabic. In the second round, after the Arabic option was ruled out, the votes for Tifinagh surged, absorbing both Arabic and Latin supporters, allowing it to win comfortably. From this perspective, it could be argued that Tifinagh served as a compromise between the Latin and Arabic scripts. However, this interpretation should not overshadow the reality that Tifinagh had long been a preferred choice among Moroccan activists. This is evident from as early as the decisive advice given by Mahjoubi Aherdane to the *Académie Berbère*, to the endorsement by AMREC, and the results of both rounds of voting at IRCAM. More significantly, the adoption of Tifinagh should be regarded as the first, and one of the most crucial steps in IRCAM's corpus planning towards a standardized national Amazigh language for Morocco.

4.2.3. Tifinagh-IRCAM and Its Significance for Standard Moroccan Amazigh

The adoption of Tifinagh initiated the task of corpus planning within IRCAM, which did not simply implement a decision of the CA but was actively involved in creating a reformed Neo-Tifinagh system, referred to as Tifinagh-IRCAM, and through it, the planning of the phonology of standard Moroccan Amazigh. By the time of Tifinagh-IRCAM's development, several other Neo-Tifinagh plans had emerged from the alphabet introduced by the *Académie Berbère*. These included the plan by *l'Association Afus Deg Wfus*, or the European Berber Cultural Space, based in Roubaix, France, and established in 1985 by former *Académie Berbère* activist Mouhand Ouramdane Khacer[429], along with the plan of Arabia Ware Benelux.[430] CAL's goal in designing its own Neo-Tifinagh had two key objectives: "1. Le maintien

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[428] The information in this paragraph regarding the voting and decision-making process comes from Bouyaakoubi, L. (2009). pp. 159-162.

[429] https://www.afusdegwfus.org/services/HistoriqueLireLaSuite.html (accessed October 5, 2024)

[430] The Neo-Tifinagh of Arabia Ware Benelux available at: https://aeb.win.tue.nl/natlang/berber/tifinagh/tifinagh-mondeberbere.html (accessed October 5, 2024)

d'un lien solidaire avec les différentes variantes de l'alphabet tifinaghe actuel, d'où la nécessité de puiser dans le fonds des graphèmes disponibles dans les différentes variantes et de considérer la création de nouveaux symboles comme un dernier recours; 2. L'adaptation du nouvel alphabet aux structures de l'amazighe standard, requérant parfois l'introduction de quelques modifications." This design was guided by four principles: "l'historicité, la simplicité, l'univocité du signe et l'économie."[431]

The effort result in the Tifinagh-IRCAM as follow

Tifinagh-IRCAM[432]

|	TIFINAGHE	Correspondance latine	Correspondance arabe	Exemples
ya	ⵔ	a	ا	ⵔⵍⵓⵔⵓ
yab	ⴱ	b	ب	ⵔ ⴱⵓⵥⵍ
yag	ⵅ	g	ݣ	ⵔⵅⵛⵓ
yagʷ	ⵅʷ	gʷ	ݣ،	ⵔⴴⵅⵅʷⵔⵯ
yad	ⵏ	d	د	ⵔⴾⵔⵍ
yaḍ	ⴻ	ḍ	ض	ⵔ ⴻⵔⵇ
yey	ⵇ	e		ⵜⵇⵜⵜⵓ
yaf	ⵝ	f	ف	ⵔⴾⵇⴱ
yak	ⴽ	k	ک	ⵔⴾⵇⴾⵇⵇ
yakʷ	ⴽʷ	kʷ	ک،	ⵔⵛⵍⵍⵍⴾⵯⵏ
yah	ⴸ	h	ه	ⵔⴸⵍⵍⵇ
yaḥ	ⵀ	ḥ	ح	ⵔⵀⵣⵇⴱ
yaɛ	ⵂ	ɛ	ع	ⵔⵂⵇⵍ
yax	ⵄ	x	خ	ⵜⵇⵄⵇⵄ
yaq	ⵇ	q	ق	ⵔⵇⵇⵔ
yi	ⵣ	i	ي	ⵣⵛⵣ
yaj	ⵊ	j	ج	ⵔⵛⵣⵇⴻ
yal	ⵏ	l	ل	ⵔⵛⵏⵔ
yam	ⵛ	m	م	ⵔⵛⵍ
yan	ⵍ	n	ن	ⵣⵔⵍⵣ
yu	ⵇ	u	و	ⵇⵏⵛ
yar	ⵔ	r	ر	ⵇⵔⵔ
yaṛ	ⵇ	ṛ	ڕ	ⴱⵇⵇⵔ
yaɣ	ⵖ	ɣ	غ	ⵔⵯⵇⴻⵣ
yas	ⵙ	s	س	ⵣⵀⵔ
yaṣ	ⵚ	ṣ	ص	ⵚⵚⵔⴱⵜ
yac	ⵛ	c	ش	ⵔⵛⵍⵍⵏⵏ
yat	ⵜ	t	ت	ⵜⵇⵔⵔⵍ
yaṭ	ⴻ	ṭ	ط	ⵜⵣⵔⴻⴻ
yaw	ⵓ	w	و۟	ⵔⵓⵓⵏⵏ
yay	ⵢ	y	ي۟	ⵔⵢⵢⵣⵔ
yaz	ⵥ	z	ز	ⵔⵛⵔⵣⵇⵯ
yaẓ	ⵯ	ẓ	ژ	ⵣⵯⵣ

In line with the aim of "maintaining a strong connection with the various existing variants of the Tifinagh alphabet," Tifinagh-IRCAM introduced only three innovative

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[431] Ameur. M., Bouhjar. A., Boukhris. F., Boukous. A., Boumalk. A., Elmedlaoui M., Iazzi. E. & Souifi. H. (2004). pp. 31-32.
[432] *Ibid.* p. 14.

graphemes (ⵝ, ⵞ, ⵇ). The remaining symbols were drawn from existing Tifinagh scripts, sometimes with slight graphemic modifications (e.g., ⵁ, ⵏ, ⵿), primarily from those of *Académie Berbère*, *Afus Deg Wfus*, and Arabia Ware Benelux.[433] Though Tifinagh-IRCAM primarily borrowed graphemes from other Neo-Tifinagh systems, it maintained a high degree of discernibility, particularly from the *Académie Berbère* version, which is the most well-known. Most notably, it was different from this by his distinction was marked by the use of circle symbols instead of point dot symbols for writing vowels (ⴰ, ⴰ, ⴰ). This innovation was borrowed from one of the two typing plans proposed by *Afus Deg Wfus* in 1993, known as *Afus Deg Wfus 2 Regular*, while the *1 Regular* version continued to use point signs for vowels.[434] Additionally, the connection of the typically two separate parts in the characters ⵖ and ⵗ, a feature borrowed from the Arabia Ware Benelux plan, also contributed to Tifinagh-IRCAM's distinctiveness.

Neo-Tifinagh Afus Deg Wfus 2 Regular[435]
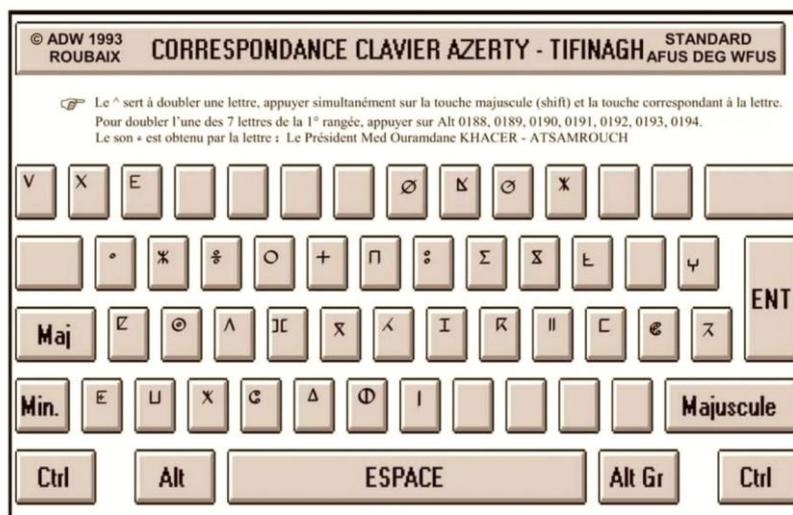
These grapheme features borrowed from lesser-known Neo-Tifinagh systems secured Tifinagh-IRCAM a high level of recognizability, ensuring the visual and

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[433] For the origion of graphemes, see *Ibid.* pp. 34-35.
[434] https://www.afusdegwfus.org/#typo   (accessed October 5, 2024)
[435] https://www.afusdegwfus.org/#archive (accessed October 5, 2024)

ideological existence of a standard Moroccan Amazigh, as it is officially regulated that Tifinagh-IRCAM was designed to write nothing but *l'amazighe standard*.

Besides graphemes, when considering the phonemes of Tifinagh-IRCAM, its significance for planning a homogeneous standard Moroccan Amazigh becomes more pronounced, as it was not designed to accommodate the phonology of any specific dialects. The official release of Tifinagh-IRCAM in 2003 was accompanied by a note stating: "Cet alphabet ne représente pas totalement les données phoniques d'aucun parler particulier; fondamentalement conçu pour écrire l'amazighe standard. Il permet ainsi d'aménager la structure-phonique de la langue amazighe dans la perspective de son unification progressive. La particularité essentielle de cet alphabet est de contribuer à neutraliser, au niveau de l'écrit, les faits à caractère local."[436] It was understood that the note intended to emphasize that localized characteristics would only be obliterated at the written level by Tifinagh-IRCAM, meaning that the oral practice of Amazigh varieties would remain unaffected. However, given that the script was designed for national education and not limited to writing, the phonetics of standard Amazigh reflected in Tifinagh-IRCAM were likely to result in a more complex situation.

The phonemes of the standard Amazigh of Morocco are reflected by the 33 letters of Tifinagh-IRCAM, with 27 consonants, 2 labialized consonants, and 4 vowels (including 3 full vowels, or plain vowels, and 1 central vowel, schwa ⴰ), which falls short in fully reflecting the phonetic realization of Amazigh varieties in Morocco. This was mainly due to the exclusion of certain phonetic units, "qui sont soit des variantes régionales, soit des unités non distinctives, soit des unités phonématiques peu productives."[437] CAL did not specify the criteria for judging what should be taken as "non distinctives" and "peu productives," but examples were listed across six aspects:

1. The lenited consonants mainly found in Tarifiyt and some varieties of Central Moroccan Amazigh, such as the phonetic units *b̲* and *t̲*, were written the same as non-lenited consonant, thus ⴱ stands both for *b̲* and b and ⵜ stands both for *t̲* and *t̲*,; 2. The retention of the emphatics (that is, pharyngealized consonants), includes the sounds ⴻ

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[436] Elmedlaoui, M. (2004b). De "une notation usuelle du Berbére" à "l'ortographe de l'Amazighe" (project de standardisation d'une langue). In *Standardisation de l'amazighe. Actes du séminaire organisé par le centre de l'aménagement linguistique à Rabat*, 63-84.

[437] Ameur. M., Bouhjar. A., Boukhris. F., Boukous. A., Boumalk. A., Elmedlaoui M., Iazzi. E. & Souifi. H. (2004). p. 18.

(t̠), Ɛ (ḏ), Ꙃ (ṛ), Ø (ṣ), and ⵥ (z̠) in certain words such as "ⵄⵉⵥⵄꙊ" (*anẓaṛ*, "rain") and "ⵄⴰⵄⴻ" (*iṣiḏ*, "rage"); 3. For the labiovelars, only two phonemes attested in most Moroccan varieties, namely kʷ and gʷ, were retained; 4. The affricates resulting from phonetic mutations, as seen in Tarifiyt (e.g., *ll* to *dj* and *lt* to *tc*), were not retained; 5. The sibilants transformed from *t* into *s* and from *d* into *z*, a feature in some Tashelhiyt dialects, were considered as "surface variation" and not retained; 6. The lateral *l*, which transforms into *r* in Tarifiyt and some varieties of Central Moroccan Amazigh, as well as into *j* in the region of Azrou, was restored as *l*, which was seen as more *pan-amazighe*.[438]

It can be concluded that Tarifiyt is the variety whose phonetic system is least reflected by the phonemes of Tifinagh-IRCAM in writing standard Amazigh of Morocco. However, this should not be simply understood as a form of discrimination by CAL against Tarifiyt. Rather, it reflects a persistent issue in writing Tarifiyt that already existed with Latin letters. Tifinagh-IRCAM essentially follows the same orthographic conventions as the agreed orthography of Latin letters, which was proposed and accepted by members of the Riffian scientific community in the Netherlands in 1996–1997 and summarized by Mena B. Lafkioui in 2000.[439] Khalid Mourigh and Maarten Kossmann point out the issues with this agreed Latin orthography for writing Tarifiyt, which are inherited in Tifinagh-IRCAM as follows:

> "The orthography is strongly phonological and sometimes historical, and aims at convergence with other Berber languages, at least in writing conventions. Thus, some typical Tarifiyt sound changes are not represented. The result is a system that many native speakers find difficult to apply, because some contrasts are made, which do not exist in Tarifiyt (e.g. one should write *kal* or even *akal* 'earth' instead of the general Tarifiyt form *šař*), while other contrasts that exist in Tarifiyt are obliterated (e.g. the difference between *řmař* 'cattle' and *lmal* 'capital', which are both written *lmal*). In spite of its 'agreed' status, this orthography has hardly ever been

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[438] *Ibid.* pp. 18-21.

[439] Mourigh, K., & Kossmann, M. (2019). pp. 21-22.; Lafkioui, M. (2000). Propositions pour la notation usuelle à base latine du rifain. *Comptes rendus du groupe linguistique d'etudes chamito sémitiques (GLECS)*, (XXXIII), 189-200.

implemented in practice, and the few attempts are often riddled with errors, or have added some additional marking in order to make the phonological structure of the words retrievable."[440]

CAL does not always ignore similar issues caused by Tifinagh-IRCAM. For instance, it addresses the problem arising from the absence of the spirant *ṯ* in contrast to the occlusive *t* as the direct object personal pronoun of the third person singular in Tarifiyt and Central Moroccan Amazigh, where the morphemes for the feminine *t* and the masculine *ṯ* are opposed. This issue was resolved by writing *tt* in place of the absent *ṯ*.[441] However, in general, it can still be understood that, both in terms of graphemes and phonemes, the design of Tifinagh-IRCAM was instrumental in planning towards a homogeneous Moroccan standard Amazigh. For graphemes, the Tifinagh-IRCAM script distinguishes itself through the adoption of less common circular symbols for vowels, in contrast to the more widely used point signs well-attested in both Tuareg and neo-Tifinagh alphabets. This choice provides a visual individuality to the standard Amazigh of Morocco, differentiating it from other Amazigh written in Tifinagh. While, in terms of the inventory of phonemes reflected in the orthography, Tifinagh-IRCAM cannot be considered descriptive of any particular varieties, it is specifically designed for standard Moroccan Amazigh.

4.3. "Moroccan Amazigh" in Education

The official textbook developed by IRCAM for teaching Amazigh in Morocco is titled *Tifawin a Tamazight* ("Hello Tamazight"). It consists of six books, with the first being introduced in 2003. Since September 2008, the complete series has been used across all six levels of the primary cycle.[442] The design of the *Tifawin a Tamazight* textbooks reflects IRCAM's progressive approach to developing a standard Moroccan Amazigh. The textbook begins by teaching three main varieties in Morocco, with the first-year book offering the same content in three versions, each corresponding to one of these varieties. Ideologically, it positions itself as teaching a homogeneous standard

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[440] Mourigh, K., & Kossmann, M. (2019). pp. 21-22.
[441] Ameur. M., Bouhjar. A., Boukhris. F., Boukous. A., Boumalk. A., Elmedlaoui M., Iazzi. E. & Souifi. H. (2004). pp. 18-19.
[442] Abouzaid, M. (2011). p. 162.

Amazigh, achieved both through the consistent use of Tifinagh-IRCAM and by avoiding explicitly naming the specific Amazigh varieties. These varieties are visually distinguishable only by the color differences on the branding of the cover: blue for Tarifiyt, green for Central Moroccan Amazigh, and yellow for Tashelhiyt.[443] When it becomes necessary to refer to the varieties, they are identified as Amazigh of the north, center, and south, as reflected in the names of the audio files accompanying the teaching guide.[444]

Covers of Tifawin a Tamazight 1 with color differences[445]
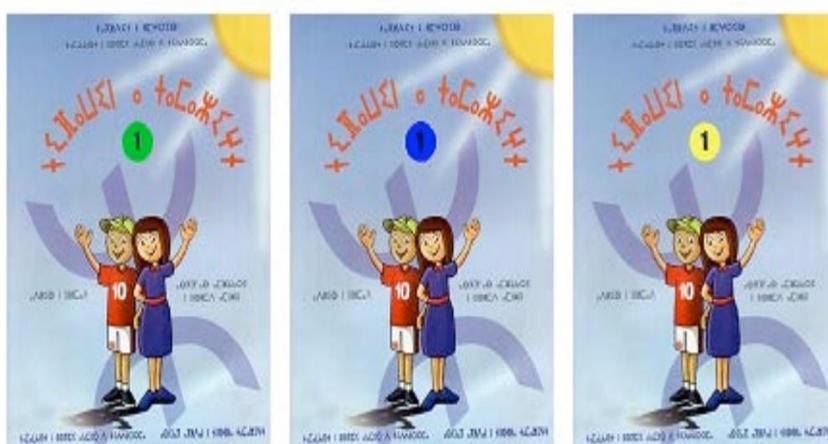
The second-year textbook, by contrast, is presented in a single version, but it maintains the color-coding system with colored bands (blue, green, and yellow) on each page to indicate the different varieties. Additionally, some pages are marked by brown to introduce content common to all three.[446] This system appears designed to gradually familiarize learners with the other two varieties and their common features. However, upon closer examination, the second-year textbook is not essentially different from the first-year one, as it sometimes seems merely to gather the content from three separate books into one. This arrangement still allows teachers and students

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[443] *Ibid*.

[444] https://www.ircam.ma/index.php/fr/edition/Guide_de_l%E2%80%99enseignant_et_de_l%E2%80%99enseignante_de_l%E2%80%99amazighe (accessed October 20, 2024)

[445] Abouzaid, M. (2011). p. 162.

[446] *Ibid*. p. 163.

to focus primarily on their own variety.

This is evident, for example, in Unit 3 of the second-year book, between pages 34-39, where three texts discuss "*g ugadaz*" ("In the market"), titled: "*g ugadaz n tmsaman*" (p. 34, page in blue for Tarifiyt), "*g ugadaz*" (p. 36, page in green for Central Moroccan Amazigh), and "*g ugadaz*" (p. 38, page in yellow for Tashelhiyt), respectively. [447] It can be inferred that these sections have not been written for teaching in sequence and are rather intended to be used separately by teachers of each variety. For instance, each text is followed by a list of new words, where "*agadaz*" ("market") is introduced three times, each in a distinct way targeting speakers of different varieties. For example, "*agadaz*" is first introduced on page 34 in blue as "*agadaz: ansa, mani ssaɣn d znuzan iwdan timsuɣin (ssuq)*" and reintroduced on page 38 in yellow as "*agadaz: ssuq*," a repetition that seems illogical if the book is intended to be used in page order.

Three texts of "g ugadaz" with colored bands in Tifawin a Tamazight 2[448]

Additionally, each text is followed by similar content introducing the usage of "like, or as much" (*am, anct, zun*), which means that if the book is meant to be used in page order, students would be introduced to the same concepts three times, each in a different variety. A similar example is found in Unit 7, discussing traffic, which

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[447] IRCAM. (2004). *Tifawin a tamazight 2, adlis n unlmad (manuel pédagogique de l'élève)*. Rabat :
Publication OKAD. pp. 34-39.
[448] *Ibid*. pp. 34, 36, 38.

features three different texts followed by similar grammar and exercises.[449] In this instance, the word "*abrid*" (road) first appears on page 82 in the blue Tarifiyt section, where it is not introduced as a new word. However, it is later listed as a new term on page 86 in the yellow section and is explained using the Tashelhiyt equivalent "*abrid: aɣaras*." These examples suggest that the book is designed for teachers and students to focus directly on their own sections when studying similar topics and grammar within the same unit, with the other varieties being mentioned to varying degrees or not at all.

This arrangement changes significantly in the third-year textbook. Although the units in Book Three still feature three texts in different colored bands, each representing a similar theme, their contents are now independent. Each text is followed by new vocabulary and reading comprehension exercises, without the repetition seen in Book Two. In each unit, only after completing all three texts are the grammar modules introduced, marked by a brown color band, signifying that the grammar is common to all three varieties or represents the grammar of standard Moroccan Amazigh. Each grammar module is then followed by another text, also marked in brown, indicating its use of standard Amazigh.[450] This significant and sudden change in Book Three, which mandates the teaching of other varieties that were not compulsory in the previous books, combined with the added difficulty of new words and grammar, presents a substantial challenge for both educators and students.

The difficulties were reflected in an interview conducted by Myriam Abouzaid in 2007 with a teacher whose native language was Tashelhiyt and who had been teaching Amazigh for three years in Rabat. The teacher testified: "La 3ème année, le problème qu'on trouve, par exemple, moi et ma copine, le dialecte qu'on connaît c'est celui du Souss. Par contre pour les livres de la 3ème année, ils essayent de… de confuser ou bien de fondre les 3 dialectes. Donc lorsqu'on trouve par exemple un mot du nord ou bien… du Moyen Atlas, oui, donc on ne comprend pas ce mot. On n'a pas un dictionnaire qui donne des explications ou bien des… des synonymes des 3 dialectes. Donc nous, les enseignants, je crois qu'il faut qu'on connaisse les autres

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[449] *Ibid.* pp. 79-90.
[450] IRCAM. (2005). *Tifawin a tamazight 3, adlis n unlmad (manuel pédagogique de l'élève)*. Rabat :
Publication OKAD.

dialectes."[451] This issue arose suddenly in the third year, as the teacher noted that during the second year, "we teachers always look for the dialect we know. We teach it to our students. That's the difference between the second-year textbook and the third-year textbook." In the third year, "on the other hand, there is only one text. So the only... we have to study it."[452] The teacher then explained the reason for this arrangement: "We are trying to arrive at a single language, but we haven't achieved it yet... One text. In which they use vocabulary from the South, the Rif, and the Middle Atlas..."[453]

The texts representing standard Amazigh, are included in Book Three at the end of each unit, marked by brown bands. However, it is difficult for these texts to entirely escape identification with specific varieties. For instance, the standard Amazigh text in the brown band on page 21 begins with the following sentence: *ijj n uǧḍiḍ, tuɣa izddɣ g yict n turtit. tuɣa ittffɣ ku ass sg taddart nns zikk, ittɣima xf yict n tṣṭṭa n usklu, ittirir, iccat g tmja.*[454] Here, the past indicator *tuɣa* and the absence of a particle before the imperfective verb, along with the usage of *ijj* for "one," *turtit* for "fig tree," and other features, clearly reflect Tarifiyt usage. Except for *ku ass*, *sg*, and *asklu*, the whole sentence is in Tarifiyt, which may not be familiar to speakers of the other two varieties. In contrast, on page 117, another standard Amazigh text employs terms like *ad ur* for negative imperatives and *uhu* for "no," which are more familiar to speakers of Central Moroccan Amazigh or Tashelhiyt.[455] Thus, the concept of "standard Amazigh" presented in the book may not reflect a homogeneous language but rather resembles "three standards" of the main Amazigh varieties in Morocco. (This feature in language teaching is presented as part of the polynomic approach by IRCAM in planning Amazigh, which I will come back to explain in Chapter Six.) While these standards share a writing system and certain phonetic and grammatical rules, they are ideologically framed as "*une langue*," rather than practically so.

This is evidenced by the description of the textbook by Bouchra El Barkani, a member of the CRDPP, who explained that rather than focusing on a homogeneous language, the third and fourth-year textbooks aim to further encourage students to

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[451] Abouzaid, M. (2011). pp. 351-352.

[452] *Ibid*.

[453] *Ibid*. p. 352.

[454] IRCAM. (2005). p. 21.

[455] *Ibid*. p. 117.

practice with all three varieties. The goal is to foster a situation where students can "comprendre l'autre qui parle un dialecte autre que le mien et parler un dialecte autre que le mien."[456] Continuing along this path, in the 5th and 6th years, students begin acquiring knowledge that enables them to speak "un 'amazighe standard' compréhensible par tous les amazighophones du Maroc."[457] While the focus in the fifth year shifts to standard Amazigh rather than the previous goal of "understand and speak another dialect," the color-coding system of the fifth-year textbook remains in place, with the main change being an increase in the percentage of brown pages.[458] For example, in the text on page 80, the use of *tuɣa*, along with the absence of a preceding particle for the imperfective verb, and sentences like *aqqa imṭṭawn n ugujil sskmaḍn ul inu*, which include the presentative particle *aqqa*, make this passage more familiar to Tarifiyt speakers than to others and than other texts.[459]

The official introduction of IRCAM to Book 5 sheds light on what this standard Amazigh entails. The official website of IRCAM states that "Tifawin a Tamazight 5 vient couronner les efforts de cette standardisation progressive entamée dans les niveaux précédents en adoptant une langue amazighe riche et unifiée pour l'enseignement-apprentissage des activités de base (communication, lecture et écriture)." In explaining how this standard Amazigh is unified, it highlights three aspects: "l'adoption d'une graphie tifinaghe-ircam à tendance phonologique, l'adoption des mêmes règles d'orthographe, le primat d'un vocabulaire commun et des structures équivalentes et l'emploi des mêmes néologismes." It also emphasizes an important feature: "Le parti pris de cette standardisation n'a cependant pas conduit à l'appauvrissement de la langue. En effet, les variantes lexicales et morphologiques ne sont pas présentées comme des formes concurrentes mais comme des synonymes et des équivalents qui expriment la richesse des ressources linguistiques de l'amazighe."[460]

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[456] El Barkani, B. (2010). *Le choix de la graphie tifinaghe pour enseigner, apprendre l'amazighe au Maroc: Conditions, représentation et pratiques* (Doctoral dissertation, Université Jean Monnet-Saint-Etienne). p. 159.

[457] *Ibid*.

[458] IRCAM. (2007). *Tifawin a tamazight 3, adlis n unlmad (manuel pédagogique de l'élève)*. Rabat :
Publication OKAD.

[459] *Ibid*. p. 80.

[460] https://www.ircam.ma/fr/edition/tifawin-a-tamazight-5   (accessed October 25,

With this presentation, Bouchra El Barkani's discussion of the ultimate goal of Amazigh education in Morocco—enabling students to speak "a standard Amazigh comprehensible to all Amazigh speakers in Morocco"—becomes clearer. The inter-comprehension among Moroccan Amazigh speakers is not to be achieved through the education of a single standard language, as the *Tifawin a Tamazight* series begins by teaching the varieties and retains features from all three throughout. Instead, it relies primarily on students learning about the other varieties, expanding their vocabulary across all three, including neologisms, and broadening their grammatical knowledge to encompass each variety. In contrast, the standard Amazigh is primarily an ideological concept, with its limited realization relying mainly on "the adoption of a Tifinagh-IRCAM script with a phonological orientation" and "the adoption of the same spelling rules." Regarding "a common vocabulary and equivalent structures," the term used is "primacy" rather than adoption, indicating an emphasis on highlighting these aspects of "a unified language" in education, rather than imposing a single language.

The importance of presenting an ideologically unified Amazigh, as introduced at the beginning of the chapter with a quotation from Ahmed Boukous emphasizing political reasons, aims at "responding to a strong social expectation: the standardization of a common Amazigh language for the entire national community." This idea is echoed in IRCAM's official presentation of *Tifawin a Tamazight,* which states that it aims to enable students to communicate "à travers l'oral et l'écrit dans un amazighe national riche et unifié tout en consolidant le sentiment d'appartenance à une communauté linguistique plus large et en renforçant la cohésion nationale."[461] In practice, as described by Bouchra El Barkani, this means enabling students to "understand others who speak a dialect different from mine and to speak a dialect different from mine." Consequently, the openness of IRCAM's standardization, designed to introduce teachers and students to a language they are familiar with, is complicated by requiring them to learn new varieties.

In conclusion, the Amazigh education in Morocco requires teachers and students to confront a complex situation, particularly from the third year onward, as they engage with other Amazigh varieties and later with Amazigh standards that could reflect features of any of the three varieties. These standards are presented as unified

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[461] *Ibid.*

mainly ideologically, with Tifinagh-IRCAM playing a crucial role through its graphemes and phonemes. Mutual comprehension of the ideologically unified Amazigh is expected to be achieved primarily through the expansion of knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical traits from other varieties, rather than through the mastery of a single language. The difficulties in education for both teachers and students caused by this form of acquisition planning can only be exacerbated by the inclusion of non-Amazigh speakers, who need to start learning Amazigh through one variety and, while still at a rudimentary level, will be introduced to the other two varieties.

While the political reasons behind the idea of planning toward a unified Moroccan Amazigh have been explained earlier in the chapter, it was essential for IRCAM to clarify and justify why it would risk potentially creating such a complex diglossic situation solely to prevent, as Boukous stated and quoted earlier, "la tendance localiste privilégiant les données lectales et géolectales"—especially given that standardizing regional varieties was precisely what linguists recommended at the 1998 INALCO workshop. In an effort to reconcile the contradiction between the "scientific need" to standardize Amazigh varieties and the "political need" to avoid standardizing varieties while planning toward a common Amazigh, Ahmed Boukous, as the rector of IRCAM, developed a comprehensive theory addressing the "death" of the Amazigh language and the/a strategy for its "revitalization."

5. THE "DEATH" AND "REVITALIZATION" OF THE AMAZIGH LANGUAGE IN AHMED BOUKOUS'S LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY

Ahmed Boukous is aware of the suggestions made by linguists regarding the standardization of regional Amazigh varieties and their rejection of planning for a common Amazigh language. In *Revitalisation de la langue amazighe* (2012), while discussing the strategies for standardizing Amazigh, he fully quotes Salem Chaker's objection: "L'élaboration d'un standard berbère commun ne peut être considérée comme un objectif immédiat. Il faut éviter de constituer dans le champ berbère une nouvelle situation diglossique du type de celle de l'arabe classique/arabe dialectal qui serait tout à fait contre-productive par rapport à l'objectif de promotion de la langue