

European Observatory for Plurilingualism (OEP)
7th European Conference on Plurilingualism
20-22 May 2026, Paris, France



**The Spoken Use of
French Among
Moroccan Public**

**Education Graduates :
Challenges and
Prospects**

Dr. Toufik MAJDI
Professor of Higher Education
Université Sultan Moulay Slimane, Maroc

Content

Introduction

problematic

Oral French Proficiency Level Among Young Moroccans : An Overview

- The Arabization Policy
- The Inadequacy of Pedagogical Reforms
- Teacher Training
- The Reading Crisis
- Rise of English

Youth Difficulties in Speaking Correct French : The Consequences

- Mixing of French and Moroccan Arabic
- Consequences on academic success
- Consequences on professional prospects

Measures adopted by the supervising Ministry

Conclusion

Introduction

In Morocco, while graduates from private education generally master the basic rules of French, public school graduates, however, most often speak a very poor French.

👉 They frequently mix it with Moroccan Arabic. Yet, within this mixture, French sometimes undergoes lexical and morphological losses."

Problematic

Key questions

- What is the level of oral French among public school graduates ?
- What causes their language difficulties ?
- What are the impacts on studies and careers ?
- What solutions can improve their language skills ?

Oral French Proficiency Level Among Young Moroccans : An Overview



Privileged Language

French is a second language in Morocco, linked to success and prestige, and widely used in education and economy..



Ambiguous status

However, its status is ambiguous: both valued and criticized.



Root Causes :

- Arabization policies
- Weak educational reforms
- Teacher training issues
- Reading crisis
- Rise of English

The Arabization Policy

Language barrier at university

- Science subjects were taught in Arabic, creating a language gap in higher education where French dominates.

Into Arabic-taught humanities and social sciences

- Many students redirected toward Arabic-taught fields.

The Pivot Back to French Education

- In 2016, recognizing these systemic failures, King Mohammed VI decreed a return to teaching mathematics and sciences in French starting from the first year of primary school.

The Inadequacy of Pedagogical Reforms

The Failure of Successive Reforms

Despite continuous educational reforms, French proficiency in Moroccan public schools remains low. After nine years of study, only a small minority of students can speak the language correctly. Decades of official evaluations and reports confirm that these repetitive interventions have failed to produce tangible results.

Incongruous Policy Goals

Official policy texts, such as the National Education and Training Charter, initially set ambitious targets. They stated that students entering high school should already be capable of communicating effectively in complex situations. The curriculum was designed to simply consolidate and expand upon these advanced linguistic skills.

The Inadequacy of Pedagogical Reforms

The Reality of the Educational Gap

The reality strongly contradicts these official expectations. Nearly two decades after the Charter's implementation, the public education system has failed to meet its language benchmarks. Moroccan public schools continue to struggle, leaving students far behind the linguistic standards seen in neighboring Mediterranean countries.

Teacher Training

🔍 Key issues :

- Teaching methods remain traditional (memorization, authority).
- Weak teacher preparation and training system.
- Few high-performing graduates choose teaching careers.
- Limited professional development

👉 French is often seen as a school subject, not a communication tool.



The Reading Crisis

The Decline of Reading Habits

Students rarely use French outside school.

⚙️ Decline in reading culture due to :

- Lack of practice environment
- Low parental French use
- Rise of social media and gaming

👉 Digital platforms dominate youth culture.



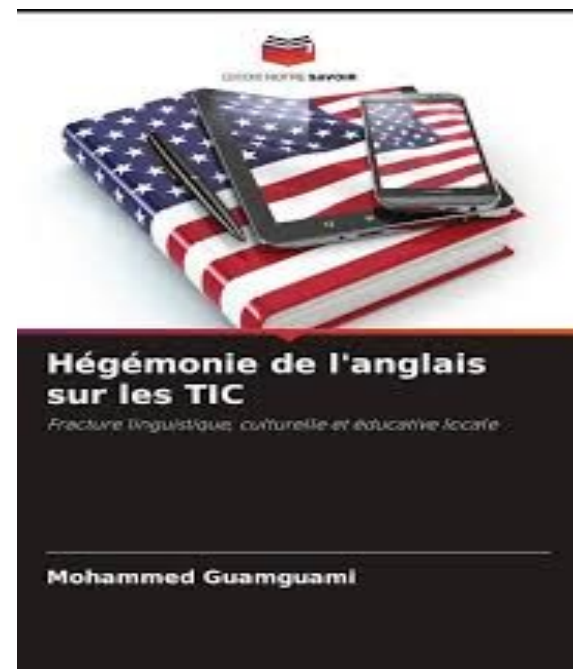
Rise of English

The Rise of Global English

English is expanding in education, science, and business.

⚙️ New English-based institutions :
📌 UM6P, UM6SS, Al Akhawayn University, etc.

👉 However, French remains dominant in education and professional life.



Youth Difficulties in Speaking Correct French : The Consequences

Blending of French and Dialectal Arabic

Young people from the public education system have a poor command of the French language. This has significant consequences on both :

- Their university studies
- and their professional integration.

Mixing of French and Moroccan Arabic

Blending of French and Dialectal Arabic

Linguistic deficits lead public school graduates to mix French with Moroccan Arabic, creating a hybrid spoken language known as "**Frandarija**".

Examples

- **Interference phenomena** : “Il a mangé mon argent” (Kla lia rezqi) meaning “he cheated me” or “he did not repay me”...
- **Lexical borrowings** : /tomobila/ for car, /lasuràs/ for insurance, /brika/ for lighter...
- **Grammatical confusions** “une problème” instead of “un problème,” “petites projets” instead of “petits projets”...

Consequences on academic success

Consequences on University Success

Most Moroccan students face major difficulties in pursuing their university studies due to their low level of French proficiency.

👉 These difficulties concern mastery of the language in all its basic components (morphological, grammatical, phonological, discursive, communicative, cultural, etc.), which prevents students from effectively following higher education courses, conducting research, and consulting academic books.

Consequences on professional prospects

The linguistic deficiencies observed among Moroccan pupils and students in French limit their chances of finding employment and building a professional career. Their language level often does not meet the requirements of the current professional environment.

80% of job interviews are conducted in French.

Rahma Bourquia, (CSEFRS), “Graduates who do not master French are excluded from the labor market...The language issue is one of fairness, as language skills should not become a factor of discrimination or inequality.”

Measures adopted by the supervising Ministry

The core module “Language and Communication”

the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Executive Training (at the time) introduce from **2022**, a new core module called “**Language and Communication**” during the **semesters 1 and 2** of university studies.

 **The aim** : help students improve their level and better adapt to the shift in the language of instruction.

Measures adopted by the supervising Ministry

The core module “Language and Terminology” by LMD System

the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Executive Training introduce, introduce a new core module called “**Language and Terminology**” during the **semesters 1 and 2** of university studies.

 **The aim** : help students to understand scientific texts, produce narrative and argumentative writing, take notes, prepare and deliver presentations, work in groups, and interact with professors.

 **Difficulties** : the program appeared overly ambitious and unrealistic given the limited teaching hours allocated (2 hours of lectures and 2 hours of tutorials per week over fourteen weeks per semester).

Measures adopted by the supervising Ministry

The core module “Foreign Languages” by PACTE ESRI 2030

the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation launched at the PACTE ESRI 2030 in **2022** a new module called “**Foreign Languages**”, placed under a new department of Transversal Teaching.

⚙ **Foreign Language** : English is taught during semesters 1 and 2, while French is taught in semesters 3 and 4. This module follows a 70/30 hybrid model, combining autonomous learning via the “Loughati” platform (which replaces Rosetta Stone) for 70% of the time with 30% face-to-face instruction. A mandatory placement test is used to determine the CEFR level (A1–C1), followed by an adaptive learning pathway...

Measures adopted by the supervising Ministry

 **SOFT Skills** : To address students' behavioral gaps and prepare them for professional life, the Ministry also introduced a “Soft Skills” module, taught by non-specialist instructors in lecture halls with more than 100 students.

 **Difficulties** : Soft skills development normally requires qualified trainers and coaches working in small groups of 15 to 20 students. Neither human nor financial resources are sufficient to meet this major challenge.

Measures adopted by the supervising Ministry

Challenge : Allocating **120 hours** to restructure two languages (**French and English**), while also integrating an **immersion platform** and **soft skills** training, represents an almost unachievable task, with efforts often yielding limited results.

👉 **These reforms** tend to **destabilize both students and teachers** and fail to achieve the expected objectives. A structural gap is clearly widening between policy ambitions and the cognitive reality of language learning.

Conclusion

👉 Language Perceptions and Cultural Identity

In Morocco's multilingual landscape, the evolution of a language relies heavily on its speakers' linguistic behavior, identity, and cultural perceptions. Positive representations foster linguistic appreciation and social value, whereas negative social perceptions lead directly to the marginalization and rejection of the language.

Conclusion

The Repositioning of French Education

The institutional status of French in Morocco has undergone significant shifts over the decades. However, with the 2016 educational reform mandating the return of French-medium instruction in public schools, the language is strategically positioned to reclaim its instrumental role alongside other languages in the country.

Conclusion

Future Outlook and Academic Horizons

While educational policies have established a new structural framework for French, the actual impact on future generations remains to be seen. The ultimate effectiveness of these reforms in raising oral and written proficiency levels will only become clear as the country approaches its **2030 strategic horizons**.