

# Investigating Teaching Practices in Reading Instruction of Amazigh Language in Morocco

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## Abstract

This study investigates the efficacy of reading instruction practices within the context of Amazigh language education. The research focuses on the impact of implementing targeted reading instruction on students' language proficiency. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this study combines quantitative and qualitative analyses to provide a comprehensive exploration of the topic. The sample comprises primary school teachers across different grade levels, each engaged in teaching the Amazigh language. Careful attention was given to the sampling design and geographic locations. Quantitative data was collected through an observation grid, allowing for a quantitative assessment of teachers' practices and perceptions. Complementary to this, qualitative data was obtained through classroom observations and semi-directed interviews, enabling a detailed exploration of instructional techniques and challenges faced.

On the other hand, qualitative data underwent thematic analysis, revealing common threads in instructional strategies and hurdles encountered. Through the integration of quantitative and qualitative insights, a comprehensive panorama of the existing reading instruction landscape emerged. Findings shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of current strategies, providing a deeper understanding of the frequency and nature of reading instruction activities. Moreover, the outcomes bear pedagogical significance and offer valuable insights for advancing language education practices. This study not only contributes to the realm of pedagogical research but also has implications for enhancing language education strategies.

**Keywords:** Moroccan educational system, primary school, Amazigh language, reading strategies, teaching practices

## **1. Introduction**

This study is closely aligned with the ongoing educational reforms within the Moroccan education and training system, echoing the recommendations put forth by both national and international diagnostic and evaluation studies. The research, titled "Investigation teaching practices in Reading Instruction of Amazigh Language in Morocco"<sup>1</sup>, is a collaborative effort between the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture and the Ministry of National Education. The central objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the efficacy of reading instruction strategies among primary school learners, with specific emphasis on the fourth and sixth-grade levels. Additionally, the study seeks to critically analyze the instructional methods employed for imparting this crucial skill. In doing so, the research aims to offer valuable pedagogical insights, informed suggestions and recommendations that can significantly elevate the overall quality of teaching practices among Amazigh language educators.

In the pursuit of robust and reliable data, this study adopts an observational approach to examine the methodologies employed by teachers in the development and implementation of reading strategies within the designated grade levels. To further enrich the analysis and interpretation of the observational findings, the research team conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with participating educators at both academic tiers. To enhance the methodological rigor of the study, the researchers have developed two distinct guides to inform their data collection process.

The analysis of the accumulated data leverages the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v. 23), a powerful quantitative analysis tool. By employing this methodological approach, the study ensures the exploration of the research questions and facilitates the generation of empirically grounded conclusions. The designed methodology underscores the commitment of this study to a systematic and comprehensive approach, aimed at achieving research objectives that hold the potential to make meaningful contributions to the educational landscape.

## **2. Framework of the study**

Teaching is a demanding profession that constantly looks for individuals with knowledge of the specifics and pedagogical nuances (Shulman, 1986). This study is based on a conceptual framework derived from two essential fields of knowledge. The first is related to

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<sup>1</sup> This study was carried out at the Center for Educational Research and Pedagogical Programs (CRDPP) with the participation of the following researchers of the center: M'hamed El Baghdadi, Fatima Agnaou, Abdellah Bouzandag, Abdeslem Khalafi, Bouchra El Barkani, Kamal Aqua, L'houssaine El Gholb and Mustapha Sghir.

the teaching practices, which fall within the pedagogical model called "process-result"<sup>2</sup>. The second is related to the reading theoretical frameworks and their development strategies for learners, based on the results of scientific research, especially in the cognitive educational sciences.

As for the first conceptual framework related to teaching practices, educational research conducted initially in the United States more than half a century ago and later in Europe, showed that the quality of learners' achievement is closely related to teaching practices. Furthermore, the goal of teaching is to ensure learning, so if learning does not take place, the goal is not achieved. According to this research, the deep-seated variation between learners' achievements at the end of the year, generally ranging from 10% to 20%, is explained by the teacher's practices (Bianco & Bressoux, 2009). Moreover, the same research indicates that the effect of these practices exceeds the "institutional effect" and the "class effect". In the same context, Soga (2000) sees education as a planned arrangement between the teacher and the student on a particular subject to achieve learning using appropriate methods and materials. Based on the professional principle, teaching is a planned, logical, well-organized process of transmitting knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

As this organic relationship between teaching practices, student achievements and academic success, is the aim goal of education, we have considered it necessary to conduct this study, which constitutes an essential addition to the two previous studies done in the field of assessment in Amazigh language in Morocco<sup>3</sup>. Hence, the statement of the problem is formulated in the following research questions:

1. What teaching practices are used by the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> primary school teachers to improve learners' reading and comprehension in the Amazigh language?
2. Did they use some strategies to teach reading activities?
3. What are the characteristics of these teaching practices?
4. What differentiates them, and which of them is the most effective?

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<sup>2</sup> These are some studies that focused on this model:

- Feyfant, A. (2011). Effects of pedagogical practices on learning. *Dossier d'actualité veille et analyse*, 65, 1-14.
- Dubé, F., Bessette, L., & Dorval, C. (2011). Differentiation and explicit teaching: integration of learners with learning difficulties. *US-China Education Review*, 1(2), 1-19.
- Bissonnette, S., Richard, M., & Gauthier, C. (2005). Effective pedagogical interventions and academic success of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. *Revue Française de Pédagogie*, 150, 87-141.

<sup>3</sup> Two studies were conducted to assess the reading and writing abilities of learners using Tifinagh's script, which is used for the Amazigh language. The first study found that the difficulties in learning the language are not primarily related to the script itself but to the learners' language learning skills. Therefore, appropriate pedagogical approaches and teacher training were recommended. The second study aimed to evaluate the reading and written expression components and identified variables related to the teacher, curriculum, and didactic approach that impact learners' performance. It concluded that teachers' representation, the Amazigh language curriculum, and the teaching approach adopted are related to learners' achievement.

### 3. Methodology of the study

#### 3.1 Data Collection Tools

Aligned with the research objectives, the study elucidates the notion of "teaching practices" as an intricate amalgamation of pedagogical and didactic dimensions. The study observes the teaching practices of the Amazigh language through the reading element in the fourth and sixth levels of primary school, using tools such as the observation grid, the semi-directed interviews as well as their designed guides.

##### 3.1.1 Observation Grid

The observation grid stands as an instrument used to unveil the intricate tapestry of teaching practices within Amazigh language instruction. It is constructed upon a competency framework harmoniously aligned with the contents of Amazigh language textbooks and pedagogical guidelines governing the fourth and sixth levels of primary education. It includes two main dimensions: didactic and pedagogical, along with other dimensions such as movements, behaviors, languages, goals, strategies, and ideologies. These dimensions contribute to understanding and analyzing the teaching practices in the targeted Amazigh language by including the observation grid which emerges as a pivotal instrument, empowering the comprehensive documentation of the multifaceted aspects that instructors choose during their professional endeavors within specific settings and temporal contexts. With the prism of this method, we artfully examine the preparatory phase, the immersive reading experience, and the post-reading strategies, offering a panoramic view of how educators facilitate the nurturing of essential reading skills.

##### 3.1.2 Semi-Directed Interviews

To enrich the depth of our analysis and provide a comprehensive perspective, we conducted a series of semi-directed interviews with educators actively engaged in the observational phase across both academic levels. These interviews were strategically employed to offer qualitative insights that complement the quantitative data obtained from observations. They also proffer an intimate insight into the pedagogical philosophies and beliefs that steer educators' choices in reading instruction-delving into facets such as their conceptions of reading, its objectives, optimal pedagogical methodologies and the intricate dynamics shaping teaching practices.

##### 3.1.3 Designed Guides

Furthermore, to strengthen the methodological integrity of our research, we employed two specialized guides designed to complement the previous tools. These guides, carefully tailored to our research context, played a crucial role in facilitating standardized data

collection. This approach enhances the dependability and rigor of our study's findings, ensuring a consistent and robust methodology throughout.

By adopting this multi-faceted approach, we aim to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the intricate nuances that underlie teaching practices. This methodological approach not only contributes to a multi-dimensional grasp of the research inquiries but also enhances the overall rigor of the study.

### **3.2 Research Structure**

#### **3.2.1 Characteristics of the Study Sample**

##### **Study Population**

The population of this qualitative study consists of Amazigh language teachers who teach at the fourth and sixth levels in primary school. The teachers can be classified into the following categories:

1. Teachers trained in regional centers for education and training. This category includes two types of teachers:
  - Specialists in teaching the Amazigh language;
  - Bilingual or multilingual teachers who teach subjects other than the Amazigh language.
2. Teachers trained within the framework of continuing training that is organized by the regional academies of education and training in collaboration with the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture. They can be further classified into two categories:
  - Teachers assigned to teach the Amazigh language only;
  - Bilingual or multilingual teachers who have subjects other than the Amazigh language.

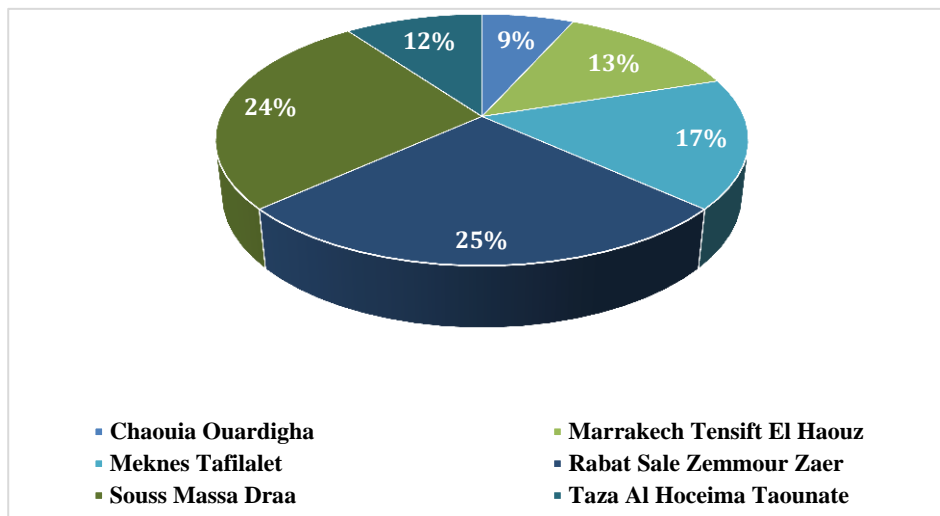
#### **3.2.2 Composition of the Study Sample by Regional Academy of Education and Training**

The study sample comprises 33 Amazigh language teachers in primary schools, divided into the four categories mentioned earlier. These teachers work in six regional academies of education and training across Morocco:

1. Taza Al Hoceima Taounate ;
2. Meknes Tafilalet ;
3. Rabat Sale Zemmour Zaer ;
4. Marrakech Tensift El Haouz ;
5. Chaouia Ouardigha ;
6. Souss Massa Draa.

This study encompasses all linguistic diversities and aspects of Morocco, including the north, central, and southern regions<sup>4</sup>. Although the number of districts, educational institutions and observed teachers varied across the academies, all included the target educational levels of the study (fourth and sixth levels of primary school), as shown in the graph below.

*Figure 1: Distribution of the Study Sample According to the Number of Teachers in each Academy*



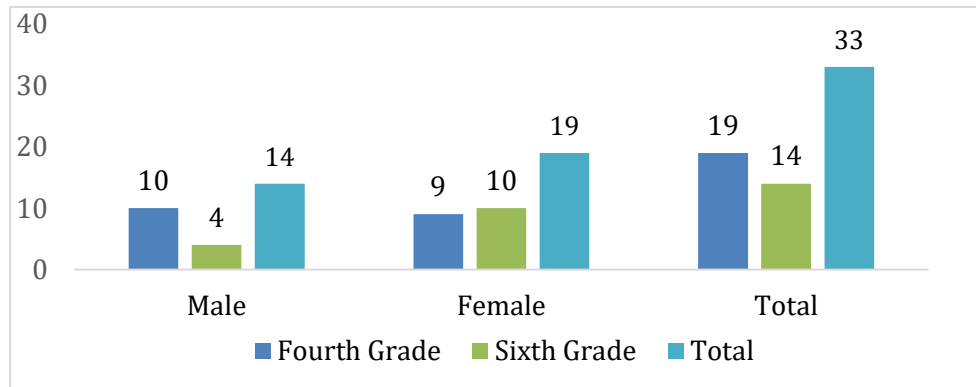
*Source: Educational Practices in Amazigh: A Field Study, published by the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture, bouregrag Editing House; 2022.*

In the graph depicted above, we unveil the distribution of our study's cohort across the diverse regional academies for education and training. Sourced from "Educational Practices in Amazigh: A Field Study," a publication by the venerable Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture, the insightful graph unveils a panorama of participation. The regional academies of Rabat Sale Zemmour Zaer and Souss Massa Draa emerge as frontrunners in participation, accounting for an impressive 25% and 24% of the total teachers, respectively. These academies also boast a marginally higher number of participating schools compared to their counterparts. In contrast, the Chaouia-Ouardigha Academy is represented by a smaller cohort of three identified teachers, constituting a modest 9% of the overall sample. The remaining academies reflect similar participation rates and teacher numbers, culminating in an ensemble that captures Morocco's pedagogical diversity with finesse.

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<sup>4</sup>. This refers to the linguistic aspects or variations, the three major Amazigh language branches known in Morocco, which are: Tarifit in the north, Tamazight in the center, and Tachelhit in the south.

### 3.2.3 Study Sample According to Gender and Teaching Level

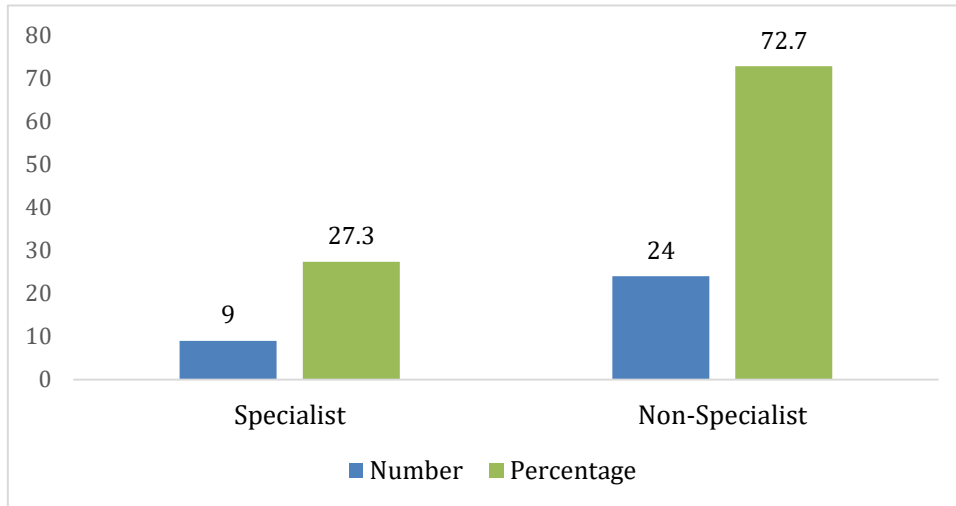


*Figure 2: Sample Distribution According to Gender and Teaching Level in %*

*Source: Educational Practices in Amazigh: A Field Study, published by the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture, bouregrag Editing House; 2022.*

Shifting our gaze to the intricate interplay of gender and teaching level within our study's sample, Figure 2 constitutes a visual representation of distribution percentages, sourced from the scholarly tome "Educational Practices in Amazigh: A Field Study". The delineation between the fourth and sixth-grade teaching cohorts reveals a captivating dynamic. Within the fourth grade, the percentage of male educators slightly surmounts that of their female counterparts, representing 10% against 9%, respectively. A divergent panorama presents itself within the sixth grade the proportion of female educators astonishingly doubles that of males, manifesting as 10% for females in juxtaposition to 4% for males. It is important to note this, despite the diminutive number of sixth-grade educators.

Simultaneously, we delve into the realm of specialization, with the graph below.



*Figure 3: Sample Distribution According to Speciality in %*

*Source: Educational Practices in Amazigh: A Field Study, published by the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture, bouregrag Editing House; 2022.*

Hailing from the esteemed pages of "Educational Practices in Amazigh: A Field Study," this graph illuminates the distribution of our study's sample according to specialization. The meticulous analysis reveals a nuanced landscape wherein specialized teachers account for 27.3% of the corpus, standing shoulder to shoulder with their non-specialized counterparts, who constitute a noteworthy 72.7% of the ensemble. This balance captures the diverse skills and knowledge that educators bring to the pedagogical realm, enriching our understanding of the academic landscape.

## **6. Discussion: Unraveling Factors Shaping Reading Pedagogy**

Within the framework of this study's multifaceted approach, the discussion embarks on an analytical journey, probing the interrelationships between teaching reading and an array of influential variables. These variables encompass the academic tier under consideration, the educators' academic qualifications, the nature of their foundational training and their engagement in continuous training endeavors. By meticulously dissecting the sub-questions corresponding to each phase of reading instruction and arranging them into a multidimensional evaluative framework, this discussion not only showcases descriptive analysis but also uncovers nuanced patterns and trends.



### **6.1 Investment Patterns Across Reading Phases**

The exploration of the "pre-reading" phase unveils a substantial investment rate of 67% among the surveyed educators. Notably, within this group, 63% pertain to the fourth level while 72% align with the sixth level. A compelling narrative emerges when examining specialized Amazigh language instructors, who exhibit a robust investment rate of 89%, followed by multilingual educators at 67%. Additionally, educators entrusted with Amazigh instruction manifest a 33% investment rate. The academic qualifications of participants also exert an influence, with 50% holding baccalaureate degrees, 32% being equipped with bachelor's degrees, and a smaller contingent of 9% bearing diplomas in general university studies.

Shifting to the "during reading" phase, a more intricate panorama comes into focus. A mere 27% of respondents demonstrate a strong commitment to this stage, with 21% originating from the fourth level and a more substantial 36% from the sixth level. Notably, educators who have engaged in more than three continuous training courses display heightened engagement levels (25% for specialized teachers and 8% for those assigned to teach Amazigh).

In contrast, the "post-reading" phase witnesses a discernible dearth of investment. A notable 52% of respondents abstain from investment in this period, with this lack being particularly pronounced in the fourth-grade context (53%), compared to the sixth-grade where 50% refrain from investment. The investment during this phase fluctuates between weak and very weak.

### **6.2 Comparative Insights: Aligning Findings with Prior Studies**

When contextualized against prior research, our findings harmonize with established trends. In a comparable study, Smith and Johnson (2018) noted a parallel phenomenon within indigenous language education, where pedagogical conceptions directly shaped classroom strategies. Drawing parallels, Brown et al. (2020) found that educators' perceptions of language acquisition mirrored the methods employed, affirming the substantial role of pedagogical beliefs in instructional choices. This resonance closely aligns with the present study, wherein the congruity between educators' cognitive representations and instructional practices underscores the profound influence of these representations on pedagogical enactment.

### **6.3 Practical Implications: Navigating the Nexus**

Our study resonates with profound implications for educational practice. The identification of investment patterns across distinct reading phases underscores the necessity for targeted

interventions and sophisticated professional development initiatives. Bridging the perceptual-practical divide mandates tailored curriculum enhancements and customized training programs. Drawing inspiration from the transformative success witnessed in the study by Lee and Wong (2019), where alignment between educators' beliefs and practices led to favorable language learning outcomes, a parallel transformative shift can be envisioned through the cultivation of harmonious congruence between cognitive frameworks and instructional realities.

#### **6.4 Limitations and Avenues for Future Exploration**

Acknowledging the boundaries of our study is imperative. The contextual confinement to a specific linguistic realm poses inherent limitations. Future research endeavors could embrace a broader linguistic landscape, engendering cross-comparisons to discern the influence of cognitive representations across diverse linguistic domains. The potential for longitudinal studies is also promising, offering an in-depth understanding of the dynamic evolution of educators' conceptions and their interplay with pedagogical practice over time.

In conclusion, this study traverses the intricate fabric of teaching practices within Amazigh language reading instruction. As we unveil the intricate web of cognitive representations shaping pedagogical choices, we unearth insights that transcend disciplinary boundaries. By doing so, we enrich our comprehension of instructional strategies while simultaneously paving the way for finely tuned enhancements in language education paradigms.

### **7. Recommendations**

Based on the study's findings, several actionable recommendations emerge to enhance reading strategies for fourth and sixth-level learners in the Amazigh language. These suggestions span didactic and pedagogical realms: employing diagnostic assessments to gauge proficiency levels; incorporating diverse comprehension techniques and critical thinking exercises; fostering autonomous learning, collaborative dynamics, and experiential learning; and integrating ongoing formative assessment. Additionally, the creation of a tailored intervention toolbox and avenues for continuous professional development for educators is advocated.

### **8. Conclusion**

In summary, this study examines the process of teaching reading in the Amazigh language at the fourth and sixth levels. The findings provide insights that can inform the development of more effective educational practices for learners and teachers. The study highlights the need for linking educational practices to the development of basic and continuous formation engineering and improving the contents of formative parts to reduce the heterogeneity of

practices. Additionally, the study identifies inconsistencies between the educational and formative aspects of the participants and their representation of the tasks entrusted to them, especially in developing reading strategies among learners. These findings can guide decision-makers in improving practitioner performance in this area.

### Acknowledgment

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