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Macro-Structures Framing Language Policy in Morocco: Which Discourse? Whose Discourse?

Khalid Laanani
Hassan II University, Mohammedia
Morocco
&
Said Fathi
Hassan II University, Mohammedia
Morocco

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Abstract: Today, the power of discourse is incontestable. Within the field of language policy and planning (LPP), language policy (LP) has been conceptualized in various ways. One paradigm-shifting conceptualization is viewing LP as *discourse*. The discursive power of language policies is quite *real* as it can be contested in official state discourses about language and language-related issues. This paper employs corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis to examine the macro-discourses of crisis, quality, equity, equality, and change in Morocco's language policy. The study scrutinizes these discourses and explores their "manipulative" use in official policy texts. It contends that these macro-discourses are strategically used to rationalize the spread and strengthening of foreign languages to the detriment of national ones. Specifically, the analysis shows that crisis discourse serves as a powerful strategy to legitimize change and create a sense of urgency that often sidelines crucial questions about the nature and beneficiaries of the proposed changes. Furthermore, the discourse of quality ties educational "quality" to the mastery of foreign languages. Likewise, renovation and modernization discourses are found to align systematically

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with the promotion of these languages. Also, the rhetoric of equity in language-in-education policy appears to justify biased decisions that favour foreign language instruction, risking the perpetuation and exacerbation of existing educational inequities. Consequently, this study implies that more attention should be paid to the intricate dynamics of language policy, especially its discursive power, which could potentially amplify disparities in education systems instead of eliminating them.
Keywords: language policy; language planning; corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis; Morocco

Macroestructuras que enmarcan la política lingüística en Marruecos: ¿Qué discurso? ¿El discurso de quién?

Resumen: Hoy en día, el poder del discurso es incontestable. En el campo de la política y planificación lingüísticas (PPL), la política lingüística (PL) se ha conceptualizado de diversas maneras. Una conceptualización que ha cambiado el paradigma es considerar la PL como discurso. El poder discursivo de las políticas lingüísticas es bastante real, ya que puede ser cuestionado en los discursos oficiales del Estado sobre la lengua y cuestiones relacionadas con ella. Este artículo emplea el análisis crítico del discurso asistido por corpus para examinar los macrodiscursos de crisis, calidad, equidad, igualdad y cambio en la política lingüística de Marruecos. El estudio examina estos discursos y explora su uso "manipulador" en los textos de política oficial. Sostiene que estos macrodiscursos se utilizan estratégicamente para racionalizar la difusión y el fortalecimiento de las lenguas extranjeras en detrimento de las nacionales. En concreto, el análisis muestra que el discurso de crisis sirve como una poderosa estrategia para legitimar el cambio y crear un sentido de urgencia que a menudo deja de lado cuestiones cruciales sobre la naturaleza y los beneficiarios de los cambios propuestos. Además, el discurso de la calidad vincula la "calidad" educativa al dominio de lenguas extranjeras. Asimismo, se ha descubierto que los discursos de renovación y modernización se alinean sistemáticamente con la promoción de estas lenguas. Asimismo, la retórica de la equidad en la política lingüística parece justificar decisiones sesgadas que favorecen la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, con el riesgo de perpetuar y exacerbar las desigualdades educativas existentes. En consecuencia, este estudio implica que se debe prestar más atención a la intrincada dinámica de la política lingüística, especialmente a su poder discursivo, que podría potencialmente amplificar las disparidades en los sistemas educativos en lugar de eliminarlas.
Palabras-clave: política lingüística; planificación lingüística; análisis crítico del discurso asistido por corpus; Marruecos

Macroestruturas que enquadram a política linguística no Marrocos: Qual discurso? De quem é o discurso?

Resumo: Hoje, o poder do discurso é incontestável. No campo da política e planejamento linguístico (LPP), a política linguística (LP) foi conceituada de várias maneiras. Uma conceituação que muda o paradigma é ver a LP como discurso. O poder discursivo das políticas linguísticas é bastante real, pois pode ser contestado em discursos oficiais do estado sobre a linguagem e questões relacionadas à linguagem. Este artigo emprega análise crítica do discurso assistida por corpus para examinar os macrodiscursos de crise, qualidade, equidade, igualdade e mudança na política linguística do Marrocos. O estudo examina esses discursos e explora seu uso "manipulador" em textos de política oficial. Ele argumenta que esses macrodiscursos são usados estrategicamente para racionalizar a disseminação e o fortalecimento de línguas estrangeiras em detrimento das nacionais. Especificamente, a análise mostra que o discurso de

crise serve como uma estratégia poderosa para legitimar a mudança e criar um senso de urgência que frequentemente marginaliza questões cruciais sobre a natureza e os beneficiários das mudanças propostas. Além disso, o discurso de qualidade vincula a "qualidade" educacional ao domínio de línguas estrangeiras. Da mesma forma, os discursos de renovação e modernização são encontrados alinhados sistematicamente com a promoção dessas línguas. Além disso, a retórica da equidade na política linguística parece justificar decisões tendenciosas que favorecem o ensino de línguas estrangeiras, arriscando a perpetuação e a exacerbação das desigualdades educacionais existentes. Consequentemente, este estudo implica que mais atenção deve ser dada à dinâmica intrincada da política linguística, especialmente seu poder discursivo, que poderia potencialmente amplificar as disparidades nos sistemas educacionais em vez de eliminá-las.
Palavras-chave: política linguística; planejamento linguístico; análise crítica do discurso assistida por corpus; Marrocos

Macro-Structures Framing Language Policy in Morocco: Which Discourse? Whose Discourse?

Morocco is a multilingual nation. The acknowledgment of this linguistic reality, however, has only recently been officially declared in the new Constitution (Ministry of Justice, 2011). Article 5 of the Constitution clearly underscores multilingualism as the distinctive characteristic of the nation and it calls for the development and protection of official languages as well as local varieties. Nonetheless, an important component of Moroccan multilingualism, and which is unstated in Article 5, is foreign languages,[1] namely French, Spanish, and English. These languages, some of which are part of a colonial legacy (French and Spanish), have become an essential constitutive element of the linguistic landscape in Morocco and enjoy a privileged status in the linguistic market. The French language, for instance, is considered a *de facto* official language (Ennaji, 2005, p. 201; Fathi, 2017, p. 4) since it is widely used in many key social domains such as the health sector, education, public administration, and numerous other sectors. Given the strong presence of foreign languages in the Moroccan social and cultural fabric, the official language policy text gives considerable importance to these languages and envisions their teaching and learning as a fundamental pillar of the planned reform of the education system in the country.

More recently, the Moroccan government adopted a new policy known as the language alternation policy (LAP), which is part of a more ambitious reform that seeks to "renovate" the Moroccan public education system and to rectify its several crippling dysfunctions. LAP is one clear example of the official orientation toward the strengthening of foreign languages in public domains such as education. Generally, the policy is a move that can be located within the framework of neoliberal tendencies in education. As a developing nation that aspires for fast-tracked economic growth, Morocco has largely been infiltrated by neoliberalism and it has been quite responsive to the impositions of the neoliberal market (e.g., Catusse, 2009; Cohen & Jaidi, 2006). Hence, it is not surprising that the official discourse openly calls for "tightening" the bonds between the economy and the education system (Apple, 2006, p. 23), and uses economic claims to rationalize market-driven reforms in education, especially the teaching of dominant languages.

[1] We adopted the same appellation used in the official documents for ease of use and clarity. European languages other than the official national ones (Standard Arabic and Standard Tamazight) are commonly seen as being foreign languages in Morocco.

LAP stipulates that a foreign language is to be used for the teaching of scientific school subjects as stated in Article 2 of the Framework Law (Secrétariat Général du Gouvernement, 2019). These subjects have been up to 2019 taught in Arabic, a measure that was part of the Arabization Policy adopted in the wake of the departure of colonialism from Morocco in 1956. However, LAP in particular, and language policy in general were framed by several macro-discourses that shape the debate about languages in Morocco and underlie reform agendas. This paper argues that *macro-discourses* such as the discourses of crisis, quality, equity, equality and change are used to justify and rationalize the strengthening of foreign languages at the expense of national languages. Accordingly, the study will attempt to map the major topical themes or *macro-structures* (van Dijk, 1980, 2001) that frame LP in Morocco. Benefitting from the synergy resulting from corpus linguistics (CL) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) or what has become known as corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS), the study tries to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the macro-discourses that frame language policy in Morocco?
2. How are these macro-discourses used to fortify the status of foreign languages at the cost of national official ones?

Conceptual Framework

Critical Language Policy

Critical language policy (CLP) has been characterized as an influential "reconceptualization" of LP (Johnson, 2023). Within the CLP framework, there was a "theoretical" shift from viewing LP as an objective process organized by an uninterested state to solve language problems hindering its development to a view of LP as an interested social practice which is implicated in power relations and social dominance (Johnson, 2016, p. 12). Researchers started highlighting the inherent political and ideological nature of LP and sought to uncover how official language policy can reproduce and maintain language and social inequalities and hierarchies (e.g., Ricento, 1998; Tollefson, 1991, 2002, 2006; Tollefson & Tsui, 2014). For instance, Tollefson (2006) contends that the critical approach to language policy "acknowledges that policies often create and sustain various forms of social inequality and that policy-makers usually promote the interests of dominant social groups" (p. 42). Political economy or "economics with a political slant" (Usher, 2008, p. xv), in particular, is seen as "inseparable" from institutional language policy decisions which more often than not stress the "socioeconomic" value of dominant languages (Ricento, 2015, p. 1). CLP, thus, emphasizes the influence of structural factors on LP processes (Tollefson, 1991) and tries to reveal power mechanisms and the resultant social inequalities that are "implicit" or "enmeshed" in hegemonic ideologies (Ricento, 2006, p. 15).

Despite being an influential theoretical approach to LP, CLP has many limitations. (Johnson, 2009), for example, notes that although CLP has immensely enriched LP research, its overemphasis on structural factors, especially power, "obfuscate[s] agency and perpetuate[s] the reification of policy as necessarily monolithic, intentional, and fascistic" (p. 155). Elsewhere, it has been characterized as "overly deterministic" (Johnson, 2023, p. 23). In the present study, CLP is not adopted unreservedly or uncritically, instead, only some of its basic theoretical insights are incorporated. Specifically, we share the view that LP is a mechanism that can be ideologically manipulated to serve the interests of dominant social groups and, therefore, to *reproduce* or create social inequalities. This particular insight informs our critical discourse analysis of the official macro-discourses that surround language policy in Morocco.

Discursive Approach to Language Policy

Ball (1993) offers a framework that conceptualizes educational policy both as *text*[2] and as *discourse*. We presume that this conceptualization will help this study reveal the strategic employment of macro-discourses in official language policy and highlight how these are constructed, circulated, and legitimized by the official language policy text (cf., Lo Bianco, 2001, 2008; Shohamy, 2006).

Language Policy as Text

According to Ball (1993), "policies are textual interventions into practice" (p. 12). In other words, legislated policies that intend to change a particular social situation are usually enshrined in official legal texts. Being one important type of social policy, language policy is also, most of the time, stipulated in an official text which has a legal force. Influenced by literary theory, Ball (1993) conceptualized *policy as text*, i.e., textual representations that are *encoded* and *decoded* in various and complex ways (p. 11). However, the processes of encoding and decoding a policy text are by no means uncontentious. On the one hand, as mechanisms of producing social meaning, policies materialize into textual form only after a long struggle and as the result of many compromises. On the other hand, they remain open, as a text, to different interpretations or "readings" since their meaning is most of the time contingent on actors' personal history, experiences, and context (Ball, 1993). When applied to LP, this conceptualization problematizes the quest for authors' intentions embedded in the policy text and, thus, opens a window for bottom-up interpretations and agentive appropriations by local agents (Johnson, 2009). Even so, we believe that LP researchers should examine policymakers' intentions since these certainly exist in policy texts. Ball (1993) himself warns against ignoring authorial intentions altogether.

Language Policy as Discourse

It is beyond doubt that discourses possess considerable influence and can serve as effective tools for maintaining an established status quo or creating new realities. Foucault (1969/1972) defined discourse as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (p. 54). Likewise, when construed as social discursive practices, policies influence and shape not only the meaning of those policies but also how they are comprehended and implemented. By conceptualizing policies as *discourses*, Ball (1993) primarily aimed to underscore the discursive power inherent in policies in that they produce "truths" and "knowledges" (p. 14). Therefore, the conceptualization of language policy as discourse is posited to unveil its extensive ramifications. For instance, one hegemonic effect of policy as discourse lies in its construction of "positions" for its subjects and, subsequently, controlling how these actors can act and think (Ball, 1993, p. 14). Consequently, we contend that any analysis of language policy remains incomplete if it fails to unveil discourses "within and without" (Johnson, 2009, p. 144) its discursive formulations, especially the "existence of dominant discourses" (Ball, 1993, p. 15). Using corpus-assisted CDA, the present paper attempts to shed light on how some particular macro-discourses are *recontextualized* in the official language policy text to promote the teaching of hegemonic languages in postcolonial Morocco.

CADS and LPP Research

While CDA has been widely used to study LPP issues, CL is relatively a new method that has only recently been gaining traction among LPP researchers. Although research touched upon the possible benefits of using corpora in sociolinguistics (e.g., Andersen, 2010), it was only the

[2] Shohamy (2006) calls this type of LP "declared language policy," that is, policy we can find in official documents (p. 74).

publication of LPP methodology textbooks, such as Hult & Johnson (2015), that turned the spotlight on CL as a promising methodological innovation within the field. Fitzsimmons-Doolan (2015) noted that the combination of the two traditions "seems especially fruitful for LPP studies seeking to make claims about larger bodies of policy discourse or policy documents using linguistic and contextual variables" (p. 109). However, there is still a paucity of studies that integrated CL and CDA for the study of LPP issues.

Fitzsimmons-Doolan (2009) conducted a corpus-based study to assess the overlap between newspaper discourse about language policy and newspaper discourse about immigration. Using keywords and keyness analysis, he concluded, against what was assumed, that there was very little intersection between the two discourses. Her research, however, highlighted the way keyness analysis can help reveal ideological bias in discourse about languages. Also, Fitzsimmons-Doolan, (2014) was able to demonstrate elsewhere how key collocations when taken as linguistic variables can reveal language ideologies. Similarly, Vessey (2016, 2017) studied media representation of languages and she found that CL techniques such keyness, collocations and measures of statistical significance can help identify particular language ideologies in media discourse. It seems that research evidence for the suitability and effectiveness of the marriage between CL and CDA to investigate language ideologies whether these are embedded in media discourse, language policy documents (Khan & Zaki, 2022), or in debates about language-related policies (Subtirelu, 2013) is steadily growing. Other research can be subsumed under a CADS framework focus, for instance, on the role of institutional language beliefs in promoting official plans for the internationalization of higher education institutions and the promotion of language diversity (Villares, 2019). In addition, there is evidence that CL techniques, in particular, can be also useful for the study of the hottest issues in the field of LPP such as agency (McEntee-Atalianis & Vessey, 2024).

As it can be concluded from the studies discussed above, it seems that corpus-assisted research in the field of LPP remained faithful to the research agenda within CDA. Issues investigated are predominantly focused on the workings of ideology, namely language ideologies hidden in language policy texts or disseminated in media discourse.

Methodology

This study employed a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis approach to examine how particular macro-discourses are used to legitimize certain language policies in Morocco.

Corpus Construction

A total of 17 official documents were included in the corpus (see Table 1). The study ensured the inclusion of diverse document types to capture a comprehensive representation of language policy discourse. Accordingly, documents ranged from supreme legal documents (e.g., the Constitution: Ministry of Justice, 2011) to policy documents issued by national institutions such as The Higher Council for Education, Training, and Scientific Research (in French, *Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation, de la Formation et de la Recherche Scientifique* [CSEFRS]; e.g., the Strategic Vision, henceforth the Vision) and intra-institutional communications like memoranda. The primary criterion for document selection was their relevance to education, particularly those focusing on language policy. Select documents were cleaned by removing non-text content. AntConc software (Anthony, 2022, version 4.2.0) was used as it supports the Arabic language and ensures a systematic and organized compilation of the documents. The resulting corpus included 236.423 tokens. It is to be noted, therefore, that the corpus was in Arabic and all searches were conducted in that language. Text in the results obtained such as concordance tables and collocates was translated into the English

language. To ensure accuracy, each of the authors offered their translations separately and then after comparing them, a final enhanced version was adopted.

Table 1

Documents Included in the Main Corpus

Document	Genre	Tokens	Author/Date of Publication
[1] The Constitution	Legal text	14,270	Constitutional Committee (2011)
[2] The Charter	Policy text	16,768	SCET (1999)
[3] The Vision	Policy text	15,782	CSEFRS (2015)
[4] The Framework Law	Legal text	7,027	Secrétariat Général du Gouvernement (2019)
[5] The Analytical Report (2014)	Report	73,548	CSEFRS (2014)
[6] The Road-map 2022–2026	Policy text	5,109	MNE (2022)
[7] The National Education Emergency Program 2009–2011	Policy text	6,753	MNE (2009)
[8] Portfolio of Framework Law Implementation Projects	Policy text	19,022	MNE (2020)
[9] The New Development Model	Report	31,563	ESEC (2019)
[10] Memo N 132	Communication	623	MNE (2009)
[11] Memo N 080/16	Communication	1,056	MNE (2016)
[12] Memo N 14/133	Communication	1,966	MNE (2014)
[13] The Whitebook (Chapter 1)	Policy text	14,063	MNE (2002)
[14] The Whitebook (Chapter 7)	Policy text	15,343	MNE (2002)
[15] CSEFRS Opinion on The Framework Law	Consultation	5,743	CSEFRS (2016)
[16] CSEFRS Opinion Regarding the Draft Decree Establishing the Applications of Linguistic Engineering	Consultation	3,375	CSEFRS (2021)
[17] CSEFRS Opinion Regarding the Draft Decree Establishing the Applications of Linguistic Engineering	Consultation	4,412	CSEFRS (2023)

Data Analysis

CL and CDA techniques were used jointly in the analysis stage. Using statistical tools from corpus linguistics, the study conducted quantitative analyses to identify key linguistic features and patterns across the corpus. On the other hand, CDA was used to uncover certain language ideologies and discourses embedded in the language used in the official documents.

CDA and CL

Both critical discourse analysis (CDA) and corpus linguistics (CL) study real examples of language but from two different angles. While CDA looks at the social use of language from a

critical perspective, in that, it attempts to uncover "opaque" power asymmetries (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 12) through the critical analysis of texts, CL studies language use in specific contexts and reveals how this use "can vary from context to context" (Csomay & Crawford, 2024, p. 5). CL, thus, is "evidence-driven" (Partington et al., 2013, p. 5). This particular characteristic makes it "a good ally" (Mautner, 2016, p. 155) for CDA since practitioners of the latter are also interested in revealing patterns within texts and use them to establish relationships between text and social structure.

Being interested in the exposure of ideology and power embedded in social discursive practices, CDA has been defined as a form of discourse analysis that studies "the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (van Dijk, 2015, p. 466). As such, CDA has a declared agenda which is socially and politically committed and is action-driven (Rogers, 2004, p. 4) as it seeks social change (Fairclough, 2001, p. 230). On the other hand, CL has been defined as "the study of language based on examples of real-life language use" (McEnery & Wilson, 2001, p. 1). It "incorporate[s] the use of computerised corpora" in the analysis (Partington et al., 2013, p. 5). However, CL has been construed in various ways (Partington et al., 2013). Taylor (2008), for instance, notes that CL has been defined as "a tool, a method, a methodology, a methodological approach, a discipline, a theory, a theoretical approach, a paradigm (theoretical or methodological), or a combination of these" (p. 180). Notwithstanding the ongoing debate on how best CL should be characterized, this paper shares the view that CL is an area of study that primarily "focuses upon a set of procedures, or methods, for studying language" (McEnery & Hardie, 2012, p. 1). Hence, CL was used as a method for textual analysis with a defined set of procedures that were harnessed to manage the quantitative aspect of the research.

CDA and CL: An Integrative Approach

The integration of CL and CDA into one powerful methodological approach is now a legitimate and well-established research practice (Ancarno, 2020; Marchi & Taylor, 2018). With the exponential growth of this line of research within discourse studies, there emerged a specialized trend that has come to be named corpus-assisted discourse studies or CADS for short. This relatively new tradition of research has gained momentum and popularity in recent years (Marchi & Taylor, 2018; Mautner, 2009) with the publication of influential studies that offered substantial evidence for the fruitful marriage between CDA and CL, thus, popularizing it (e.g., Baker et al., 2008; Bednarek & Caple, 2014; Mautner, 2007). In their review article, Nartey & Mwinlaaru (2019) could identify 121 studies which integrated CDA and CL. However, it should be noted that not all versions of CADS are explicitly critical (Baker & McEnery, 2015). Research focusing on the critical element in CADS is labelled corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis and is seen as a subcategory of CADS (Ancarno, 2020).

Overcoming the limitations immanent in both CDA and CL has been usually offered as a rationale for bringing the two into one methodological approach (Nartey & Mwinlaaru, 2019). According to Mautner (2016), CL can contribute to CDA in at least five ways. Theoretically, CL shares with CDA the assumption that variation in language use is systematic and functional (Gray & Biber, 2011, cited in Mautner, 2016). Also, CL offers CDA the opportunity to work with much larger corpora, thus, it helps reduce researcher bias in text selection (Baker, 2006) or what has been known as "cherry-picking" for which CDA has been widely criticized (e.g., Widdowson, 2004). The integration of CL and CDA results in "methodological triangulation" (McEnery & Hardie, 2012, p. 209), therefore, boosting the validity of the empirical analysis (Ancarno, 2020, p. 174) . Additionally, CL software offers a host of both quantitative and qualitative techniques for in-depth exploration of

textual data. For instance, the analyst can compute frequencies, find collocations, account for salient discoursal patterns, identify discourse functions, and much more.

All these major contributions have made CADS enjoy a great appeal, especially for its "ability to reconcile close linguistic analyses with the more broad-ranging analyses" which CDA is generally interested in (Ancarno, 2020, p. 167). However, given the breadth of both CL and CDA and seeing that CADS is still an emerging field of inquiry, researchers are faced with numerous research design challenges particularly because there are not many established protocols yet (Ancarno, 2020).

CDA and CL: A Tool-Box

The integration of CDA and CL offers the researcher several useful techniques which can be used to achieve particular research objectives and to answer questions related to the social use of language. To show how the official language policy documents employ and foreground specific macro-discourses to rationalize particular policy decisions unheedingly of the systemic disparities these may incur within the education system, the present paper eclectically utilizes a number of analytical tools from CDA and CL and attempts to leverage their synergetic power. On the one hand, CDA offered a general framework for the critical analysis conducted. Specifically, the paper draws on van Dijk's socio-cognitive model (e.g., 2014, 2016, 2017), especially his notion of semantic macro-structures or macro-discourses (e.g., van Dijk, 1980, 1995). To identify these overarching official discourses which frame language policy in Morocco, the analysis delves into close textual analysis of the select language policy documents. Using CL tools, the analysis highlights salient linguistic patterns that seem to indicate ideological bias in those texts. The paper also dwells on specific linguistic choices made by the authors of the documents and critically evaluates certain concepts that seem to have saliency in all texts. Moreover, the paper engages, though not thoroughly, in the rhetorical analysis of select excerpts from the corpus, particularly the attempt to identify argumentation schemes and interpret their manipulative use and their implications (Walton et al., 2008).

These analysis moves were largely achieved by harnessing a number of CL tools. Specifically, the paper made use of collocational analysis. This "involves the identification of words which tend to occur near or next to each other a great deal" (Baker & McEnery, 2015, p. 2). To identify collocations, the window span was set at 5L/5R, whereas the minimum frequency and the minimum range for collocates were set at 5 and 2, respectively. Log-likelihood (LL; Dunning, 1993) and mutual information (MI) were the chosen collocation statistics. Even though log-likelihood is the only measure offered by the software used for the analysis, both LL and MI are well-established and widely used in CL research. Log-likelihood ($p < .05$ adjusted to 3.84 with the Bonferroni method) was used as a significance measure as it makes no assumptions about the normal distribution of the linguistic data (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). Jointly, mutual information was used to assess the strength of the collocation (Baker, 2005; McEnery & Wilson, 2001), and it was set to default in AntCon (all values) to avoid taking an arbitrary threshold which would impact the results of the test. The primary reason for using both MI and LL was to triangulate collocational statistics. On the whole, the paper's interest in collocations was driven by the fact that "from an ideological point of view, collocates are *extremely* interesting" as the high collocational frequency of particular words can render the relationship between them unquestionable (Baker & McEnery, 2015, added emphasis by the authors).

Besides simple counts of the absolute frequency of some words, the study used dispersion statistics since frequency alone cannot account for "typicality" (McEnery & Wilson, 2001, p. 80; Miller, 2021, p. 84) nor for "consistency" (Baker, 2010, p. 27). Simply put, dispersion is defined as "the spread of values of a variable in a dataset" (Brezina, 2018, p. 11). In our case, seeing software

constraints, dispersion values were used to describe the distribution of search words across the different parts of the corpus. Juilland's *D* was used as a measure of dispersion. Accordingly, a dispersion value of 0 indicates extremely uneven distribution and a value of 1 indicates perfectly even distribution (Brezina, 2018). Yet, another more important procedure which was of great help to our qualitative analysis was concordancing. According to McEnery & Hardie (2012), concordancing is not only a well-established CL technique but it is "central" to it (p. 1). Accordingly, concordance tables of search words of interest are produced.

Results and Discussion

Discourse of Crisis and Failure

Moroccan public school is represented in the official text as a school in crisis and continuously failing (see Table 2[3]). This crisis discourse, however, is not specific to the education domain. The belief that there is a crippling crisis in all social domains is a common view. The New Development Model Report, for instance, highlights the existence of major critical dysfunctions not only in the field of education but also in key fields such as healthcare, the economy and the judicial system to name but a few. Thus, the crisis discourse about the Moroccan education system is part of a *crisis macro-discourse* about the Moroccan nation and its progress problems. Interestingly though, the educational crisis is constructed in the official discourse about the public school as the origin of all the other crises be they social, cultural, or economic (CSEFRS, 2014, p. 6). The said crisis of the public education system is represented as an *ongoing crisis* since the 1990s, and not specific to a particular period of the history of the Moroccan school (CSEFRS, 2014). Worthy of note is the fact that this crisis discourse is limited to the public school as pointed out in the New Development Model (The Economic Social and Environmental Council, 2019.

Table 2

Sample Concordances of The Search Term "Crisis"

File	Right Context	Hit	Left Context
The Charter	our education system accompanies the phase of regaining independence and its construction requirements. We observe that the chronic	**crisis**	it faces
The Strategic Vision	This imbalance is considered one of the main reasons explaining the trust	**crisis**	experienced by the society towards school.
The Road-map	National assessments of student achievements confirm the	**crisis.**	of learning within the public school system
The Analytical Report	The [image] that the collective perception promotes about the school is an image of a school in	**crisis,**	subject to criticism from all parties who see it as the *source of all problems*

Note: In CL terminology, especially in the context of concordances, a "hit" is the search term of interest surrounded by other words and phrases on both sides which are usually referred to as "the right context" and "the left context."

[3] Text in the original language can be found in Table A in the Appendix.

Collocational analysis reveals that the official discourse of crisis surrounding the Moroccan school is prevalent in all official documents. A host of words connotative of failure and crisis are systematically used to describe the situation of public education. For instance, the word "deterioration/تدهور*" collocates with the word "school," showing a statistically significant consistency (LL = 22.26, $p < .05$, MI = 4.56). Hence, the reform of the educational system is presented as an urgent necessity. The word "reform" occurs more than 371 times in the corpus and strongly collocates with words that pertain to education (see Table B in the Appendix). The phrase "education system" emerged as the strongest collocate of the word "reform," indicating a semantic preference for the phrase. The saliency of this collocation in the official text strengthens the belief that the whole education system is indeed in crisis and urgently needs reforming.

The crisis discourse in the official texts is a normalized discourse (Fairclough, 2013; van Dijk, 1998). Although its saliency signals the acknowledgement of a structural problem in the education system, it is constructed as a "normal" state of affairs. In this regard, CSEFRS (2014) states in its Analytical Report that "the re-evaluation of the education system is not a uniquely Moroccan case. *All* educational systems worldwide go through crises and periods of re-evaluation to different extents" (p. 26, emphasis added by authors). The long period that the reform of the Moroccan school took (it has been in reform since independence) and the many failing reform initiatives that it underwent attest to the normalization of the crisis-reform discourse.

The discourse about languages in the official text is also contaminated by this macro-crisis discourse. Moroccan students' failure to master these named languages is taken as a symptom of the deterioration of public education. Learning foreign languages, thus, turns into a barometer of the wellness of the whole educational system. For instance, the Analytical Report (2014) considers Moroccan students' weak proficiency in the French language as being indicative of the weak performance of the whole education system. Thus, to overcome this acquisition crisis, a measure such as LAP, especially the French Medium Instruction (FMI) Ordinance, is represented as the most appropriate solution in the official text.

Discourses of Renovation, Change and Modernization

Crises are often constructed as an opportunity for change and renovation. In other words, crisis discourse serves as a compelling justification and rationale for the desired change in any crisis-stricken system. It legitimizes change and surrounds it with a sense of *urgency* (Taylor, 2004), which usually makes questions about the nature of change, its content and for whose benefit an irrelevant concern. Renovation and modernization discourses, hence, build on crisis discourse and find legitimacy in it. In the Moroccan context, the renovation of the schooling system is stated in the official educational policy texts as one of the major goals to be achieved after the implementation of the new reform. There is, then, a consistent call for all parties involved in the education enterprise to engage in the reform to build the "new school," which is productive, innovative, dynamic and inclusive. In this regard, the bi-gram "new school" occurs eight times in the corpus and the adjective "new" has a statistically significant collocation with the term school (LL = 16.52, $p < .05$, MI= 2.09). The Framework Law states, for instance, that its essence as a legal document "lies in establishing a *new school* open to everyone" (Secrétariat Général du Gouvernement, 2019, p. 5623).

The dispersion analysis showed that the topical themes of 'renovation' and 'change' have a high saliency in the major official documents[4]. Renovation discourse, however, seems to be the most preferred type of discourse in educational policy documents, for example, the term 'renovation' has a high dispersion coefficient in the Vision (D = .81), the Charter (D = .70) and the Framework Law (D = .63). These results indicate that the reform seeks to renovate some aspects of the education

[4] See Figure A in the Appendix.

system rather than aim for radical change. The top collocates of the word (renovation/تجديد*) show that the planned renovation focuses on curricula and teaching approaches (see Table 3), including those used in the teaching of foreign languages. For instance, the Vision states that one of the major goals of the new language policy is the "renovation of foreign languages curricula and programs according to new educational approaches and methods" (CSEFRS, 2015, p. 38).

Of interest to our analysis here is the fact that renovation and change discourses are systematically associated with the teaching and acquisition of foreign languages. The argumentation scheme prevalent in the official text is that the renovation of the Moroccan public school necessarily involves the consolidation of the teaching of foreign languages. Under the rubric "Renovation Domains and Change Levers", for instance, the Charter delineates 18 levers of change the ninth of which is about the teaching of languages. Lever 9 unambiguously associates the integration and foreign language mastery as causal conditions for the planned change. Similarly, Lever 13 of the Vision, titled "Mastery of Languages and Diversification of Media of Instruction," emphasizes the extreme importance of strengthening the teaching and learning of foreign languages as a catalyst of the desired change.

Table 3

A Sample of the Top Collocates of the Word "Renovation"

Collocate	Range	Likelihood	MI
مناهج/curricula	5	**49.686**	**7.341**
برامج/programs	4	**40.003**	**5.513**
التربوي/educational	6	39.985	3.199
الطرائق/methods	4	**38.143**	**6.885**
المدرسة/school	4	36.098	2.863
البيداغوجي/pedagogical	3	29.031	3.646

Moreover, renovation is consistently used as a synonym for modernization. The argument is that to modernize the Moroccan school essentially means to open up to the outside world. Here, the only feasible mechanism to achieve this goal is the elevation of the status of foreign languages in the school domain and the expansion of their acquisition planning (French in particular). For example, foreign languages are generally claimed to "foster openness to diverse cultures, enhance opportunities for social and professional integration, and help keep up with technological advancements, thereby contributing to the active implementation of the Moroccan development model" (CSEFRS, 2021, p. 5). The elevation of the status of foreign languages and the expansion of their acquisition are two *unstated* goals of LAP. The consolidation of foreign languages, thus, is subtly integrated into the discourses of renovation and change in the envisaged reform. These languages are discursively constructed as the heralds of the long-awaited positive change in the "new" public school, which is an essential cornerstone in the developmental model the nation aspires for. Conversely, national languages are represented in this discourse of change as languages that need to change themselves!

Discourse of Quality

Offering an education of quality is a recursive theme in the Moroccan educational policy documents. It is stated as one of the ultimate and must-achieve goals of reform. A close reading of these documents shows that quality rhetoric pervades every official text with a highly noticeable

saliency in each. For instance, the lemma "quality" occurs 400 times and it has a consistent dispersion in key documents (see Figure 1 for dispersion statistics). Quality of schooling is one of the three tenets of the envisaged reform as reflected in the Vision motto: "For a School of Equity, Quality and Promotion." In the same document, quality in education is defined as "enabling the learners to fully achieve their potential through optimal mastery of cognitive, *communicative*, operational, emotional, rational, and creative competencies" (CSEFRS, 2015, p. 80, emphasis added by the authors). As can be read in this definition, mastery of languages (referred to as communicative competency), especially foreign languages, is a fundamental principle in the conceptualization of educational quality in the official discourse. The characterization of public school as a school of "quality" is conditioned by its ability to enable its students to master foreign languages, namely French.

The low-quality education offered by the Moroccan school is generally defined as a major dysfunction of the education system. Failing to master foreign languages (e.g., French) is represented as a prominent manifestation of this general dysfunction (CSEFRS, 2015. In connection with this point, Projects Portfolio, a document outlining the practical guidelines for the implementation of the Framework Law (2019), considers the promotion of foreign languages as part of the solution to the quality crisis. It states that "[…] work should focus on rectifying the dysfunctions that have been observed in classroom practice, especially […] problems in foreign language acquisition" (The Ministry of National Education, 2020, p. 33). Likewise, the Framework Law interestingly represents LAP as one critical measure that should guarantee the attainment of quality goals. It states that to ensure the quality of the education system "[…] bridges must be established between its components […] and the adoption of plurilingualism and Language Alternation" (Secrétariat Général du Gouvernement, 2019, p. 5624). The metaphor of establishing "bridges" (Freq = 81) literally means the adoption of French as a medium of instruction in the lower levels of education to meet language norms in higher education, a point also emphasized in the Vision (CSEFRS, 2015, p. 38).

Figure 1

Dispersion Results for the Lemma "Quality"" in Key Texts

Row	FileID	FilePath	FileTokens	Freq	NormFreq	Dispersion	Plot
1	13	Rdmap.docx	5109	47	9.199	0.829	
2	14	Strag_Vision.docx	15782	55	3.485	0.779	
3	12	Portfolio_proj.docx	19022	41	2.155	0.732	
4	7	Fwk_Law.docx	7027	20	2.846	0.721	
5	0	Analytical_Rep.docx	73548	100	1.360	0.703	
6	1	Charter.txt	16768	26	1.551	0.665	

There is a consistent emphasis in the official text on the measurement of educational quality (the term "measurement" has a strong collocation with the lemma "quality" (LL = 26.06, MI = 5.12). In this respect, as was initially suggested in the Vision (CSEFRS, 2015), Article 53 of the Framework Law (Secrétariat Général du Gouvernement, 2019) stipulates measures that can be taken to continuously evaluate the performance of the Moroccan education system. Among these is the stipulation of constant revision of all legislative documents regulating the education domain and the establishment of a *quality framework* to guide the assessment of quality across the different components of the education system. However, this concern with the measurement and standardization of quality in education does not seem to reflect the existence of a genuinely national plan to bring about real change in the education system and to democratize it. As can be read in the Analytical Report, it is rather a response to a globalized neoliberal view of education which puts more emphasis on the quantitative rather than the qualitative aspects of educational quality (International reports such as PIRLS and TIMS). In connection with this point, the Analytical Report states:

> Quality assurance in the field of education has witnessed significant development across various parts of the world. Measuring quality is achieved through international research and evaluation reports. This process also involves the formulation of appropriate *standards* and criteria. As a result, *competition* has arisen to seek the *quality seal* awarded by evaluation and accreditation bodies. Hence, the education and training system in Morocco is called upon to respond to quality requirements. (CSEFRS, 2014, p. 160, emphasis added by the authors)

In the Moroccan context, foreign languages are at the centre of this measurement philosophy. Even though official quality discourse endorses the setting of benchmarks for the learning of both national and foreign languages (CSEFRS, 2015), it is not clear how proficiency in national languages can be assessed given the fact that this is an uncommon practice in Morocco and the whole Arab world. It can be deduced then that the intended measure targets foreign languages since they have been subject to such benchmarking practices all over the world (e.g., The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, CEFR). The downside of this practice is its insistence on language proficiency as a prerequisite credential to access the job market and, therefore, creating social injustice as it may obstruct the unconditional enjoyment of constitutional rights such as work.

Thus, under the banner of plurilingualism, quality discourse systematically associates the promotion of quality education with the teaching and learning of foreign languages. A close textual reading of the official text shows that plurilingualism is a pervasive language ideology utilized mainly to legitimate biased language-in-education policies that clearly favour the spread and consolidation of foreign languages at the expense of national languages. This bias is glaringly apparent as proficiency in foreign languages is seen as indicative of the success of the whole education system (CSEFRS, 2023, p. 7). Moreover, quality discourse is intertwined with equity and equality discourses as will be discussed in the next section.

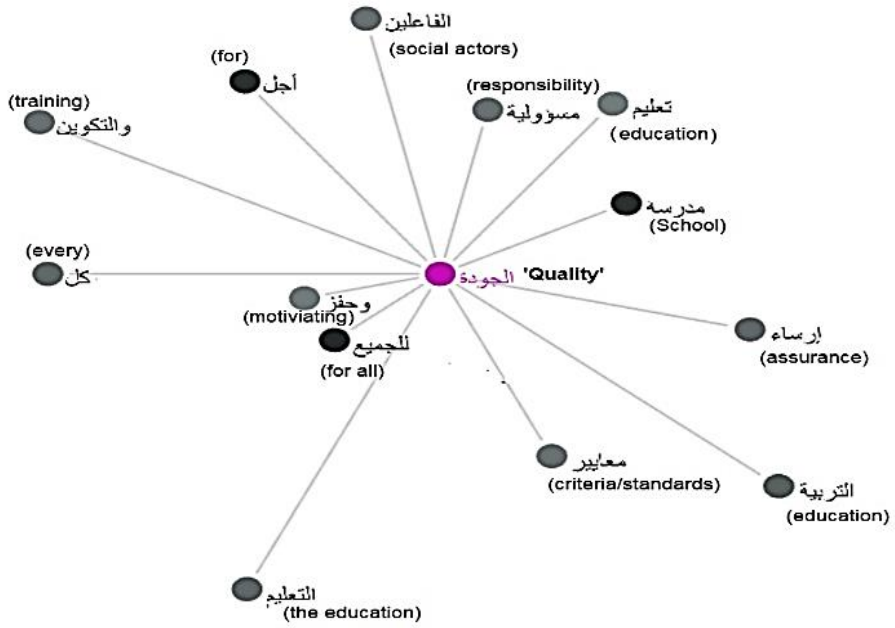
Discourse of Equality and Equity

Equity (F = 95), as aforementioned, is a core goal and one of the three fundamental principles that undergird the philosophy of the recent educational reform in Morocco. It is systematically associated with quality discourse (e.g., the type "quality" is a strong collocate of the search term "equity/نصاف*" (LL= 62.82, MI = 7.05). This strong association between the two discourses is further illustrated in the GraphColl (Figure 2) which shows the network of collocations

of the type "quality". As can be noticed in the graph, the phrase "for all/للجميع" is a statistically significant correlate of the type "'quality" (LL = 126.24, MI = 5.15). In the official text, equity is defined as "ensuring the widespread provision of education and training with *equal opportunities* for all citizens and *eliminating all* geographical, *social* or gender-related inequalities" (The Ministry of National Education, 2020, p. 10, emphases added by authors). Here, the rhetoric of educational equity and equality is blatantly idealistic and far removed from the realities of the current situation of the education system as it can be attested in the lexical choices and their rhetorical use in this rather vague definition. The claim is the elimination of all aspects of inequity and equality in education, which is evidently unfeasible given the power and complexity of many other socio-economic factors. Also, we need to make this important distinction between opportunity and outcome (Levinson et al., 2022). In the Moroccan context, although equity and equality are conceptualized as giving equal opportunity to every Moroccan student to access their right to education, less emphasis is placed on equitable educational outcomes. Indeed, guaranteeing equal access to education does not necessarily ensure that all students will get equal outcomes. One example of this discrepancy is at hand. A huge number of Moroccan students decide every school year, for several different reasons, to discontinue their education at an early stage. About 3 million students dropped out between the years 2000 and 2012 before finishing their middle school education, and 64% of university students dropped out without obtaining a degree (CSEFRS, 2014).

Figure 2

The Network of Collocations of the Type "Quality"



With relation to the teaching and learning of languages, the official discourse claims that the language-in-education policy suggested as part of the reform aims primarily at establishing equity and equal opportunity in the mastery of languages. The new language policy seeks to enable learners to harness related linguistic skills such as comprehension, speaking and writing (CSEFRS, 2015). Equity in language learning is stated as one of the three fundamentals of language education policy

in Morocco (CSEFRS, 2015). As such, educational equity is a desirable goal to pursue in the field of education. However, when the official equity discourse is used solely to legitimize the consolidation of the status of foreign languages, it risks creating and deepening inequities in language learning. An illustration of this logic can be found in the *undue* comparison (false equivalence fallacy) that the Analytical Report, whose results and recommendations formed the basis for the Vision, draws between learning languages in the private and public sectors. The report concluded that there are stark differences in language skills between private-sector students and their peers in the public sector. Private school students showed higher language competence.

Although this comparison is completely biased seeing the great disparity of means and resources in both sectors, the interpretation of its results is even more biased as it seeks to legitimize the expansion of foreign languages (e.g., French) in the Moroccan school domain. The report states:

> The rationale behind these differences, particularly in the context of the *French* language, stems from the *emphasis* placed by the private sector on this language. It is introduced right from the inception of the primary education. In contrast, public education students start their acquisition of this language only in the second year of elementary education. Additionally, within the realm of private education, *French serves a dual purpose. It functions not only as a subject of study but also as a medium of instruction for other subjects.* (CSEFRS, 2014, p. 118, emphasis added by the authors)

This interpretation, especially the last part related to the use of French as a medium of instruction that links the practice to the improvement of language proficiency (causal argumentation; Walton et al., 2008), is questionable and seems to be a fallacy.[5] This exact type of rationalization is used to justify the enactment of LAP in the two subsequent official documents, namely the Vision and the Framework Law. The argument scheme used in this instance is that the end of an action (improvement of language policy) justifies it (adoption of LAP). The state, then, represents the private sector as a model that should be reproduced to achieve excellence in language teaching and learning. This way, the public school finds itself in unequal competition with another education sector that is supposed to be in a complementary relation to it and not as a competitor. Moreover, how can we ensure educational equity, while the structures of inequity are maintained and even sanctioned by the state (private/public duality)? The official discourse itself admits that the public school has become exclusively a "school for the poor" since a large portion of middle-class families choose private schools for their children (CSEFRS, 2014, p. 161). The situation becomes even worse in rural education. Students in rural areas are found to be weaker not only in languages but in all other subjects (CSEFRS, 2014).

Then, although the strengthening of foreign languages is promoted as a necessary measure to promote equity in learning languages, for instance by adopting them as media of instruction, it may, in practice, deepen educational inequities. Admittedly, public school students do not have the same economic and educational resources available to their peers in the private sector and would face great challenges in improving their foreign language proficiency. To study in one's national language is a basic linguistic right that should be protected if we are to democratize education and ensure equal epistemological access to all learners (Morrow, 2009). That said, it seems then that the official equity discourse is mere rhetoric and its main function is to justify a set of biased educational policies, especially the aspect related to the teaching and learning of foreign languages in

[5] Concerning the introduction of the French language at the start of primary education for private school students compared to the second year for public school students, logically, the one-year difference is insignificant and cannot be used to explain the huge difference between the two sectors.

public schools. Ultimately, language-in-education policies of this type risk deepening and reproducing inequities rather than eliminating them.

Conclusion

Employing corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis, this paper has critically examined the macro-discourses of crisis, quality, equity, equality, and change. It has sought to reveal how these discourses are strategically employed to justify the prioritization of foreign languages over national languages within the official language policy in Morocco. The analysis showed that crisis discourse serves as a powerful strategy for legitimizing change, creating a sense of urgency that often sidelines crucial questions about the nature and beneficiaries of the proposed change. Intertwined with crisis rhetoric, renovation and modernization discourses are also systematically associated with the teaching and acquisition of foreign languages. Notably, the discourse on renovation consistently aligns with the elevation of foreign languages, particularly colonial French, and represents them as a mechanism for modernizing the educational system and connecting with the global community.

As outlined in the official discourse, the conceptualization of educational quality links the characterization of public schools as institutions of "quality" with the mastery of foreign languages. In this regard, the paper questioned the official claim that language-in-education policy aimed at fostering equity and equal opportunity in language mastery. Moreover, the analysis showed that the rhetoric of equity in language-in-education policy appears to be a justification for biased LP decisions which favour the teaching and learning of foreign languages in Moroccan public schools. Ultimately, it is claimed that such language-in-education policies, driven mainly by the many impositions of the neoliberal trend in education, may risk perpetuating and exacerbating existing educational inequities rather than mitigating them.

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About the Authors

Khalid Laanani
Hassan II University
khalid.laanani-etu@etu.univh2c.ma
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5520-3292
Khalid Laanani is a PhD candidate at Hassan II University, Morocco. He holds an MA in linguistics and cultural studies from the University of Chouaib Doukkali, El Jadida. His main research interests are language policy, language teaching, and discourse studies.

Said Fathi
Hassan II University
sifathisaid@hotmail.com
Said Fathi is a professor of linguistics at Hassan II University, Morocco. He is currently the head of the Doctoral Studies Centre and also the director of the LALITRA Laboratory at the same faculty. His main research interests are applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, and language policy and planning.

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