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**Foreign Language Education in Morocco:
Can French Withstand the Hegemony of English?**

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Abstract

In the wake of independence, Morocco has undertaken a series of linguistic reforms to meet the challenges of the continuously developing society. The successive reforms in Morocco's language policy and planning took charge of managing the diversity of the linguistic situation within the educational system where a number of local and foreign languages interact. French, English, and Spanish share the teaching of foreign languages in Moroccan schools. However, only two of these have been at the forefront recently. French, which has for long enjoyed a

privileged place within the Moroccan community, is at risk of losing its status in favour of English that is increasingly held in high esteem among young Moroccans. The objective of this research is to identify the different factors that can destabilize the status of French (L2) in the presence of the fast-paced spread of English (L3) by sharing insight into youngsters' attitudes towards the two languages in the Moroccan context. The results obtained from the survey conducted among young Moroccans aged 18 to 25 clearly revealed positive attitudes towards learning English against a noticeable lack of motivation towards French. Admittedly, participants showed a positive view of French too, but the mastery of English, for them, has become a necessity thanks to its growing dominance in education, the business world, the labour market, and international relations. The results also disclosed an uncertain future of the French language whether in the educational system or in the Moroccan society at large.

Keywords: status of French, spread of English, attitudes to language, educational system

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1. Introduction

Morocco is one of the multilingual nations where a plethora of local and foreign languages circle one another in a contested dance (Fischer, 2011; Loutfi & Noamane, 2020). The historical, social, and economic developments that have taken place in Morocco have led to its population

acquiring numerous foreign languages over the centuries (Kachoub & Hilgendorf, 2020). The Kingdom is home for various languages which coexist and interact while at the same time striving to establish a sustainable place and status within the community. The linguistic market splits into two categories. On the one hand, we find local languages; Arabic and Amazigh and their varieties, and on the other, we have foreign languages namely French, Spanish, and English. To properly manage this linguistic wealth, it was essential to establish an effective linguistic policy. Thus, since its independence in 1956, the State has undertaken a series of linguistic reforms that have identified three major objectives aimed mainly at maintaining local languages, perfect mastery of foreign languages and developing positive attitudes towards any type of language learning process.

Despite its lack of formal status, French is currently considered the first foreign language (L2) in the country. It is very much present in key areas of the society including media, economy, social institutions and education. However, this esteemed position is in competition with the growing expansion of English (L3) in Morocco. The increasing attraction of young people to English and the emergence of the latter as an international *lingua franca* could further strengthen its presence in the country. In the long term, this could affect the place occupied by French in the educational system and in the Moroccan society at large, especially following the recent reforms in the country's language policy and planning (LPP).

The objective of this research is to identify the different factors that can destabilize the status of French (L2) in the presence of the fast-paced spread of English (L3). To analyze the problem, it seems only adequate to go over a number of points that would provide a theoretical framework and put the research in context. Therefore, the study (i) first brings into focus the history, status, and domains of use of both French and English while simultaneously highlighting the importance of these two foreign languages for the socioeconomic and career advancement of young Moroccans; (ii) it then, investigates and discusses the attitudes of young Moroccans towards these two foreign languages. The research stresses the importance of language attitudes in revealing not only the actual status of a language, but also in affecting its future prospects. Hence, the article adopts a mixed approach analyzing academic literature, official documents, and discourses as well as using a questionnaire to collect young Moroccans' attitudes towards French and English.

1.1. Status of French in Morocco

The Maghreb region has for long been thought of as a francophone bastion (Battenberg, 1997). In Morocco, French has had a long journey in the educational system. Its anchoring in the school environment has gone through essential stages that have led to its current status. During the 44 years of the Protectorate (1912-1956), French was the main official language, however, it did not have much impact on education as it was learnt by only a small minority of the French and the Moroccan elite (Marley, 2004). After independence and the democratization of

education, the language gradually took root as more and more Moroccans enrolled in schools and as the language became indispensable in many vital sectors, such as the administration, tourism and the job market, especially in the private sector (Sadiqi, 2006).

French persisted as the language of instruction until the 70s after which the Arabization policy was adopted to reclaim the national unity and linguistic heritage of the nation (Buckner, 2011). Arabization was not fully implemented throughout the 12 years curriculum of the elementary education until 1990 (Moustaoui, 2017). In higher Education, however, scientific, and technical streams remained exclusively taught in French. Ultimately, this inconsistency in the means of instruction across the different levels of education proved to be pernicious, especially when high school graduates under the Arabization policy found themselves at disadvantage when enrolling in a university degree program to which French was the means of instruction.

The Arabization policy has led to a considerable decline in French proficiency among secondary school students who found themselves unprepared for the linguistic challenges of higher education. Even after graduation, they faced the harsh reality of competing for a job with their French-educated peers who eventually landed higher paid jobs and had higher chances of employment, not only because of their degree, but also because of their proficiency in French. This state of affairs has resulted in the destabilization of the policy of Arabization put in place more than fifty years before.

Over the course of more than two decades, when it became clear that the Arabization of the educational system was unable to prepare young graduates for the job market, several educational reform initiatives saw the light. The latest reforms in the Moroccan LPP, including The National Charter of Education and Training (COSEF, 1999), the 2009 Emergency Plan, the 2015-2030 Strategic Vision (Higher Council, 2015, p. 17), the Framework Law 51.17 (Law 51.17, 2019, Article 32), the New Model of Development (New Model of Development, 2021), and the 2022-2026 Road Map for Education System Reform, Strategic Project for Education Revival⁵; all have the same objective regarding the role and status of languages within the Moroccan educational system. Their ultimate goal is to ensure that students by the end of secondary education (K-12) master the Arabic language, are able to communicate in the Amazigh language, and show proficiency in at least two foreign languages.

In 2016, the use of Arabic as the MOI of scientific subjects was called into question and French was reinstated as a means of instruction of scientific disciplines (mathematics, physics and chemistry, biology and geology) (Alalou, 2017). In August 2019, the Moroccan Parliament officially passed the Framework Law 51.17 according to which the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research gave its official instructions promulgating the

⁵ Retrieved from: <https://www.men.gov.ma/Ar/Documents/FRoute20222026ar.pdf>, on August 27th, 2023, at 2:41 a.m.

teaching of scientific disciplines in the French language. In tertiary level, the language persists as the MOI of all scientific and technical streams. Outside the realm of education, French still enjoys a major role in the Moroccan linguistic market as it is used in mass media, commerce, and health.

Given the already complex linguistic situation in the country and the inconsistency in the weight and uses of French and Arabic throughout the different levels of the educational system, the emergence of English as another linguistic option for young Moroccans calls to question whether the presence of yet another powerful contestant, not only on the local, but also on the global linguistic scene, would provide a remedy or add one more obstacle in the face of young generations' future aspirations.

1.2. The Status of English in Morocco

As an inevitable consequence of globalization, Morocco's international economic relations are gradually diversifying with the international community (Soussi, 2021). New dynamics of political, cultural, and linguistic transformations have been triggered as a result. Though the presence of English is not new, in recent years it has become a powerful contender in the foreign language market of the country. English at the global level is being promoted so that world trade and diplomatic matters can be handled with the powerful partners in this language that is labeled an international *lingua franca*.

The presence of English in Morocco goes back to the Second World War, when Moroccans had to interact with the Americans, who had established bases along many coastal cities (Ennaji, 2005). Since then, English has gradually become an important foreign language in the State's linguistic landscape. Its value has only increased through time as its spread continues at a rapid pace in vital domains, such as business, media, science, technology, academic research, and education (Loutfi& Noaman, 2014). The spread of English in the country is tightly linked with the educational system, as the language has been part of the Moroccan school since the colonial era. After independence, it continued to be taught as a second foreign language in high school (L3) alongside French (L2) and the other local languages that constitute the country's long established multilingual repertoire.

The educational policies adopted by the State have been favorable to English. A series of reforms in the Moroccan LPP caused a shift in the weight of foreign languages among young Moroccans. For instance, the teaching of English, which was originally programmed only for upper secondary education (K-10 to K-12), was later introduced in the 9th grade of middle secondary education (K-9). Then, in 2014, a new stream was created which taught scientific subjects exclusively in English. Finally, in 2023, the Ministry of Education issued an official Ministerial Circular (030/23)⁶, which called for the generalization of English

⁶ Ministerial Circular (030/23) about generalizing the instruction of English in middle secondary education, the Ministry of National Education, May 23, 2023.

teaching in all levels of middle and upper secondary education (K-7 to K-12).

The successive linguistic reforms do not solely focus on the inclusion of English in both cycles of the secondary education, they also include the tertiary level of education. The spread of English in Moroccan universities became more pronounced and evident given the significant increase in the number of students enrolling in the English department each year in comparison with those enrolling in the French department, and while the number of students in the English department is on the rise over the years, in the French department the number of students is on the decline (Sadiqi, 1991; Jebbour, 2019).

The promotion of English in the tertiary level begun with the former Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Lahcen Daoudi (2012-2017). During his time in office, he made considerable changes involving the status of English in higher education since he viewed it as “*the language of technology and scientific research par excellence.*” (Quoted in Bouziane & Saoudi, 2021, p. 188). In 2014, a formal decree was issued that required all applicants for a university professor position to show proficiency in English during their hiring process. In 2016, a ministerial note requested graduates in some disciplines to demonstrate mastery and skillfulness in English upon finishing their doctoral degree program.

The rationale behind these decisions was that the Moroccan higher education could not thrive nor advance by relying on French only,

especially considering that English is a prerequisite for accessing the most important and up-to-date research material. The former minister once remarked that researchers who could not read the newest academic publications in English had to wait for the French translation to be published; a task which could take up to 10 years (Kachoub & Hilgendorf, 2020). This meant that relying only on French in doing research would have dire implications for the Moroccan scholarship, which could fall behind in scientific and academic progress.

Generally, whether it is in the educational system or in society at large, English is becoming an alternative foreign language for the youth who struggle with French, or whose aspirations go far beyond those that French can afford (Kachoub & Hilgendorf, 2020). Unlike French and Spanish English is not a colonial legacy in Morocco. It has become increasingly important in all realms of life as a result of the globalization of the economy as well as the development of information and communication technology. It is an instrumental language for the young generation in the sense that it opens to the larger world, better educational and career opportunities in and outside of the country.

2. Research Methodology

Currently, French and English are present in Morocco to varying degrees in major sectors of society such as education, economy, and media. English is obviously gaining more ground especially in the educational system that has of late upgraded its status within the secondary and tertiary cycles. That said, an old question resurfaces and that is whether

French can still maintain its status as first foreign language in the face of the advance of English in the Moroccan context. The objective of this study is to analyze the intricate power struggle relationship between the two main foreign languages in the country under the current circumstances. To do so, the study will examine the attitudes of young Moroccan learners towards both French and English in order to better understand the growing interest in English attested as the language of globalization.

2.1. Scope of the research

Because language planning is deeply influenced by language attitudes (Christ, 1997), analyzing attitudes is basic to studying the status of a language. It also helps gain insight into interactions which reflect emotions, beliefs and thoughts that are not accessible through direct observation, but that could be inferred from measurable responses.

The present study relies on a survey as a strategy of research. 112 young Moroccans aged between 18 and 25 years old, from different cities in Morocco, took part in it. The choice of this age group was not random. Its significance lies in that it represents a large group of stakeholders in the education system. These participants belong to different majors and streams and are all holders of the baccalaureate degree at least. The sample is representative of young Moroccan male and female population in the education system. Of the 112 participants in the survey, 59 (52.7%) are females and 53 (47.9%) are males.

2.2. Instruments

To meet the needs of the survey, the Likert scale questionnaire was used to achieve a more nuanced identification of participants' attitudes. The 20 questions developed were partly inspired by research on student motivation and attitudes towards foreign language learning (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Dörnyei & Dewaele, 2023). After the elaboration of the questions, the questionnaire was then translated to Arabic to make the content more accessible to the respondents.

2.3. Data Collection

The study was conducted over a period of one month (July 2023- August 2023) during which the help of secondary school teachers from different Moroccan cities was enlisted as they were solicited to share the electronic link containing the questionnaire via Google Forms with their former students who have already graduated high school. The respondents were selected on the basis of snowball sampling technique where the sample is built up by the identification of a few candidates who match the criteria to take part in the study and subsequently asking them to recommend other informants who share the same criteria. After the data collection, the coded questions were processed individually and in Excel for a more thorough analysis. The percentages, based on descriptive statistics, are displayed in tables to illustrate the results obtained from the data collected. For accuracy of the findings, we opted for a quantitative research project in this part of the study in order to gain

deeper insight into the reasons lying behind the shift of young Moroccans towards English.

3. Data analysis and Discussion

The presentation of the results is organized in five sections. In the first section, the survey examines youngsters' attitudes towards the cultures of French and English-speaking communities. The second section addresses the instrumental motivation behind learning the two languages. The third section analyzes the respondents' attitudes towards the usefulness of the two languages on the international level. The fourth section is allocated to the study of the role of the two languages in the creation of an ideal model of self (Yashima, 2009), while the fifth and last section deals with the respondents' projections about the future of the two languages within Morocco.

3.1. The French and English⁷ cultures:

⁷ By French and English here we mean French and English speaking communities, mainly France, Belgium, Canada for French and the US, Australia and England for English.

Table 1

Attitude towards the French culture

	I strongly agree	I agree	I neither agree nor disagree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
1. I like French music	12.50%	33.04%	28.57%	9.82%	16.07%
2. Learning French is important to open up to the French culture	18.75%	42.86%	25.00%	8.04%	5.36%
3. I like French-speaking cinema	6.25%	17.86%	17.86%	36.61%	21.43%
4. I like French TV programs	8.04%	18.75%	25.89%	24.11%	23.21%
Average	11.39%	28.13%	24.33%	19.65%	16.52%

Table 2

Attitude towards the English culture

	strongly agree	I agree	I neither agree nor disagree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
1. I like English music	46.43%	39.29%	8.04%	2.68%	3.57%
2. Learning English is important to open up to anglophone cultures	50.89%	41.07%	6.25%	1.79%	0.00%
3. I like English-speaking cinema	51.79%	36.61%	8.93%	2.68%	0.00%
4. I like English TV programs	47.32%	33.04%	9.82%	8.93%	0.89%
Average	49.11%	37.50%	8.26%	4.02%	1.12%

Expressing a positive attitude towards a culture is an essential incentive that lies behind learning the language pertaining to that culture. The first section of the survey aims at investigating young Moroccans' attitudes towards the cultures of French and English-speaking communities. Tables 3 and 4 show a significant difference in the youth's attitudes. While more than two thirds of the respondents (86.61%) have a favorable attitude towards English culture, less than a half (39.52%) have a positive

attitude towards the French culture. The statistics displayed show a huge difference in young Moroccans' attitudes towards the two cultures transmitted through the media of music, language, cinema, and TV.

Behind the valued position given to English among youngsters is its perception as a global language that is vital for accessing knowledge, news, culture, or even travelling the world. In real life, one important key driver for English in Morocco is the ever-growing exposure of young Moroccans to the media (movies, series, TV programs), Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), online gaming and an increasing rate of smartphone usage (social media platforms and internet sites). In addition to the educational system, the British Council (2021) estimates that 42% of Moroccans to learn English through cultural content in movies and series (25%) and the Internet (17%), which gives access to unlimited written and audiovisual media that provide the users with all types of cultural connotations associated with language.

3.2. The instrumentality of French and English

Table 3

Attitude towards the instrumentality of the French language

	I strongly agree	I agree	I neither agree nor disagree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
5. I think that currently the French language is very useful in the world	2.68%	18.75%	16.96%	34.82%	26.79%
6. Mastery of French is essential when traveling outside Morocco	5.36%	16.07%	33.04%	28.57%	16.96%
7. Learning French promotes in-depth knowledge	9.82%	22.32%	35.71%	19.64%	12.50%
8. Learning French is important for a better professional future	8.04%	30.36%	21.43%	22.32%	17.86%
Average	6.48%	21.88%	26.79%	26.34%	18.53%

Table 4

Attitude towards the instrumentality of the English language

	I strongly agree	I agree	I neither agree nor disagree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
5. I think that currently the English language is very useful in the world	78.57%	19.64%	0.89%	0.89%	0.00%
6. Mastery of English is essential when traveling outside Morocco	86.61%	10.71%	0.89%	1.79%	0.00%
7. Learning English promotes in-depth knowledge	52.68%	30.36%	14.29%	1.79%	0.89%
8. Learning English is important for a better professional future.	69.64%	25.89%	2.68%	1.79%	0.00%
Average	71.88%	21.65%	4.69%	1.57%	0.22%

The second section of the survey questions young Moroccans' attitudes towards the instrumentality of French and English. The results obtained (see tables 5 & 6) clearly indicate the fact that the vast majority of the youth responding to the survey (93.53%) have a more favorable attitude

towards the instrumentality of English, compared to 28.36% who share a similar view of French. 95.53% express that learning English is advantageous for a better professional future, while only 38.40% think the same of French. Even though French has been a main MOI in Morocco for over a century, 83.04% of the respondents affirm that it is indeed English that promotes in-depth knowledge. French was approved by 32.14% of the respondents. Generally, an overall of 98.21% think that English is more useful than French (21.43%) worldwide.

Competence in English is regarded as opening doors to a more advanced culture and better career opportunities (Phillipson, 1997). The expansion of English in Morocco took root because of the fast changes in the world, changes which are not so much linguistic as they are economic, political, and social. These factors provide a centripetal pragmatic force behind the estimated value, attractiveness, and desirability of this language with a high Q-value⁸ (Spolsky, 2004). Even though French is still used by government agencies, administrations, private companies, and French investment corporations, there is a number of young learners, growing by the day, who resort to develop their skills in English rather than in French as an alternative for securing a better academic and professional future.

3.3. French and English in International contact

⁸ A Q-value is a measure of the communicating utility of a human language computed as the product of a language's centrality and its prevalence

Table 5

Attitude towards the impact of French on international interaction

	I strongly agree	I agree	neither agree nor disagree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
9. Learning French will help me meet people from other countries.	8.93%	44.64%	19.64%	17.86%	8.93%
10. Learning French will help me establish relationships with people from other countries.	12.50%	41.96%	22.32%	14.29%	8.93%
11. Learning French will help me communicate with people from other countries.	10.71%	45.54%	17.86%	17.86%	8.04%
12. Learning French will help me get to know people from other countries.	11.61%	43.75%	16.96%	18.75%	8.93%
Average	10.94%	43.97%	19.20%	17.19%	8.71%

Table 6

Attitude towards the impact of English on international interactions

	I strongly agree	I agree	neither agree nor disagree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
9. Learning English will help me meet people from other countries.	70.54%	26.79%	2.68%	0.00%	0.00%
10. Learning English will help me establish relationships with people from other countries.	71.43%	25.89%	1.79%	0.89%	0.00%
11. Learning English will help me communicate with people from other countries.	70.54%	28.57%	0.00%	0.00%	0.89%
12. Learning English will help me get to know people from other countries.	71.43%	27.68%	0.00%	0.89%	0.00%
Average	70.99%	27.23%	1.12%	0.45%	0.22%

All the questions in the third section of the survey are meant to elicit the respondents' attitudes towards the impact of the two languages on international interactions. While 54.97% agree that French can help them meet, communicate, and establish relations with people from other

countries, another 98.22% assume international interaction would become easier thanks to learning English (see tables 7 & 8).

One of the crucial reasons for the expansion of English in Morocco and elsewhere is its use in key domains that involve international communication whether in personal exchanges (on the internet social media interactions and in tourism), or in international gatherings, such as conferences and summits where academics and experts meet. Its neutral role explains its reputability as an international lingua franca “*used for communication between people whose first languages differ.*” (Holmes & Wilson, 2022, p.117)

3.4. *The ideal self in a foreign language*

Table 7

Attitude towards the ideal self in French

	I strongly agree	I agree	I neither agree nor disagree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
13. French is necessary for my future plans.	15.18%	29.46%	25.00%	16.96%	13.39%
14. I imagine myself speaking perfect French every time I think about my future career.	16.07%	25.89%	22.32%	18.75%	16.96%
15. My ambitions largely depend on my perfect command of French.	14.29%	20.54%	25.89%	28.57%	10.71%
16. My thoughts on the future always evoke the usefulness of French.	10.71%	19.64%	36.61%	21.43%	11.61%
Average	14.06%	23.88%	27.46%	21.43%	13.17%

Table 8

Attitude towards the ideal self in English

	I strongly agree	I agree	I neither agree nor disagree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
13. English is necessary for my future plans.	64.29%	23.21%	11.61%	0.89%	0.00%
14. I imagine myself speaking perfect English every time I think about my future career.	66.07%	18.75%	7.14%	0.89%	7.14%
15. My ambitions largely depend on my perfect command of English.	60.71%	23.21%	13.39%	2.68%	0.00%
16. My thoughts on the future always evoke the usefulness of English.	57.14%	25.89%	16.07%	0.89%	0.00%
Average	62.05%	22.77%	12.05%	1.34%	1.79%

The fourth section deals with the attitudes of the respondents towards the ideal self in a foreign language, namely French and English. The ideal self is how the ideal image of oneself is perceived through hopes, ambitions, aspirations, or personal wishes. Therefore, strong motivation to learn a foreign language is largely dependent on the value and role the target language has in achieving an ideal self-image. Young Moroccans participating in this survey demonstrate different stances in regard to the way they visualize their ideal self in both foreign languages under study (see tables 9 &10). Whether it is for usefulness in the future (84.03%), realizing future plans (87.5% 16), succeeding in a future career (84.83%) or for fulfilling future ambitions, an average of 84.83% see that English is best for the achievement of their ideal self-image.

Previous research on the relationship between language learning and ideal self-image found out that the strongest correlation was found between self-esteem and fluency (Harbat, 2018). Fluency in English, according to the present research findings, leads to a more positive view of one's worth. For the Moroccan language learner, self-concept has a determining role in motivation and interest in foreign language learning.

3.5. *The future of French and English in Morocco*

Table 9

Attitude towards the future of French in Morocco

	I strongly agree	I agree	I neither agree nor disagree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
17. I would prefer scientific subjects to be learnt in French	12.50%	12.50%	17.86%	28.57%	28.57%
18. French will make Morocco open to the world community	6.25%	10.71%	23.21%	28.57%	31.25%
19. I think French is much more advantageous for the future development of the country	2.68%	13.39%	18.75%	36.61%	28.57%
20. English in Morocco will probably disappear in the future (in favor of French)	9.82%	1.79%	12.50%	41.07%	34.82%
Average	7.81%	9.60%	18.08%	33.71%	30.80%

Table 10

Attitude towards the future of English in Morocco

	I strongly agree	I agree	I neither agree nor disagree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
17. I would prefer scientific subjects to be learnt in English	54.46%	19.64%	10.71%	4.46%	10.71%
18. English will make Morocco open to the world community	79.46%	16.96%	1.79%	0.00%	1.79%
19. I think English is much more advantageous for the future development of the country	70.54%	24.11%	4.46%	0.00%	0.89%
20. French in Morocco will probably disappear in the future (in favor of English)	41.07%	29.46%	16.07%	8.04%	5.36%
Average	61.38%	22.54%	8.26%	3.13%	4.69%

The last section of the survey is an attempt to investigate the attitude of youngsters towards the future of French and English in Morocco. According to the results obtained from the analysis, it is revealed that French in Morocco is at risk as only 17.41% see it as part of the country's future as opposed to 83.92% who regard English as an integral part of the State's near future. In the educational system, 74.10% of the sample investigated agree to the use of English in the teaching of scientific subjects, compared to 25% supporting French. 96.42% admit that English will lead to the integration of Morocco in the international community through openness on the world, while only 16.96% have the same opinion about French. Of the two codes, English is thought to be more advantageous (94.65%) than French (16.07%) for the future development of the country. Lastly, while 17.41% still hold on to French

and think that English would probably disappear from the Moroccan linguistic landscape, another 83.92% foresee that English will persist and that it is, eventually, French that risks to lose its position in Morocco.

As such, English is expected to become Morocco's primary foreign language in the next few years. Young people are strongly in favor of switching from French to English because they perceive of this movement as a necessary step for the future development of the country as a whole as well as a steppingstone towards a brighter professional future and a successful career.

Conclusion

The competition between English and French in various African and Arab countries, including Morocco, is an increasingly noted phenomenon (Battenburg, 1997). It has already been over 30 years since the Moroccan scholarship (Sadiqi, 1991) has recognized the competition between these two foreign languages. This study set itself the objective of exploring the attitudes of young Moroccans towards French; the country's first foreign language (L2) and towards English; the country's second foreign language (L3). The results obtained clearly demonstrate a great motivation towards learning English against an increasing aversion vis-à-vis the French language. The changes in language use and preferences inside the Moroccan society today are becoming more and more pronounced. English is prized among young Moroccans because of its instrumental value as a key to the outside world, better social status, and career prospects without carrying the weight of a painful past that comes

with colonization. It does not represent a threat to Arabic or Amazigh, but it certainly threatens the long-established position of French as a second foreign language. The discrepancy in the results obtained through the present survey have proven that the high demands of modern life have rendered English a prerequisite tool of adaptation. It is increasingly popular amongst the younger generation at the detriment of French whose space is being gradually reduced.

To conclude, it is therefore possible to put forward the idea that the power of the Moroccan State's latest linguistic policies that support the growth of English in Morocco are likely to tip the balance in favor of the global language and jeopardize the future of French in the country. However, noteworthy is the fact that though French might lose its status as the first foreign language (L2) in the country, it cannot simply disappear from the linguistic scene because "*with each wave of colonization and cultural blending, it seems that Moroccans do not lose a language, but simply add another to their linguistic tapestry... English is only the latest in a long line of foreign languages to take root in Morocco.*" (Buckner, 2011, p.217).

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CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Changing Paradigms & Future Directions in Higher Education

Mohammed I University

Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Oujda, 2023

**Measuring Lifelong Learning among Applied
Linguistics' Doctorate Students: a Case Study of Moulay
Ismail's University**

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Abstract

It is well-acknowledged that the purpose of higher education is to nurture within learners the desire for and the implementation of perpetual education. All vital parties involved in tertiary education – graduates, stakeholders, tutors and accreditation entities – concur that this result is highly essential due to the accelerated evolution of our society, particularly in engineering and technology. Consequently, contemporary universities must provide more than simply traditional and current knowledge and aptitudes to their students; they must be

capable of furnishing them with generic skills and capacity to direct their own learning both during and after their studies as they adjust to a vast selection of contexts after the completion of formal education. In this regard, this study seeks to measure the propensity for lifelong learning among Applied Linguistics' Doctorate Students in Moulay Ismail's university of Arts and Human Sciences. It also employs a quantitative methodology, utilizing a survey instrument developed by Kirby et al. (2010) to investigate the lifelong learning skills of 38 participants. The results of the survey reveal slightly significant differences between male and female student populations, particularly in the trait of "setting goals," in which females self-reported a higher ability. These findings imply that it would be advantageous to invest additional resources into creating curricula which emphasize lifelong learning traits, thus enabling students to foster their growth.

Keywords: Lifelong Learning; Learner Autonomy; Evaluation and Assessment of Student Learning

1. Introduction

The concept of lifelong learning, as defined by empirical research, refers to the intentional acquisition of knowledge and skills aimed at improving one's quality of living. It is expected that individuals take ownership of their learning experiences (Dunlap and Grabinger, 2008). The term "l'éducation permanente" was first used by Faure

(1972) and entails the idea of continuously seeking knowledge and development from birth until death. The Faure Report further declares lifelong education as a comprehensive framework for educational policies in both developed and developing nations (Friesen and Anderson, 2004). The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) (2020) also recognizes the aim of promoting this characteristic globally, with a particular focus on adult learning, continuing education, literacy, and non-formal basic education. The institute strives to provide opportunities for lifelong education and the fulfillment of human potential, human rights, and democratic values.

Without a doubt, Morocco's implication on the subject of lifelong learning is apparent. In 2022, his majesty, King Mohammed VI called for the creation of the "African Institute for Lifelong Learning" during the 7th UNESCO International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VII) in Marrakech (Morocco World News, 2022). However, the implementation of the concept of lifelong learning in Moroccan Education, specifically at the tertiary level, remains a far-fetched goal.

In light of the limited availability of substantial research studies on lifelong learning within Moroccan higher education institutions, this research paper has undertaken a quantitative investigation to examine PhD students' propensity for lifelong learning. Through conducting a

survey with 38 students from Moulay Ismail's university, the following research questions are considered:

1. Do Applied Linguistics' Doctorate Students of Moulay Ismail's University have propensity for lifelong learning?
2. Does gender influence students' propensity for lifelong learning?

2. Literature review

Lifelong learning is a pivotal priority for governmental bodies, educational institutions, and administrators alike. In fact, education accreditation entities explicitly incorporate lifelong learning into learning outcomes. The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) places a strong emphasis on lifelong learning as a fundamental aspect for graduates to possess essential learning skills, enabling them to pursue further studies with a sense of autonomy (Martínez-Mediano and Lord, 2012). Furthermore, the Qualifications Framework of the EHEA underscores the importance of empowering graduates to identify their own training needs in their chosen field of study and in their professional lives (European Higher Education Area (EHEA), 2020). Additionally, the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) acknowledges and promotes the value of continuous learning by specifying that graduates should possess the ability to engage in lifelong learning (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc. (ABET), 2021). This dedication to lifelong learning is also evident in one of the twelve graduate attribute

profiles in both the Washington Accord and Sydney Accord (International Engineering Alliance (IEA), 2013). Similarly, Malaysia also places great emphasis on lifelong learning and actively advocates for its importance. Consistent with this, the Third Outline Perspective Plan of Malaysia recognizes the value of lifelong learning in a knowledge-based economy, where continuous improvement and skill development are crucial (Buntat et al., 2013). Nevertheless, lifelong learning should be an emphasized trait not only in the fields of engineering and technology, but also in social and human sciences.

In this regard, the attributes of individuals who embody the concept of lifelong learning have been extensively discussed in literature, with particular focus on two overarching dimensions: aptitudes and proficiencies related to the acquisition of knowledge, and attitudes and beliefs towards learning and knowledge. Prior research has sought to foster the practice of lifelong learning and bolster its effectiveness (Martínez-Mediano and Lord, 2012; Micieta et al., 2019). Notable variables affecting student aptitudes in conventional learning have also been investigated (Castaneda & Cheng, 2019; Chen and Liu, 2019; Thongmak, 2021). Eschenbacher and Fleming (2020) have emphasized the challenges associated with lifelong learning, particularly regarding the importance of transformative learning in times of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The diversity of studies focusing on lifelong learning from different perspectives indicates that the awareness of its importance is gradually surfacing in the academic

sphere. It is our expectation that the valuable insights gleaned from these endeavors will aid in the advancement of lifelong learning amongst individuals from all backgrounds.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

A total of 38 Doctoral students in Applied Linguistics, who are enrolled at Moulay Ismail University of Arts and Human Sciences, completed an online survey. The survey was posted on a WhatsApp Group specifically created for these students, and no remuneration or incentives were provided for participants to encourage their participation, as the task was carried out exclusively by volunteers. 19 participants were excluded from the final analyses due to visible inconsistencies within their answers, leaving a final sample size of $n = 19$.

3.2. Data collection and Analysis

The questionnaire was developed on the Google Form platform. Participants were required to rate each item using a five-point Likert agreement scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire is composed of 14 questions extracted from the lifelong learning questionnaire developed by Kirby et al. (2010). The survey questions are based on the five characteristics of lifelong learning, namely:

- a. goal setting.
- b. application of knowledge and skills.
- c. self-direction and self-evaluation.
- d. locating information.
- e. adaptable learning strategies.

After the collection of data, every questionnaire item was coded and scored according to the manual of the lifelong learning scale (LLS) of Kirby et al (2010). The scores were, then, entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS was used to conduct descriptive and inferential statistics to answer the research questions of the study.

4. Results

The overall result of the descriptive analysis conducted in order to answer the first research question yielded a mean that does not surpass 3.05 and a standard deviation of 0.84. This indicates that doctorate students of Moulay Ismail's university have a moderately low propensity towards the characteristics of lifelong learning. Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of all the participants depending on each characteristic. It is important to note that reverse-scored questions were reverse-coded before the analyses. A lower mean score indicates a higher self-rated propensity for that trait. Students feel more propensity towards knowledge appropriation and moderate propensity towards the other traits of life-long learning.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for characteristics of lifelong learning (n=19)

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Max	Min	M	SD
Setting Goals	19	2.00	3.60	2.8526	.41549
Appropriating Knowledge	19	1.33	3.33	1.9825	.60322
Self_Direction	19	1.50	3.50	2.5263	.56455
Locating Information	19	2.00	4.00	3.0526	.84811
Learning Strategies	19	1.67	3.33	2.5965	.50404

Note. ‘M’ refers to the mean; ‘SD’ refers to standard deviation.

As for the second question of the research paper, an independent samples t-test was used to analyze the differences of students based on gender. Table 2 summarizes the mean, standard deviation, and the standard deviation mean of males and females depending on each characteristic. When comparing female and male students’ propensity towards lifelong learning, females exhibit higher propensity towards setting goals, but equal propensity towards the other traits.

Table 2

Detailed analysis on characteristics of lifelong learning based on different genders

	Gender	Group Statistics			
		N	M	SD	SDM
Setting Goals	Female	11	2.9636	.32023	.09655
	Male	8	2.7000	.50143	.17728
Appropriating Knowledge	Female	11	1.9091	.57910	.17460
	Male	8	2.0833	.66069	.23359
Self_Direction	Female	11	2.6364	.55186	.16639
	Male	8	2.3750	.58248	.20594
Locating Information	Female	11	3.0000	.89443	.26968
	Male	8	3.1250	.83452	.29505
Learning Strategies	Female	11	2.5758	.42403	.12785
	Male	8	2.6250	.62836	.22216

Note. ‘M’ refers to the mean; ‘SD’ refers to standard deviation; ‘S’ refers to Standard deviation mean

4. Discussion

The results presented above suggest that gender does not have a major impact on lifelong learning on its five characteristics. The scores for both were found to be comparable, except for the slight difference shown in setting goals. This observation aligns with the findings of a previous study conducted by Kirby et al. (2010) on undergraduate students from diverse educational backgrounds, including art, nursing, education, business, information technology, and science. Furthermore, a study by Bayrakçi and Dindar (2015) also yielded similar results, indicating no significant gender-based disparities in the factors influencing lifelong learning among undergraduate students from Math-Science background.

The disparities observed in the lifelong learning results among Applied Linguistics' doctorate students provide valuable insights into their enduring learning capabilities. It should be noted, however, that these results may not be directly comparable due to the differing level of education of the participants: undergraduate students as investigated by Kirby et al. (2010) and Bayrakçi and Dindar (2015), and postgraduate students as observed in the present study. In the same line of thought, Perry Jr (1999) conducted an in-depth survey with university students and found that the students initially hold a binary perspective on knowledge - it is either true or false. However, as their knowledge accumulates, they come to realize that the truth is relative to the context. In the final stage, students become cognizant of the existence of multiple perspectives and may even incorporate their

own opinions (Perry Jr, 1999). Notably, Level 4 students displayed a more analytical approach and were conscious of their strengths and weaknesses, likely due to their exposure to more qualitative problems, in contrast to Level 2 students, which indicates that even the level of study can affect the lifelong learning characteristics. To conclude, it was also observed that the notion of lifelong learning was confused by the concept of autonomy among these students.

5. Implications, Recommendations and Conclusions

Continuous education is a significant strategy for an individual's personal growth and professional expertise in terms of fundamental qualities and practical domains. In particular, the rapid evolution of information and technology in the global landscape has made continuous education imperative for individuals. It is imperative to increase awareness about this approach through means such as seminars, conferences, and panels, which shall be arranged in consideration of this information. Additionally, through cooperation between universities and the Ministry of Education, novel programs for continuous education shall be established to foster the advancement of society as a whole.

6. Limitations & Directions for Future Research

The limitations of this study can be summarized as the lack of statistical significance in the results due to the small sample size. Enlarging the participants' body with a more diverse population would have greatly impacted the outcomes. It is suggested that a mixed-method approach would be better suited for describing the tendency of Doctorate students towards lifelong learning. In subsequent research, it is recommended that two or three preexisting instruments be combined to cover a broader range of lifelong learning traits. Furthermore, a comparative analysis across multiple universities would offer valuable insights regarding the university's influence on fostering lifelong learning attitudes among students.

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CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Changing Paradigms & Future Directions in Higher Education

Mohammed I University

Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Oujda, 2023

**Shifting Paradigms in Moroccan Higher Education:
A Study on Academic Writing Literacies and the Need for
Doctoral-Level Interventions**

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Abstract

In recent years, Moroccan higher education has undergone substantial transformations on various fronts. Despite concerted efforts to align with global academic standards, the challenge of academic writing at the doctoral level persists, echoing a global concern that demands urgent attention. This paper delves into the imperative for interventions and paradigm shifts within Moroccan tertiary education to foster academic writing literacies among English as an Additional Language (EAL) doctoral students. To address this issue, the study investigates the self-perceptions of Moroccan doctoral students

regarding their academic writing skills and their awareness of the elements of authorial voice. Employing a qualitative approach, a case-study design, and an exploratory survey, I explored the perspectives of seventeen Moroccan doctoral students from Moulay Ismail Universities in order to gain deeper insights into their self-perceived academic skills, specifically in relation to thesis writing, and academic literacy. The data was collected using convenience sampling and analysed through the parameters of thematic analysis. The study highlights a lack of awareness among doctoral students regarding the elements of authorial voice; an absence of academic writing training programs; and a crucial need for personalized interventions in academic writing instruction. Future research should aim to address the development and assessment of doctoral training programs tailored to effectively nurture students' authorial voices.

Keywords: Academic Writing, Academic Literacies, Moroccan Higher Education, Doctoral writing, Authorial Voice

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1. Introduction

Doctoral education is a rigorous journey that does not only require patience and academic prowess but also an impressive command over the art of scholarly writing. The challenge is more serious for doctoral students who write in English as an Additional Language (EAL), since they are required to navigate the intricate balance between linguistic

proficiency and grasping the rhetorical expectations within their respective disciplines. Doctoral students should be able to move beyond using accurate grammar and structure to cultivating their unique authorial voices.

The dissatisfaction expressed by PhD supervisors cannot be overlooked regarding the quality of doctoral writing conducted by their supervisees. This hints at an underlying issue with the prevalent pedagogical approaches in addressing the complexities of advanced academic writing. Furthermore, the data presented in the literature highlighting high dropout rates by doctoral students, particularly at the writing up stage, calls into question the efficacy of the training programs in place.

In Morocco, the diverse academic landscape witnesses a notable absence of insights into how doctoral students perceive and navigate advanced academic writing, especially with regards to the linguistic features of authorial voice. The current study seeks to address this pressing issue through exploring Moroccan doctoral students' awareness of the elements of advanced academic writing, which are in turn the criteria for academic writing literacy, and the constituents for authorial voice. The study also attempts to identify potential interventions that resonate with the needs and preferences of doctoral students, fostering a generation of confident and adept scholarly writers.

2. Literature review

Undertaking a doctoral thesis is unequivocally a process that demands a significant amount of academic writing. Ivanic (1998) emphasizes that doctoral writers are expected to infuse their writing with their unique personal voice, while also acknowledging the rhetorical expectations of their academic discipline (Hirvela and Belcher, 2001). The intricacy of academic writing places L2 writers at a crossroad where they must balance linguistic mastery of the English language and rhetorical understanding of language use within their respective fields. This perspective on academic writing was initially introduced by the academic literacies approach to academic writing.

In essence, the academic literacies movement signalled a paradigm shift in addressing the challenges students encounter with their academic writing. Rather than exclusively concentrating on the problematic linguistic aspects at the surface level of writing, the academic literacy approach delves further into the epistemological issues related to writing. The underlying epistemological aspects of language pertain to how students adeptly construct knowledge within disciplinary contexts (Wingate & Tribble, 2012, p. 483).

Consequently, this shift enabled educators to engage deeper in developing pedagogical strategies that transcend the teaching of basic writing skills, such as grammar and structure. Instead, they sought to comprehend how they could assist students in developing rhetorical and discipline-based strategies that facilitate the integration of their

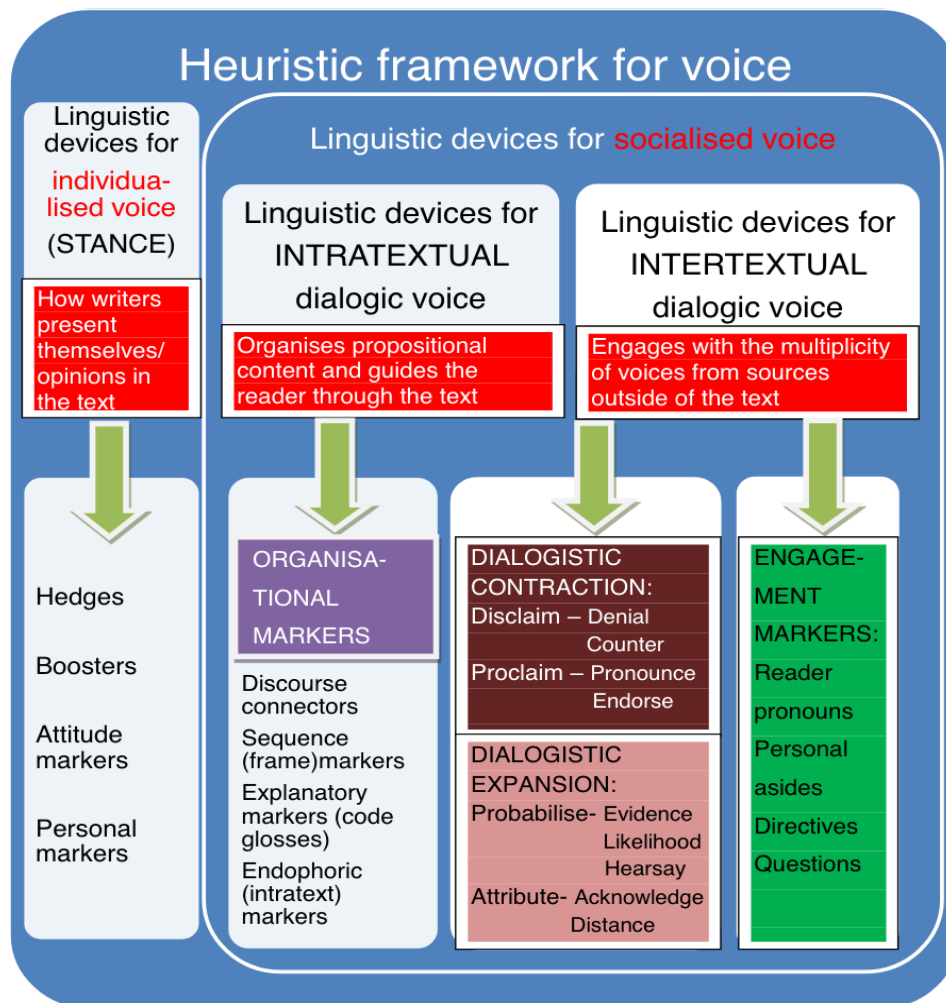
writing into disciplinary fields. Therefore, the primary objective of academic literacies approaches is to offer alternatives to conventional methods of aiding students in enhancing their academic writing from a critical perspective (Tribble, 2009, p. 403).

The definition I adopt to characterize doctoral academic writing literacy extends beyond mere mechanical language mastery to encompass the manifestation of an authorial voice. We adhere to the definition put forth by Matsuda and Tardy (2007), characterizing voice as 'the amalgamative effect of the use of discursive and nondiscursive features that language users choose deliberately or otherwise from socially available yet ever-changing repertoires' (p. 239).

In this study, I aim to introduce, following the academic literacies approach, the components forming the heuristic framework of authorial voice outlined by Olivier and Carstens (2018). This framework serves as the cornerstone of a comprehensive system designed to assess students' awareness of their proficiency in academic writing skills. Below is a simplified heuristic outline of these elements.

Figure 1

A Heuristic Framework by Olivier and Carstens (2018) proposed for voice in academic writing



The heuristic framework for voice advocated by Olivier and Carstens (2008) amalgamates two highly influential frameworks, namely Martin and White's appraisal framework (2005) and Hyland's metadiscourse (2005). The heuristic framework diverges into two distinct categories of linguistic features: linguistic devices for individualized voice and linguistic devices for socialized voice. The framework, as depicted in Figure 1, effectively distinguishes between the linguistic devices utilized by writers to portray themselves in the text within the realm of individualized voice and the intertextual and intratextual linguistic elements constituting the domain of socialized voice. For a comprehensive understanding of the heuristic framework, you may refer to "A Heuristic Framework for Voice Instruction at the Doctoral Level" by Olivier and Carstens (2018).

Recent research in the field indicates that academic writing poses a greater challenge for L2 writers (De Magalhães et al., 2019; Guerin & Picard, 2012), given that English is not their first language (Cotterall, 2011; Morton & Storch, 2019). Indeed, research indicates that a significant number of students abandon their doctoral studies during the writing up phase (Rudd, 1985; Kamler & Thomson, 2006; Torrance & Thomas, 1994).

Advanced academic writing at the doctoral level hinges on the mastery of the elements of authorial voice (Carstens & Olivier, 2018; Ahmed & Zhang, 2023). The challenge lies in facilitating the process by which L2 doctoral writers cultivate a confident authorial voice that

aligns with disciplinary conventions without succumbing to the pitfalls of plagiarism (Guerin and Picard, 2012, p. 34).

PhD Supervisors express dissatisfaction with the quality of doctoral writing produced by their supervisees (Kamler & Thomson, 2014; Rose & McClafferty, 2001). Therefore, doctoral writers require support to metamorphose into scholarly writers with the necessary competence and confidence (Cotterall, 2011, p. 414). Not only that, but providing assistance and support is crucial for the development and sustainability of advanced academic writing (Paltridge, 2003; Swales, 2004; Thomas, 2006).

To address the identified gaps in the literature, namely the difficulties doctoral students face at the writing up stage and lack of a confident authorial voice, this study examines students' awareness of the elements of authorial voice, the availability of doctoral training programs in thesis writing and academic literacy, and potential interventions preferred by PhD students in the development of a disciplinary voice.

3. Method

The methodology deployed in order to investigate advanced academic writing, or rather academic writing literacy at the doctoral level, was guided by the following questions:

1. Are doctoral students aware of the elements that constitute advanced academic writing?

2. Did students get any follow-up doctoral training in advanced academic writing?
3. If not, what are the interventions that doctoral students deem necessary to produce advanced academic writing in their doctoral thesis?

3.1. Participants

Seventeen Moroccan doctoral students (n = 17) from diverse disciplines, including natural sciences, social sciences, human sciences, and engineering in Moulay Ismail university, actively participated in this study. The number of participants attained in this study was qualitatively significant, especially that the data saturation criterion was respected. It is essential to note that the participants were volunteers who did not receive any remuneration for their involvement in this case study. Due to the lack of immediate access to doctoral students and unavailability of a large set of data, we opted for convenient sampling and the dissemination of the qualitative survey through WhatsApp groups that comprised the target population.

3.2. Data collection and Analysis

A qualitative survey was developed using Google Forms and distributed online to the participants. The survey consisted of a series of open-ended questions that were generated from Olivier's (2017) heuristic framework of authorial voice. The questions targeted the exploration of authorial voice awareness among doctoral students,

their prior academic writing training experiences and their preferred modes of intervention in receiving training. For data analysis, we carried out thematic analysis on the participants' elaborate responses in order to identify patterns and themes that provided valuable insights into the research questions.

4. Results

The thematic examination of the questions related to assessing Moroccan doctoral students' awareness of the elements of authorial voice produced the following outcomes. 15 out of 17 doctoral students demonstrated confidence in their academic writing skills, encompassing research ideas, literature reviews, research methodologies, data analysis, citation and referencing, grammar and language accuracy, revision and editing, academic integrity, and ethics.

In general, doctoral students felt adequately prepared to engage in research-related activities at the thesis production level. However, when asked about their proficiency in the components comprising desired doctoral academic writing literacy skills, the results were as follow: 8 out of 17 participants self-rated as still unable to critically analyze and construct strong arguments in their academic writing. More than 9 doctoral students expressed their lack of readiness to actively engage with and critique ideas and arguments of other scholars in their academic writing.

Regarding whether doctoral students received or will receive any training in advanced academic writing from their doctoral laboratories, implying exposure to the elements of authorial voice, we uncovered the following findings. Almost all participants (16 out of 17 students) did not receive any support in developing and constructing compelling arguments; using appropriate linguistic elements to manifest their authorial voices; addressing the reader using intertextual language; and showcasing the author through using intratextual and individual elements of voice.

Our last question pertained to the modes of interventions that doctoral students considered suitable for advancing their academic writing. The first highly sought-after means of academic writing training was proposed to be through fun and engaging workshops and seminars. This was followed by the appeal for access to academic writing software, websites, online courses, and applications that can guide them and help identify their writing deficiencies. They also requested clear one-on-one feedback from their supervisors as frequently as needed. Finally, doctoral students advocated for organizing peer-reviewing sessions by the faculty with experts and requested permission to organize writing groups gathering PhD students from various disciplines within the faculty facilities.

5. Discussion

The results paint a nuanced picture of the confidence and proficiency of doctoral students in various aspects of their academic writing. I have observed that the majority of doctoral students demonstrated

readiness and confidence in undertaking conventional research tasks. Yet, when probed about their predisposition of higher order skills such as critical analysis and argument construction, the majority of students seemed to lack and ignore the elements of authorial voice. This underscores a potential misalignment in doctoral students' expectations of their abilities and their actual competencies in the fieldwork.

This misalignment indicates a potential gap in the current doctoral educational landscape, especially given that the significance of the elements of authorial voice, which form the foundation for doctoral academic writing literacy, is widely acknowledged by scholars worldwide. Therefore, our future efforts to enhance academic writing in higher education should be strategic and should focus on incorporating the elements of authorial voice into existing training programs or developing specialized modules for doctoral students to undertake within the timeframe of their PhD completion.

The modes of interventions suggested by doctoral students, such as interactive workshops, access to software, and personalized feedback provide valuable data for designing future interventions. These preferences can be utilized to create tailored programs that are most convenient to address specific deficiencies in academic writing literacy according to students' preferences.

The interest demonstrated by doctoral students in workshops, expert-led peer-reviewing sessions, and writing groups highlights a broader cultural shift towards a new social approach to academic writing,

which is further reflected in the elements of authorial voice. The call for a supportive scholarly community that promotes collaborative learning was not only proposed by doctoral students but also supported by numerous scholars in the literature (Cotterall, 2011; Morton & Storch, 2021; Paltridge, 2003; Swales, 2004; Thomas, 2006).

6. Implications, Recommendations and Conclusions

The findings disclosed by this study bear several implications for doctoral academic writing, particularly concerning thesis composition. The substantial percentage of students who professed confidence in traditional academic areas, specifically in grammar and language accuracy related to academic writing, suggest that the existing pedagogical approach caters to the basic aspects of writing proficiency. However, the lack of exposure to advanced academic writing, including authorial voice, among the majority of participants implies a potential oversight in the current doctoral educational curriculum.

This essentially necessitates a reconsideration, if not a paradigm shift, of the content and modes of training offered within the realm of doctoral programs, with a focus on the transmission of the elements of authorial voice that cultivate confident writers with their independent authorial voices. Additionally, the participants' expressed interest in certain intervention modes over others should be taken into consideration when designing future training programs. Research into ways to incorporate students' preferences at the doctoral level can

ensure an optimal environment for Moroccan PhD students to thrive in.

In essence, the study illuminates the importance of a comprehensive approach to academic writing training for doctoral students that tackles not only foundational but advanced academic writing literacy skills while nurturing a collaborative culture within the academic community.

7. Limitations & Directions for Future Research

The study's limitations manifest in the sample size and single-institution focus, along with the limited exploration of the notion of authorial voice. Findings stem from a relatively small sample of doctoral students in Morocco. Moreover, the study centers on doctoral students' experiences within Moulay Ismail University in Meknes, prompting the need for additional case studies across different Moroccan universities to ensure generalizability. While the study touches on authorial voice elements, it refrains from nuanced investigation due to relying on self-assessment for gauging participants' writing skills.

Future research might embrace a longitudinal approach to trace students' academic writing and its evolution throughout their doctoral education. Comparative analyses of doctoral academic writing literacy skills across disciplines could be conducted through a multi-site study, offering a more holistic view of the academic writing landscape. Integrating qualitative methods in future research can deepen

understanding of authorial voice elements, drawing insights from contextual variation. Lastly, interventions aligned with doctoral students' preferences can be tested for effectiveness and developed for implementation in doctoral training programs.

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CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Changing Paradigms & Future Directions in Higher Education

**Transforming Moroccan Higher Education:
Aligning Skills and Lifelong Learning for the Modern
Workforce**

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Abstract

Morocco's higher education is transforming to meet evolving job market demands. There has been a mismatch between traditional teaching methods and workforce needs, leading to pedagogical reforms prioritizing practical skills and linguistic proficiency. The goal is to prepare graduates for rapid socioeconomic and technological changes while enhancing their employability prospects. Reforms include language proficiency, digital technology integration, and high-demand skills. Morocco's educational reforms align higher education

with lifelong learning principles, providing students with the tools for initial employment and career adaptability.

Keywords: Moroccan higher education, pedagogical reforms, lifelong learning, employability, job market

Introduction

This study examines Morocco's higher education system and how it has adapted to the changing needs of the modern workforce. The main focus is on aligning academic knowledge with professional requirements and providing graduates with skills that promote lifelong learning. The urgency of Morocco's transformation is emphasized, with a commitment to meeting the evolving demands of the job market. The aim of this research is to analyze the key components driving the changes in higher education and how they position graduates to thrive in an environment of constant change. The paper invites readers to explore Morocco's educational evolution beyond traditional learning methods, and to prepare for success in the modern era.

Stepping into the vibrant tapestry of Morocco, a land steeped in cultural splendor and strategically positioned on the global map, one encounters a higher education system poised to serve as a catalyst for transformation. Encompassing a diverse array of institutions across the country, this intricate network strives to cultivate a highly skilled and agile workforce, capable of navigating the ever-evolving demands of the 21st-century economy. However, it is apparent that higher education presents multifaceted challenges.

The traditional academic offerings, while comprehensive, often struggle to align themselves seamlessly with the dynamic and ever-shifting requirements of the global job market. This prevalent

disconnect mirrors the challenges faced by higher education systems worldwide, highlighting the urgent need to bridge the gap between academia and the professional landscape. Against the backdrop of this evolving scenario, our quest will unveil the strategic initiatives and transformative reforms propelling Morocco's higher education system into a new era, where practical relevance and adaptability reign supreme in preparing graduates for success on the global stage. Peter Drucker, a renowned management consultant, educator, and author, asserts that "The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence – it is to act with yesterday's logic" (p. 7). His words echo the importance of adaptability and innovation in a world that is constantly changing. In the context of higher education, Drucker's quote underscores the need for institutions to embrace lifelong learning and prepare graduates for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Higher Education Challenges

Morocco's higher education system, while poised for transformation, grapples with challenges reminiscent of its international counterparts. As we scrutinize the backdrop of higher education challenges, it becomes apparent that aligning educational offerings with the dynamic requirements of the global job market stands as a prominent hurdle. The diverse array of institutions within the higher education sector encounters difficulties in adjusting their curricula to meet the rapidly evolving career demands, signaling a need for substantial

reform. The urgency to equip graduates with skills relevant to the contemporary workforce mirrors a global trend, where traditional educational models face scrutiny for their effectiveness in preparing students for the practical challenges of professional life.

A quote by Albert Einstein resonates with the essence of this challenge, “Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school” (AJ, 2023, para. 1). This provokes contemplation on the relevance and effectiveness of existing teaching approaches. The disconnection between traditional pedagogical methods and the actual needs of the workforce raises pertinent questions about the trajectory of higher education. Morocco’s acknowledgment of these challenges underscores the significance of the ongoing pedagogical reforms aimed at prioritizing practical skill development, linguistic proficiency, and the infusion of digital technology into education. This transformative endeavor reflects a commitment to bridging the gap between academia and the job market, laying the groundwork for graduates to thrive amidst the complexities of the modern professional landscape.

Purpose and Impetus: Bridging the Gap Between Academia and Employability in Moroccan Higher Education

Driven by a critical mission to close the widening gap between academic skills and real-world employability, our study dives into the ongoing pedagogical reforms within Moroccan Higher Education

Institutions (HEIs). This journey stems from a stark realization: graduates armed with traditional academic knowledge often find themselves ill-equipped for the practical demands of the workforce. The disconnect between the skills imparted through conventional teaching methods and the actual needs of the job market has become increasingly evident in recent years, raising urgent questions about the relevance and efficacy of existing educational approaches.

At the heart of our research lies a deep commitment to enhancing graduate employability, recognizing it as a multi-faceted concept that transcends mere academic qualifications. It encompasses practical skills, adaptability, and a lifelong dedication to learning. Through our critical analysis of the ongoing reforms, we aim to shed light on the strategies employed to bridge this crucial gap between academia and the job market. Our ultimate goal is to empower graduates with the necessary tools for not only securing initial employment but also for sustained professional success in a rapidly evolving world.

The core impetus for this transformative shift in Moroccan HEIs lies in recognizing the substantial mismatch between traditional pedagogical methods and the actual needs of the workforce. This disconnection has sparked profound questions about the relevance and effectiveness of existing teaching approaches. Graduates, armed with academic knowledge, often encounter significant challenges when navigating the practical requirements of the job market. As a response to this critical issue, Morocco is undertaking ambitious pedagogical

reforms that place a heightened emphasis on practical skill development and linguistic proficiency, both identified as key components of lifelong learning. The urgency to prepare graduates for the evolving job market has become paramount, urging a departure from conventional teaching methodologies to embrace a more dynamic and adaptive approach.

This transformative endeavor within Moroccan HEIs is guided by a commitment to empower students with the practical skills and linguistic abilities indispensable for success in the contemporary job market. The reforms, embedded within the broader discourse on pedagogical advancements, encompass critical practical aspects such as ensuring curriculum relevance, promoting experiential learning, enhancing language proficiency, integrating digital technology into education, and aligning with the skills demanded by the job market. The overarching objective is clear: to equip graduates not only with academic knowledge but with a comprehensive skill set that positions them as dynamic contributors to the rapid socioeconomic and technological transformations characterizing the modern world.

Key Practical Aspects of Reforms

At the heart of Morocco's higher education transformation are key practical aspects that redefine the educational landscape. The first pivotal aspect revolves around ensuring curriculum relevance. This necessitates a departure from conventional and static curricula to dynamic frameworks that align with the evolving demands of the job

market. The purpose of education is to enhance the ability to apply knowledge, not just accumulate it (Whitehead, 1929). The integration of experiential learning is another cornerstone, emphasizing hands-on experiences that provide students with real-world insights and skills. This shift acknowledges that practical exposure is invaluable in preparing graduates for the challenges of the professional realm. Furthermore, the emphasis on language proficiency underscores the global nature of the workforce, recognizing linguistic abilities as essential assets in an interconnected world. By fostering proficiency in languages crucial for international communication, the reforms aim to enhance graduates' competitiveness on a global scale.

A significant component of Morocco's pedagogical reforms is the infusion of digital technology into education. The use of technology in education should be about enhancing human capabilities, not replacing them (Hargreaves, 2005). Recognizing the transformative power of technology, this aspect aims to equip students with digital literacy skills and adaptability, crucial in navigating a world increasingly shaped by technological advancements. Additionally, the reforms prioritize imparting skills that are high in demand in the job market, ensuring that graduates possess the competencies sought by employers. This multifaceted approach reflects Morocco's commitment to providing a holistic education that not only meets academic standards but also prepares graduates for the dynamic challenges of the modern workforce.

Main Objective of Reforms

The overarching objective of the ongoing pedagogical reforms within Moroccan higher education is both clear and compelling: to prepare graduates to thrive amidst the rapid socioeconomic and technological transformations of the modern world while enhancing their employability prospects. This multifaceted objective encapsulates the broader vision of higher education as a dynamic platform for lifelong learning and professional success. The first facet of this objective underscores the imperative for graduates not only to adapt but to excel in an environment characterized by constant change. This encompasses not only technological advancements but also economic shifts and evolving industry trends. The emphasis is on ensuring that graduates not only survive these transformations but are well-positioned to excel and contribute actively to innovation and growth.

The second facet accentuates the importance of enhancing graduates' employability prospects. Employability, in this context, extends beyond securing the first job; it involves possessing the skills, adaptability, and mindset necessary to navigate a dynamic job market throughout one's career. These reforms aim to equip graduates with the tools required not only to secure initial employment but also to progress professionally over the course of their careers. The objective recognizes that higher education must extend beyond traditional learning spaces and provide students with the knowledge, skills, and mindset essential for securing a professional career in an ever-

changing world (Kelly & Challender, 2019). This comprehensive objective sets the tone for the transformative journey undertaken by Morocco's higher education institutions.

Comprehensive Approach to Reform

The ongoing transformative journey within Moroccan higher education reflects a comprehensive approach to reform, addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by the evolving demands of the modern workforce. At its core, the reforms recognize the imperative to bridge the persistent gap between academia and the job market, signaling a departure from traditional pedagogical methods that may fall short in equipping graduates with the practical skills needed for professional success. The commitment to fostering work-ready graduates is evident in the emphasis on several key practical aspects.

Curriculum relevance takes center stage, acknowledging the need for educational frameworks that align with contemporary career requirements. Experiential learning, an integral part of the reforms, signifies a shift towards hands-on, real-world experiences, recognizing the value of practical exposure in preparing students for the intricacies of the professional realm. Additionally, language proficiency is prioritized, acknowledging the global nature of the workforce and the significance of effective communication in an interconnected world (A Nation at Risk, 1983). The integration of digital technology into education aligns with the transformative impact of technology on the modern workplace, ensuring graduates are digitally literate and

adaptable. By focusing on skills in high demand, the reforms aim to create graduates who are not only academically proficient but possess the competencies sought by employers, aligning higher education with the evolving needs of the contemporary job market.

Main Objective and Lifelong Learning

At the heart of the ongoing pedagogical reforms within Moroccan higher education lies a clear and compelling objective: to prepare graduates to thrive amidst the rapid socioeconomic and technological transformations of the modern world while enhancing their employability prospects. This multifaceted objective encapsulates the overarching vision of higher education as a dynamic platform for lifelong learning and professional success. Thriving in an environment marked by constant change is emphasized, requiring graduates to adapt to technological advancements, economic shifts, and evolving industry trends. The reforms acknowledge that graduates should not merely survive these transformations but should be positioned to excel and contribute actively to innovation and growth.

Enhancing employability is the second facet, underscoring the importance of possessing skills, adaptability, and a mindset conducive to navigating a dynamic job market throughout one's career. Beyond securing the first job, the reforms aim to instill the capabilities for sustained professional growth. This recognition necessitates an extension of higher education beyond traditional learning spaces, providing students with the knowledge, skills, and mindset essential

for securing and advancing in a professional career in the face of continual change. The comprehensive objective reflects Morocco's commitment to a holistic educational approach, preparing graduates not only for their initial employment but for a lifetime of continuous learning and success in the evolving global landscape.

Transformative Potential

The ongoing transformation of Moroccan higher education represents a dynamic response to the evolving demands of the modern workforce. It is driven by the recognition of the need to bridge the gap between academia and the job market, emphasizing practical aspects and aligning education with lifelong learning principles. This transformation is not unique to Morocco but reflects a global shift in the role and purpose of higher education. It recognizes that graduates need more than academic knowledge; they need practical skills, adaptability, and a commitment to continuous learning to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

As we have explored throughout this paper, Morocco's higher education reforms encompass a range of practical aspects, a commitment to empowering students, and a multifaceted approach to ensure their success. By aligning higher education with workforce needs and fostering lifelong learning, Morocco is not only preparing graduates for their first job but for a lifetime of professional growth and success. This paper has provided an overview of the key elements of this ongoing transformation. It is a testament to the importance of

higher education as a catalyst for individual and societal progress, and a recognition that education is a dynamic and evolving endeavor that must adapt to meet the needs of the future. Morocco's journey serves as an example of the transformative potential of higher education and offers insights that are relevant to the broader global conversation on the future of learning and work.

Conclusion

Moroccan higher education is transforming to meet the needs of the modern workforce and bridge the gap between academia and the job market. Morocco's commitment to enhancing practical aspects, aligning education with lifelong learning principles, and prioritizing adaptability reflects a global recognition of the evolving role and purpose of higher education. Beyond preparing graduates for initial employment, the multifaceted reforms aim to equip individuals for a lifetime of continuous learning and professional success. This journey exemplifies the transformative potential of higher education, providing valuable insights applicable to the broader global discourse on the future of learning and work. Morocco's proactive approach serves as a compelling example of how educational systems can evolve to meet the dynamic challenges of the contemporary world, emphasizing the crucial intersection between academic knowledge, practical skills, and lifelong learning.

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