

## **Standard in the Shadows: The Paradox of Modern Standard Arabic's Classroom Sovereignty Amid Darija's Everyday Hegemony: A Sociolinguistic Field Study.**

- **AUTHOR 1** : MAZOUZE Zineb,
- **AUTHOR 2** : ET BABI Ilham,
- **AUTHOR 3** : SERHANI Mounir,

**(1)** : PhD Student, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, University Hassan II Casablanca, Casablanca, Morocco.

**(2)** : PhD Student, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, University Hassan II Casablanca, Mohammedia, Morocco.

**(3)** : Vice-Dean, Faculty of Sciences Mohammedia, University Hassan II Casablanca, Casablanca, Morocco.



**Conflict of interest:** The author reports no conflict of interest.

**To quote this article:** MAZOUZE .Z, ET BABI .I & SERHANI .M  
(2025) « Standard in the Shadows: The Paradox of Modern Standard  
Arabic's Classroom Sovereignty Amid Darija's Everyday Hegemony:  
A Sociolinguistic Field Study»,

**IJAME : Volume 02, N° 18 | Pp: 027 – 044.**



DOI : 10.5281/zenodo.18183771  
Copyright © 2026 – IJAME

## Abstract

This study examines linguistic diglossia in Moroccan secondary education, focusing on the interplay between Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Moroccan Darija in classroom practices. Using a questionnaire administered to 99 students, we explore language preferences, the impact of Darija on MSA proficiency, and switching challenges. Results reveal Darija's dominance in daily life (87.9%) and mixed use in classrooms (62% for teachers), negatively affecting MSA expression (65%). Sociolinguistic analysis highlights tensions between Darija's practical utility and MSA's symbolic role in identity and education. Recommendations include enhanced MSA exposure and modern teaching methods to foster balanced proficiency. This contributes to understanding diglossia in multilingual contexts, emphasizing policy reforms for sustainable linguistic balance. The findings align with ongoing debates in Moroccan education policy, such as those in the Strategic Vision 2015-2030, which calls for improved language teaching to address proficiency gaps. By integrating empirical data with sociolinguistic theory, this research underscores the need for hybrid approaches that leverage Darija as a bridge while reinforcing MSA's centrality in formal education.

**Keywords:** linguistic diglossia, Modern Standard Arabic, Moroccan Darija, code-switching, sociolinguistics, education policy

## Introduction

Linguistic diglossia represents a complex phenomenon from both linguistic and social perspectives, manifesting in many societies around the world where the high and low varieties of language intertwine within the same social environment. In Morocco, this phenomenon reflects cultural and linguistic diversity in a unique way, where Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) meets Moroccan Darija or Amazigh to weave our daily lives day by day. This diversity raises various issues concerning societal identity, the efficiency of the educational system, social integration, and others.

Linguistic diglossia, where high (formal) and low (informal) varieties coexist, poses significant challenges in multilingual societies like Morocco (Ferguson, 1959). In Moroccan education, MSA serves as the official medium, while Darija dominates informal interactions, leading to proficiency gaps and identity issues (Fathi, 2024). This study addresses a key gap: the limited empirical focus on secondary students' experiences amid recent debates on Darija's role in textbooks (Suleiman & Abdelhay, 2020). The central research question guiding this investigation is: To what extent does the dominance of Darija in daily life and classrooms affect students' proficiency in MSA, and what policy interventions can enhance MSA mastery while leveraging Darija's practical utility? We hypothesize that increased exposure to MSA through modern pedagogical methods and policy reforms will mitigate the negative impacts of diglossia on formal language skills. Objectives include analyzing language use patterns, assessing Darija's impact on MSA, and proposing solutions. By integrating sociolinguistic theory with field data, we aim to inform policy for equitable language education. In this article, we will attempt to focus on linguistic diglossia in Arabic language lessons, in addition to the challenges faced by learners and the solutions that can be followed to achieve a sustainable linguistic and cultural balance.

## Literature Review

Morocco exemplifies a vibrant model of cultural pluralism that forms the bedrock of its national identity, manifesting in the diversity of its Amazigh, Arab, Saharan-Hassani, Andalusian, African, and Mediterranean civilizational tributaries. This pluralism is explicitly affirmed in the preamble and Article 5 of the Moroccan Constitution, which stipulates that "Arabic is the official language of the state" while committing the state to "promoting and developing its use." Concurrently, the same article recognizes Amazigh as a second official language, thereby institutionalizing linguistic plurality as an integral component of national unity. In this context, Dr. Mohamed Ennaji (2020) argues that Morocco's cultural multiplicity necessarily engenders

a dynamic linguistic pluralism, wherein Moroccan Darija constitutes a vital tributary that nourishes everyday communication and embodies popular memory and direct social interaction—without detracting from the status of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as the language of state, education, and administration. Thus, linguistic diversity—including Darija as an authentic cultural constituent—emerges not as an impediment but as a lever for Morocco’s composite identity, provided this dynamic is managed through balanced language policies that safeguard MSA as the official reference while valorizing Darija as a communicative bridge and living heritage (Ennaji, 2020; Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco, 2011).

### **1. Linguistic Diglossia**

Language is a social phenomenon and the sole means ensuring communication among humans. It is observed in many countries with diverse ethnic populations that most inhabitants speak two languages or with varying degrees of proficiency between one language and another; these are termed bilinguals (Drim & Bin Bu’ali, n.d.).

Linguistic diglossia or Diglossia is a linguistic phenomenon occurring in some societies where two or more forms of the same language are used in different social contexts. It is possible for more than one language to be in use in a single society. For example, in Switzerland, people use Swiss German (Schweizerdeutsch) in daily life, while High German (Hochdeutsch) is used in writing and formal domains. In our Moroccan society, we can say we are amid languages, first Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) used in formal occasions like education, media, official speeches, and literature; this language is usually widely accepted and standardized, an official language. Then the common language used by the general public in daily life for informal interactions, simpler and more widespread: Moroccan Darija. Here, it is incumbent upon us to clarify the difference between two important terms: linguistic diglossia, which we discuss, and multilingualism, which refers to the presence of more than one language used in a single society or by one person, possibly resulting from migration, colonization, cultural interaction, or other factors. In this context, people may speak two or more languages fluently and use them in various aspects of life. For instance, India has immense multilingualism with many official and recognized languages like Hindi, English, Tamil, Bengali, and others; people use multiple languages daily based on region and context. In Canada, English and French are official languages, and people are encouraged to learn and use both. Thus, the essential difference between linguistic diglossia and multilingualism is that diglossia concerns two different forms of the same language used in different contexts within one society, while multilingualism concerns the presence and use of more than one language in a society or by an individual.

## 2. The Concept of Linguistic Diglossia and Its Manifestations in Linguistic Reality

In al-Munjid fī al-Lughā al-‘Arabiyya, izdawaja: became two, "doubled number," "doubled knot." Two words: one resembling the other in weight and rhyme. Izdiwaj: in cinema: making a film spoken in a language alongside the original. Izdiwajīyya: duality (the state of something being between two, "linguistic duality" is the coexistence in one country of either two different languages or two states or types of one language, standard and colloquial). Ibn Khaldun defined it as: "Deviation from the standard language of revelation and corruption of the innate characteristic, habit, or nature due to mixing with non-Arabs" (‘Abd al-Rahman bin Muhammad al-Hadrami, 1978). It appears from what Ibn Khaldun stated that linguistic diglossia was present in Arab life since ancient times.

Saleh Belaid defined linguistic diglossia as: "Using two linguistic systems simultaneously for expression or explanation, a type of switching from one language to another" (Belaid, 2010), meaning that individuals today alternate between standard and colloquial spontaneously over time.

Opinions on this term have varied, discussed by Arabs and Orientalists who provided interpretations and definitions. Among them, André Martinet defined diglossia as: A bilingual practices using two national languages with equal proficiency, each becoming a tool for conveying thought and representing the surrounding world (Martinet, 1990a). He saw it as a socio-linguistic situation where two dialects compete, each with a social and cultural status; the first an acquired linguistic form used in daily life, the second a tongue imposed in certain circumstances by those holding power (Martinet, 1990b).

This means linguistic diglossia is the ability of a speaker or specific linguistic group to alternate between two linguistic systems, possessing two tools for thinking and two cultural systems, observable in daily usage or educational environments. Karl Krumbacher is considered the first to discuss linguistic diglossia in 1420 between Greek and Arabic, and William Marçais the first to term it La Diglossie in French in 1422, defining it as "Competition between a written literary language and a common colloquial language." With Charles Ferguson, diglossia entered sociolinguistics in his 1958 article "Linguistic Diglossia," exemplifying Arabic. In 1959, he translated diglossie to English as diglossia, denoting two different forms: one colloquial for daily life, the other for formal matters (Kayda, 2002).

What we understand is that linguistic diglossia is not limited to Arabs and Arabic but extends to all world countries and languages. The most advanced peoples write in a language differing from spoken language. Whoever assumes English, French, Russians, or Germans write as they

speak errs greatly; they too have spoken language, colloquial speech, or crude expression that does not straighten when written, insufficient for conveyance, unfit for composition, description, correspondence, and elaboration required in refined literature (al-‘Attar, 1990).

### **3. Causes of Linguistic Diglossia**

Causes of linguistic diglossia vary, including what Ibn Khaldun presented in his *Muqaddima* in Chapter 45 titled "Sciences of the Tongue," where he observed deviations in Arabic—grammatical, semantic, and syntactic—marking the beginning of linguistic diglossia. On grammatical deviation: "It (language) is a habit in their tongues, passed from one to another as generations take languages today. When Islam came and they left Hijaz for kingdoms held by nations and states, they mixed with non-Arabs, altering the habit as ears heard deviations from non-Arabs, and hearing is the origin of linguistic habits. Fearing the habit's complete corruption over time, making Quran and Hadith incomprehensible, scholars derived consistent laws like universals and rules from their speech patterns, analogizing all speech types, joining similars: the subject is nominative, object accusative, topic nominative. They saw meaning change with word endings, terming it declension, its cause operator, etc. These became their specific conventions, recorded in books as a dedicated craft, termed grammar" (‘Abd al-Rahman bin Muhammad al-Hadrami, 1978).

On semantic level, in the same chapter: "This science explains linguistic topics. As the Arabic tongue's habit corrupted in endings called declension by grammarians, laws were derived to preserve it as said. Corruption continued with non-Arab contact, extending to word topics; much Arabic speech used non-topically, inclining to non-Arabs' alien conventions opposing pure Arabic. Linguistic topics needed preservation through writing and recording, fearing loss and ignorance of Quran and Hadith. Many tongue imams undertook this, compiling dictionaries. The pioneer was al-Khalil bin Ahmad al-Farahidi, authoring *Kitab al-‘Ayn*, encompassing all alphabet letter combinations: binary, ternary, quaternary, quinary—the utmost in Arabic composition" (‘Abd al-Rahman bin Muhammad al-Hadrami, 1978).

On syntactic level, in "Language is a Craft Habit": "The Arab speaker, when Arabic existed among them, hears contemporaries' speech, styles in interactions, expression methods, as a child hears vocabulary uses first, then hears structures and acquires them. Hearing renews constantly from every speaker, usage repeats until becoming firm habit and trait like theirs. Thus languages pass from generation to generation, learned by non-Arabs and children. This is what the public means by Arabic being natural, i.e., primary habit taken from them, not others. Then this habit corrupted with non-Arab mixing; the cause: the growing generation hears

expressions for intentions in other ways than Arabs', expressing accordingly due to many non-Arabs mixing, also hearing Arab ways, confusing matters, taking from both, creating a deficient habit. This is the meaning of Arabic corruption" ('Abd al-Rahman bin Muhammad al-Hadrami, 1978).

From Ibn Khaldun's words, he speaks of language as a habit in Rashidi days, clearly gone from Arabs; its loss means entrenchment of deviations, entrenchment means colloquial emergence, leading directly to linguistic diglossia. We see causes of linguistic diglossia including: It may serve as a symbol of identity and social belonging; standard language considered a symbol of modernity, education, professionalism, while local dialects symbolize local and cultural belonging. Colonial history may cause diglossia in many colonized countries, leaving colonial language official alongside local, used in formal and educational contexts, local in daily life. Cultural cross-pollination may also lead to diglossia; with openness to other cultures, openness to other languages, increasing interaction via trade, travel, technology, local language influenced and used alongside official or international communication language.

#### **4. The Arab Linguistic Reality Under Linguistic Diglossia**

Linguistic diglossia in the Arab world is a clear and distinctive phenomenon, with evident difference between Modern Standard Arabic ("modern standard") and diverse local Arabic dialects ("colloquial"). Language has an effective impact on individual and societal life; for the individual, a means of connection with others, through which they achieve purposes and obtain desires, express hopes, pains, emotions. Language provides individuals many opportunities to benefit from leisure through reading, writing, enjoying the read, nourishing emotions. It is the tool to convince others in debates, discussions, opinion exchange, advise and guide others, spread principles, influence them (Abu Mughli, 1987).

But language now faces many dangers and problems aiming to change and replace it, demolish its entity, erase principles; among these, linguistic diglossia touching all societal segments in the Arab world, as the latter is the primary speech community reflecting this phenomenon, its features, implications varying from one Arab country to another, each forming a self-standing sub-speech community, each containing multiple linguistic communities (Mahmud, 2014).

Today, our reality shows it difficult to find someone speaking Modern Standard Arabic alone proficiently; rather, mixing colloquial or foreign language, hearing standard rarely except in a classroom, then outside filled with colloquial in ear and eye everywhere, confusing matters, repelling standard, punishing mastery and control ('Abd al-Tawwab, 1994).

## 5. Between Standard and Colloquial

Since linguistic diglossia requires two language levels—one standard, one colloquial—and we discuss this in the Arab world, we must address both Modern Standard Arabic and colloquial.

· Colloquial: We mean by colloquial language that used by individuals in daily dealings, the informal aspect. Some call it dialect, as in Ibrahim Anis's *Fi al-Lahajat al-‘Arabiyya: A set of linguistic characteristics spoken by individuals in a specific geographic environment, on various levels: phonetic, morphological, syntactic, semantic, distinguishing it from other dialects in the same language (Anis, 1956)*. Colloquial is also "the language used today and long ago in daily needs, inside homes, in relaxation and spontaneity" (‘Abd al-Rahman al-Hajj Saleh, n.d.), the language we converse in daily about life's affairs regardless of relations and homes, tongue of educated and uneducated, varying classes and professions (Rida, 1981).

Terms denoting colloquial vary; some trace to its original source, calling it first language, others mother tongue as first discovered and acquired by the child at birth from mother, first contact for long years, spoken language used in daily affairs and conversations. Here arises a problem: Is colloquial the mother tongue as first picked by the child, or standard? · Standard: Language: Eloquence in *Lisan al-‘Arab: Fasaha, eloquence: clarity; man eloquent meaning boy eloquent meaning eloquent, tongue eloquent meaning fluent (Ibn Manzur, 1405 AH/1984–1985 CE)*. Terminologically: Eloquence is tongue fluency, freedom from tongue knot (‘Abd al-Rahman al-Hajj Saleh, 2007). Language subject to laws regulating and governing its expressions (Zakariya, 1964). Standard is the pillar of Arab nationalism and one of its main components (al-Zaghlul, 2000). We recall Carl Nallino: Arabic surpasses all languages in splendor, tongue unable to describe its beauties (al-Jundi, 1982). Richard Yorke in a Beirut lecture: Despite differing countries and saturation, one great unifying force: Modern Standard Arabic, this Arabic pattern preserved for 1500 years, language of the holy Quran, respecting its immense literary heritage. Johann Fück: Modern Standard Arabic owes its global position today basically to this fixed fact: it has stood in all Arab and Islamic countries as a linguistic symbol of Islamic world's unity in culture and civilization (al-Jundi, 1982).

### Methods

The study adopts a quantitative sociolinguistic field methodology that relies on a structured questionnaire comprising 13 items, specifically designed to investigate the dynamics of linguistic diglossia in Moroccan qualifying secondary education. The questionnaire addresses four primary axes: patterns of daily language use, in-class language preferences, the degree of ease in code-switching, and students' suggestions for improving Modern Standard Arabic

(MSA) instruction. It was administered to a convenience sample of 99 students from urban schools (56.6% female, i.e., 56 students; 43.4% male, i.e., 43 students), with reliability ensured through pilot testing that yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82—a level considered highly acceptable in sociolinguistic research. Data were analyzed descriptively using percentages, frequency tables, and cross-tabulations, while chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) tests were applied to examine associations between variables at a significance level of  $p < 0.05$  using the Python programming language. Results revealed no statistically significant relationship between gender and language preference ( $p = 0.12$ ), contrasted with a strong and statistically significant association between intensive Darija use and the weakening of MSA's status ( $\chi^2 = 14.2$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Ethical considerations were rigorously observed through obtaining informed consent, ensuring complete anonymity, and guaranteeing voluntary participation without coercion. Nevertheless, the study explicitly delineates its methodological limitations, including the small sample size ( $n = 99$ ), reliance on non-random convenience sampling—which restricts generalizability—the absence of qualitative interviews or direct classroom observations as complementary data sources, and confinement to urban contexts. These constraints necessitate future research with broader scope and mixed-methods approaches (e.g., longitudinal studies, in-depth interviews, and stratified random sampling) to enhance external validity and generalizability across diverse Moroccan educational settings.

## Results and Discussion

### Results

Daily life is dominated by Darija (87.9%), with no MSA use (0%), confirming its "low" status (Table 1). Classrooms show mixed use (62% teachers, 56% students), with 68% allowing occasional Darija (Table 2). Preferences favor MSA (14 responses) for cultural value but Darija/mix for clarity (8 responses). Darija aids understanding (43% yes, 53% sometimes) but negatively impacts MSA expression (65%). Switching is easy/medium (99%), mainly hindered by external exposure lack (57%). Chi-square revealed no gender significance ( $p = 0.12$ ) but strong association between Darija use and weakened MSA status ( $\chi^2 = 14.2$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Suggestions emphasize modern methods and increased hours.

1. Dominance of Darija in Daily Life (87.9%): This percentage confirms Darija's social character as primary communication language, reflecting traditional diglossia dynamics. Absence of standard use (0%) in daily life indicates limited exposure outside formal contexts, reinforcing proficiency challenges.
2. Language Mix in Class (62% for teachers, 56% for pupils): This reflects teachers' and

pupils' strategy to balance clarity (via Darija) and official curriculum adherence (standard). It aligns with "code-switching" as a mechanism to facilitate understanding, but may reduce standard practice opportunities.

3. Teachers Allowing Colloquial (68% sometimes): This shows relative leniency in managing diglossia, possibly responding to pupils' needs, but may reinforce Darija dependence at standard's expense.
4. Explanation Preferences (Question 6): Preference for standard (14 responses) links to its cultural and religious status, while colloquial (4) or mix (4) reflects clarity need. This indicates tension between standard's symbolic value and colloquial's practical need.
5. Colloquial Impact on Understanding (53% sometimes, 43% yes): This confirms Darija as auxiliary tool for understanding, especially difficult subjects. But 65% see negative impact on standard writing and expression, reflecting sociolinguistic challenge: colloquial eases immediate communication but may hinder official language proficiency.
6. Switching Ease (56% easy, 43% medium): Absence of major difficulty (0% difficult) may reflect pupils' adaptation to diglossia, but 43% medium indicates potential challenges. Main reason (57% lack of standard exposure outside school) confirms limited supportive linguistic environment.
7. Standard Status (62% yes): Pupils' awareness that colloquial may weaken standard status reflects consciousness of its cultural and social value, but highlights challenge in preserving it amid Darija dominance.
8. Teaching Improvement Suggestions: Suggestions like daily standard use, rule simplification, linking to learner reality indicate pupils' awareness of need for supportive linguistic environment and modern methods.

<b>Table 1: Daily Language Use</b>		
Language	Number	Percentage
Darija	87	87.9%
Amazigh	3	3.0%
Others	9	9.1%
MSA	0	0%

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on questionnaire data (2025).

Context	Mix (%)	MSA (%)	Darija (%)
Teachers	62	31	6
Students	56	40	3

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on questionnaire data (2025).

### Question 1: Gender

Option	Number	Percentage
Female	56	56.6%
Male	43	43.4%

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on questionnaire data (2025).

### Question 2: Language Predominantly Used in Daily Life

Option	Number	Percentage
Moroccan Darija	87	87.9%
Amazigh	3	3.0%
Other Languages	9	9.1%
Modern Standard Arabic	0	0%

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on questionnaire data (2025).

### Question 3: Predominant Language in Teacher Communication Inside the Classroom

Option	Percentage	Number
Mix of Standard and Colloquial	62%	61
Modern Standard Arabic	31%	31
Colloquial (Darija)	6%	6

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on questionnaire data (2025).

### Question 4: Language Used by Pupils Inside the Classroom

Option	Percentage	Number
Mix of Standard and Colloquial	56%	55
Modern Standard Arabic	40%	40
Colloquial (Darija)	3%	3

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on questionnaire data (2025).

**Question 5: Does the Teacher Allow Colloquial Use During Responses?**

Option	Percentage	Number
Sometimes	68%	67
Yes	15%	15
No	15%	15

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on questionnaire data (2025).

**Question 6: Do You Prefer Explanation in Standard or Colloquial? And Why?**

Preference	Number	Reasons (Summary)
Standard	14	- Official and expressive language - Facilitates understanding literary materials - Enhances linguistic proficiency - Language of the Quran with cultural and social status - More eloquent and precise in expression
Colloquial	4	- Easier to understand - Daily life language - Allows easy expression
Mix	4	- Aids understanding - Balances clarity and formal education

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on questionnaire data (2025).

**Question 7: Does Colloquial Use Help in Understanding Lessons?**

Option	Percentage	Number
Sometimes	53%	52
Yes	43%	43
No	3%	3

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on questionnaire data (2025).

**Question 8: Does Colloquial Use Affect Your Level in Expression and Writing in Standard?**

Option	Percentage	Number
Yes	65%	64
No	34%	34

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on questionnaire data (2025).

**Question 9: Reasons for Inclining to Standard or Colloquial Inside the Classroom**

Reasons	Summary of Responses
Standard	- Enhances linguistic proficiency - Official and cultural language - More precise in expression
Colloquial	- Ease of understanding - Familiar daily language
Mix	- Aids communication and understanding

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on questionnaire data (2025).

**Question 10: Degree of Ease in Switching from Colloquial to Standard**

Option	Percentage	Number
Easy (70–100%)	56%	55
Medium (40–60%)	43%	43
Difficult (0–30%)	0%	0

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on questionnaire data (2025).

**Question 11: Reasons for Difficulty in Switching from Colloquial to Standard**

Reason	Percentage	Number
Lack of Exposure to Standard Outside School	57%	56
Nature of the Curriculum	15%	15
Weak Training in Standard	11%	11
Shyness or Confusion	11%	11

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on questionnaire data (2025).

**Question 12: Does Colloquial Use Weaken Standard's Status?**

Option	Percentage	Number
Yes	62%	61
Perhaps	18%	18
No	18%	18

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on questionnaire data (2025).

**Question 13: Suggestions for Improving Standard Teaching**

Suggestions (Summary of 32 Responses): · Use standard in daily life · Focus on dialogue and interaction methods · Improve curriculum quality · Encourage reading and cultural programs · Train teachers on handling different levels · Simplify grammatical rules · Link standard to learner's reality · Use modern teaching methods (language games, multimedia) · Prohibit colloquial in class · Increase class hours · Organize competitions and cultural seminars

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on questionnaire data (2025).

**Discussion**

Sociolinguistic Analysis Theoretical Framework Diglossia, as defined by Ferguson (1959), is a situation where two linguistic forms coexist in one society, with the "high" language (standard) used in formal contexts like education, and the "low" language (colloquial) in daily communication. In Morocco, Modern Standard Arabic is the official education language, while Darija dominates social interactions. Fishman (1967) added that diglossia may lead to proficiency challenges if not managed properly, especially in education where learners are

expected to switch languages.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the results show typical diglossia in Moroccan secondary education, with Darija dominating daily interactions while standard remains official education language. This creates tension between colloquial's practical function (ease of understanding) and standard's symbolic value (identity and culture language). Classroom language mix reflects "code-switching" described by Gumperz (1982), where speakers use two languages for different contextual needs. However, this reliance may widen the gap between standard and colloquial proficiency, especially in formal writing and expression. Lack of standard exposure outside school (57%) aligns with sociolinguistic studies indicating environmental limitations affect proficiency (e.g., Haverkamp's works on Arab world education). Preference for standard for cultural and religious reasons reflects its link to Arab-Islamic identity, while colloquial for social comfort. This highlights challenge in balancing standard preservation as identity language and meeting pupils' practical needs.

Results align with Ferguson's (1959) diglossia model, showing Darija's hegemony in informal spheres and MSA's formal confinement, echoing "dual diglossia" where globalization amplifies tensions (Fathi, 2024). Code-switching facilitates learning but erodes MSA proficiency, as 65% report negative effects, supporting anxiety theories from the 2018 debate (Suleiman & Abdelhay, 2020: "Darija in textbooks threatens cultural purity"; El Attar, 2025). Limited exposure (57%) mirrors regional studies (Ennaji, 2005; Aissati et al., 2025). This underscores policy needs for hybrid approaches, balancing utility and heritage. Limitations suggest broader sampling; implications include curriculum reforms to mitigate identity conflicts.

### **Recommendations**

The alarming aspect of linguistic diglossia is its infiltration into education, finding place in school classrooms. Learners become confused before two linguistic systems. Colloquial may be daily spoken language for various individuals—this we agree on—but we also agree it is not the language of science. Thus, preserving the educational institution's language specificity is necessary, emphasizing adopting Modern Standard Arabic exclusively there. Observing classrooms as a secondary qualifying education teacher for four years, I notice pupils' inability to use Arabic easily, finding great difficulty, attributable to prior reliance on colloquial for understanding and explaining lessons. Accordingly, we present recommendations to overcome this:

- **Strengthening the Use of Modern Standard Arabic in Classrooms:** Educational institutions contribute to curbing the spread of linguistic diglossia by ensuring that

teachers and educational staff exclusively adopt Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in instruction, refraining from colloquial usage even for explanatory purposes, and increasing the allocated hours for Arabic as a mother tongue across educational stages. The Ministry of National Education, Preschool and Sports should implement this by amending the Strategic Vision 2015-2030 to mandate at least 20% more hours for MSA in secondary curricula, supporting the Arabization policy outlined in the 1999 National Charter for Education and Training.

- **Motivating Learners and Enriching Their Linguistic Repertoire:** Learners should be encouraged to engage in continuous reading and study, with their linguistic stock enriched through story reading and oral retelling to peers; motivation toward MSA can be fostered by organizing cultural competitions and offering incentive prizes conducted in standard Arabic. Policymakers, such as the Ministry, could support this through national programs like annual MSA competitions, aligning with Article 5 of the 2011 Constitution to promote Arabic use.
- **Developing Modern Curricula and Innovative Teaching Methods:** Emphasis should be placed on contemporary, innovative curricula for teaching Arabic that prioritize the development of reading and study skills, incorporating language games, multimedia resources, and linking MSA to topics of interest to students; grammatical rules should be simplified through gradual, accessible presentation, with lessons supported by Arabic dictionaries to clarify complex concepts. This could amend Framework Law 51.17 (2019) by integrating hybrid modules where Darija serves as a transitional bridge in early grades, as our findings show it aids understanding (43% yes), thereby enhancing MSA proficiency without eroding its status.
- **Teacher Training and Involvement in Curriculum Development:** Teachers' competencies in managing linguistic diglossia should be enhanced, enabling judicious use of the colloquial as a transitional bridge to MSA instruction; experienced educators should participate in curriculum design, while systematically identifying and addressing learners' difficulties in Arabic language instruction. The Ministry should launch mandatory training workshops for 50,000 teachers by 2027, drawing on the 2025 media debates on Darija in textbooks to incorporate evidence-based strategies that our study supports, such as addressing the 65% negative impact on expression.
- **Enhancing Exposure to MSA Inside and Outside School:** The use of MSA should be promoted in school and cultural activities (e.g., reading clubs and language

competitions), supported by language policies that advocate for its presence in media and daily life to increase out-of-school exposure. Findings from this study could inform amendments to the Strategic Vision 2015-2030 by recommending partnerships with media outlets to broadcast MSA content, countering the 57% lack of exposure and strengthening MSA's role in national identity as per the Constitution.

These action points for the Ministry of Education aim to support existing policies like the Arabization initiative while amending them to address diglossia-induced gaps, as evidenced by our results showing weakened MSA status (62%).

## **Conclusion**

This study reveals linguistic diglossia in Moroccan secondary education as both a challenge and an opportunity. While Darija facilitates comprehension, excessive reliance on it may undermine proficiency in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Through innovative pedagogical strategies and supportive language policies, the status of MSA can be strengthened while preserving the advantages of colloquial communication.

Moroccan diglossia presents challenges (proficiency gaps) and opportunities (inclusive education). By prioritizing MSA integration alongside supportive strategies, stakeholders can promote linguistic equity. Future research should evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions.

## References

- Abd al-Rahman bin Muhammad al-Hadrami. 1978. *Al-Muqaddima*. Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi.
- Abd al-Tawwab, R. 1994. *Fasl al-Maqal fi Mas'alat al-Amma wa-l-Fusha*. Dar al-Arqam.
- Abu Mughli, S. 1987. *Athar al-Lugha fi al-Hayat al-Fardiyya wa-l-Ijtima'iyya*. Majallat al-Ulum al-Ijtima'iyya.
- Aissati, A., Bouhjar, A., & Kich, A. 2025. Language issues in Morocco. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 7(2): 45-62. <https://doi.org/10.15640/ijll.v7n2a4>
- Al-Attar, A. 1990. *Al-Lugha al-Arabiyya bayna al-Fusha wa-l-Ammiyya*. Dar al-Thaqafa.
- Anis, I. 1956. *Fi al-Lahajat al-Arabiyya*. Dar al-Nashr.
- Belaid, S. 2010. *Al-Izdiwajiyya al-Lughawiyya: Ta'rif wa-Tahlil*. Majallat al-Lugha.
- Constitution of the Kingdom of Morocco. 2011. Official Bulletin of the Kingdom of Morocco, No. 5964 bis. <https://www.maroc.ma/en/content/constitution-kingdom-morocco>
- Drim, N. al-D., & Bin Bu'ali, H. n.d. *Athar al-tadakhul al-lughawi fi al-'amaliyya al-ta'limiyya*. Algeria.
- El Attar, M. 2025. A critical discourse analysis of media coverage on Moroccan Arabic diglossia in education. *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies*, 26(1): 112-130. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-025-00544-0>
- Ennaji, M. 2005. *Multilingualism, cultural identity, and education in Morocco*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/b106355>
- Ennaji, M. 2020. *Multilingualism, cultural identity, and education in Morocco* (2nd ed.). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-56339-4>
- Fathi, S. 2024. Dual diglossia in Morocco: A new sociolinguistic situation. *International Journal of Language, Linguistics, Literature & Culture*, 3(4): 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.59009/ijlllc.2024.0078>
- Ferguson, C. A. 1959. Diglossia. *Word*, 15(2): 325-340. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00437956.1959.11659702>
- Fishman, J. A. 1967. Bilingualism with and without diglossia; diglossia with and without bilingualism. *Journal of Social Issues*, 23(2): 29-38. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1967.tb00573.x>
- Gumperz, J. J. 1982. *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511611834>
- Ibn Jinni, A. al-F. 'U. n.d. *Al-khasa'is* (M. 'A. al-Najjar, Ed.). Dar al-Huda.
- Ibn Manzur. 1405 AH/1984–1985 CE. *Lisan al-'Arab* (Vol. 12). Adab al-Hawza Publication.

- Al-Jundi, A. 1982. Al-Lugha al-Arabiyya fi al-Alam. Dar al-Kitab.
- Kayda, I. 2002. Li-l-‘Arabiyya al-fusha bayna al-izdiwajjiyya al-lughawiyya wa-l-thanawiyya al-lughawiyya. Al-Majalla al-‘Ilmiyya li-Jami‘at Malik Faisal, 3(1).
- Mahmud, ‘A. al-J. T. 2014. Al-waqi‘ al-lughawi fi al-‘alam al-‘Arabi fi daw’ haymanat al-lahajat al-mahalliyya wa-l-lughu al-Injiliziyya. Ru‘ya Istratijiyya Website, Assiut University.
- Martinet, A. 1990a. Al-thanawiyya al-alsaniyya wa-l-izdiwajjiyya al-alsaniyya (N. Siraj, Trans.). Al-‘Arab wa-l-Fikr al-‘Alami, 11. National Development Center.
- Martinet, A. 1990b. Al-thanawiyya al-alsaniyya wa-l-izdiwajjiyya al-alsaniyya: Da‘wa li-nazra dinamiyya li-l-waqi‘ (N. Siraj, Trans.). Al-‘Arab wa-l-Fikr al-‘Alami, 11. National Development Center.
- Rida, A. 1981. Radd al-‘ami ila al-fasih (2nd ed.). Dar al-Ra‘id al-‘Arabi.
- Saleh, S. ‘A. 2014. Muhadarat fi ‘ilm al-lugha al-‘am.
- Suleiman, Y., & Abdelhay, A. 2020. Diglossia, folk-linguistics, and language anxiety: The 2018 language ideological debate in Morocco. In R. Bassiouney (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of Arabic and identity* (pp. 197-214). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203730515-13>
- Sultani, N. 2006. Al-kashf al-lughawi ‘an al-ta‘addud al-lahji fi lughat al-Qur’an [Master's thesis]. Department of Arabic Language and Literature, University of Algiers.
- Ta‘ima, R. A., & Mana‘, M. al-S. 2000. Tadrīs al-‘Arabiyya fi al-ta‘lim al-‘am: Nazariyyat wa-tajrib (1st ed.).
- Zakariya, N. 1964. Tarikh al-da‘wa ila al-‘amiyya wa-atharuha fi Misr (1st ed.). Dar Nashr al-Thaqafa.