THE PLACE OF CULTURE IN THE AMAZIGH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS IN MOROCCO

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Abstract

This paper investigates the model of Amazigh language teaching in Morocco, which has been declared to be based on the communicative approach. So the objective of the present study is to explore the cultural content of the Amazigh textbooks using content analysis as the main method to process the data drawn from the first, third, and fifth level textbooks. The analysis reveals an over-representation of mainly two aspects of the Amazigh culture, namely the articulation of the value system and the language of social interaction. The presentation of the cultural information is done through drawings and narratives at the expense of photos and dialogues. The drawings do not illustrate the Amazigh native culture but rather report a type of global culture. Therefore, the presentation of culture in the Amazigh textbooks is more geared toward transmitting knowledge about cultural themes, patterns, and behavior than the practical application of that knowledge and the cultivation of the learners' aptitude for their appropriate use, which is one of the aims of the teaching of Amazigh.

Keywords: Amazigh culture, textbooks, cultural content, communicative competence.

1. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF AMAZIGH

The Amazigh language, widely known as 'Berber', a Hamitic language of the Afro-Asiatic family, is the oldest language in North Africa (Gross, 1993). It is the indigenous language of Morocco and other North African countries. Despite its long presence in the region, Amazigh was maintained as an oral language mainly used in the informal domains, while Modern Standard Arabic is used in all formal domains. After the independence of Morocco, Modern Standard Arabic was established as the official language and Amazigh became stigmatized, marginalized, and excluded from all formal settings.

Amazigh in Morocco is classified into three major varieties, associated with three regions of Morocco, namely Tamazight, in the Middle Atlas Mountains and

Southeast, Tashelhit, in the High Atlas and Southwest, and Tarifit, in the Rif Mountains and Northeast. People who speak '*Berber*,' a foreign prejudiced appellation, prefer to call themselves 'Imazighen', in the singular 'Amazigh', which means a 'free man'. Today, Amazigh is considered the mother tongue of about 40% of Morocco's population (Boukous, 1995; Ennaji, 1997). Although, Moroccan official figures state that Amazigh people make up 40 percent of the nation's population, analysts claim that the number ranges from 60 to 70 percent (Moroccan Constitutional Reform, 2011).

Until recently, all three Amazigh varieties existed almost exclusively in oral form and were used only in informal settings, especially in rural areas. However, over the last three decades, the Moroccan language policy has undergone significant changes under the pressure of the Amazigh Cultural Movement and the Human Rights Institutions, which have struggled for the official and institutional recognition of Amazigh. Indeed, starting from the 1990s, thanks to the emergence of new technologies and globalization, Moroccan authorities were forced to change their attitudes from rejection to acceptance, and finally to official recognition.

As a result of the change in the state's attitudes and language policy, the new National Charter for Education and Training (Charte Nationale d'Education et de Formation), released in 1999, referred to Amazigh as a national language and allowed for an "opening" for the Amazigh language in schools. In 2001, the state launched a reform of the educational linguistic policy through the creation of the Royal Institute of the Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) whose missions include the standardization and promotion of the Amazigh language and culture. In 2003, Tifinaghe-IRCAM became the official graphic system for writing Amazigh in Morocco. In the same year, Amazigh language teaching was actually launched by the Ministry of Education (hereafter MEN) in collaboration with IRCAM. Initially, Amazigh was introduced into some 300 elementary schools at the first level across the country, after over 1,000 teachers had been trained in the teaching of Amazigh. All the recruited teachers, native and non-native Amazigh speakers, received the same two-week training session prior to the implementation of this project in the fall 2003. Finally, in 2011, Amazigh was recognized as the second official language of Morocco beside Arabic, as proclaimed in Article 5 of the New Constitution (see Morocco's Constitution, 2011). However, although the status and position of Amazigh has changed from a spoken, non-recognized language to a written, codified, and official language, its status has not changed much, as its implementation as an official language has still not occurred. Amazigh seems to be confronted by forces that aspire to keep its status as a minoritized language despite its constitutional recognition (Boukous, 2013, p. 31).

2.   THE AMAZIGH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS

The 'Centre de la Recherche Didactique et des Programmes Pédagogiques' (Centre of Didactic Research and Pedagogic Programs) at IRCAM issued a textbook, specifi-

cally the "Tifawin a Tamzight" (Good Morning Tamazight) series, in 2003 (IRCAM, 2007). By 2008, IRCAM, in collaboration with MEN, had designed all the required student textbooks and pedagogical materials for the teachers for all the primary school levels. Meanwhile, between 2002 and 2009, the Ministry of Education issued five ministerial circulars (*mudhakkirat*), namely 90, 108, 116, 130, and 133, to accompany the integration of Amazigh into the school curriculum.

It is very important to set goals for mother-tongue education. In fact, models for mother-tongue education in schools are varied, controversial and evolving. For instance, in Poland there has been a shift from teaching grammar to developing communicative competence (Awramiuk, 2002). There has been contention regarding the teaching of grammar vs. using the language-for-learning or 'growth model' in Australia (Sawyer & Watson, 2001, p. 77). Starc (2004) shows that the new national Slovenian curriculum for mother-tongue education is based on the communicative and pragmatic approach to teaching language and literature (p. 113). Cosson (2007) in Brazil depicts the debate between the traditional mother tongue education based on normative grammar and the socio-interactionist paradigms, which are based upon the concept of language as human interaction (p. 40).

In Morocco the guidelines and directions that underpin Amazigh language pedagogy, which are based on the communicative approach, are contained in the ministerial circulars 108 and 116 issued in September 2003 and 2008 respectively. According to these ministerial circulars (2003, p. 2; 2008, p.4), one of the main objectives set for the teaching of Amazigh is stated as follows:

> Based on the educational choice governing the rest of the educational curricula, which hinge principally on developing the learners' skills, the teaching of Amazigh aims chiefly at promoting the learners' communicative skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills). In addition to these communicative skills, the teaching of Amazigh seeks to develop strategic, cultural, procedural, and technological skills, in accordance with the age and level of maturity of the learners (translation mine).

It is worth mentioning that the textbooks available for the teaching/learning of Amazigh were claimed to adopt a situational approach based on dialogues, which are generally meant for children, both native and non-native learners (Boukous, 2011, p. 240). Moreover, when the fifth level textbook, "Tifawin a Tamzight", was issued in 2007, it was claimed that it was based on a communicative approach (IRCAM, 2008). Nevertheless, as Boukous (2011) argues, it is necessary to evaluate the books in terms of their objectives, content, and methodology; other studies argue for the need to reconsider the teaching of Amazigh (El Kirat & Bennis, 2010; El Kirat, 2004). Therefore, the aim of this study is to analyze the Amazigh textbooks for their cultural content and its presentation to see whether they meet their primary intended objective, namely to promote the learners' communicative competence. Because culture is a vital component of communicative competence, we turn now to a discussion of the concept of culture and the type of culture to teach.

3.   THE TEACHING OF CULTURE

Language education professionals have long claimed that the teaching of culture is an integral part of language education. Brody (2003), for instance, argues that, "it is impossible to deal with second language education without taking culture into account" (p. 37). When communication is set as the goal of language learning, as is the case with Amazigh teaching, culture should inevitably be involved, for language and culture are inextricably intertwined. Culture is negotiated for the most part through language, and language codifies many cultural assumptions and values (Brody, 2003). However, the type of culture(s) to teach is a controversial issue. This dilemma is confounded by the lack of (i) a comprehensive and agreed upon definition of culture, (ii) a well-established method for culture teaching in the language classroom, and (iii) appropriate teaching materials. Due to these lacunae, culture has not been adequately integrated into the teaching materials nor properly taught in language classrooms to the present day. Issues related to culture teaching and its integration into Amazigh teaching materials are addressed in the present study.

Culture, which is a vital component of language instruction, is difficult to integrate appropriately into the curriculum (Brody, 2003). The difficulty seems to emanate from the fact that culture is so rich that education specialists disagree concerning which of its aspects to represent in textbooks and to teach. When it comes to defining culture teaching, educational theorists fall into two camps: those who propose teaching culture in terms of the achievements of a society and those who champion the anthropological definition of culture as a way of life characteristic of a society (Richards, 1976). Brooks (1968) captures this distinction in his terms 'formal' and 'deep' culture. Formal culture refers to the most significant achievements of a group. It involves the wide range of forms of aesthetic expressions found in the fine arts, theatre, painting, dance, architecture, and artistry, in whatever form, as well as literature, including poetic and prose works. Deep culture, on the other hand, refers to the sum total of a group's way of life or patterns of living. So, two main types of culture can be distinguished: so-called big "C" Culture, which designates the highly evaluated products of civilization, and small "c" culture, which relates to a particular group of people and their way of life as in the culture of the Eskimo (Brody, 2003, p. 39). The former often includes history, geography, literature, music, etc., while the latter is composed of "anthropological or sociological culture, namely the attitudes, customs, and daily activities of a people, their ways of thinking, their values, their frames of reference" (Valete, 1986, p. 179). The approach adopted for small "c" culture creates a deeper understanding of culture and reinforces the notion of cultural relativism. Many other aspects of culture could be subsumed under small "c" culture. For instance, the naming tradition and clothing style that Amazigh people use exemplifies anthropological culture. Personal names, as Akinyemi (2005) argues, play a role in understanding the culture of the target people.

Spinelli (1985) adds another important category, namely 'functional culture,' which refers to "those elements of surface and deep culture … which must be learned in order to function while travelling, living, studying, or working in a foreign culture" (Spinelli, 1985, p. 214). Elements of functional culture include acting appropriately in everyday situations, using appropriate gestures, and performing those tasks necessary for everyday living, such as shopping, banking, using the telephone, etc. (Spinelli, 1985). Functional culture is everyday culture that learners are required to acquire in order to function in the target language and culture society.

Until the advent of the audio-lingual teaching method in the fifties and sixties, culture in the second language classroom was for the most part limited to literature (the big C "Culture"), and was even often confined to textbooks and/or courses beyond the intermediate level (Lafayette, 2003). However, with the establishment of a globally dominant communicative approach to language teaching and learning (cf. Sawyer & Van de Ven, 2007), teaching some degree of communicative competence became a key goal, and the choices in the second language curriculum were correspondingly changed to include more of the cultural idiosyncrasies in language use (Brody, 2003, p. 42). Thus, the anthropological approach to culture, or small "c" culture, which is now deemed not simply appropriate for beginning classes, but rather an essential component of language instruction (Carr, 1985; Seelye, 1984), was firmly established. So, to what extent are elements of small "c" culture exploited in the teaching of the Amazigh language?

Since Amazigh language teaching is text-based, many of the teachers' teaching practices are determined by the content of the textbooks. Thus, investigating the cultural content included in the Amazigh textbooks and its mode of presentation is of great value given the status of this language as a newly standardized and official language. Moreover, the analysis of the textbooks will help reveal whether the goal set for teaching Amazigh, namely promoting the learners' communicative skills, can be achieved, at least in part, through the use of these textbooks.

4.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is inherently multi-methodological in focus (Flick, 1998). The use of multiple methods is an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The cultural content of the Amazigh textbooks is analyzed using content analysis. Moreover, the study investigates the Amazigh teachers' views about the cultural content of the textbooks.

The data used in the present study was collected through a content analysis of three Amazigh textbooks and interviews of 25 teachers. For the textbook analysis, the analytical categories for approaching Amazigh textbooks were adopted from the work of other foreign language textbook researchers such as Damen (1987), Dechert & Kastner (1989), Feng (2004), and Joiner (1974). A distinction is made in

this study between the socio-cultural content and the manner of presentation of the cultural content.

The socio-cultural content includes:

- social interaction: convention of behavior in social interaction, greeting, leave taking, congratulation, request, etc.
- value system: values, attitudes, customs, concerns, beliefs, morals, etc.
- social and political institutions: schools, hospitals, courts of law, social security, etc.
- social relations: family, friend, classmate, co-worker, other.
- cooking, food and eating habits
- holidays and celebrations
- leisure time activities
- health & hygiene
- popular music
- housing
- national history
- national geography
- other

The manner of presentation, which consists of the different types of teaching activity used to present the cultural elements, comprises: reading text, dialogue, song, fable, puzzle, drawings, photo, map, and photocopy of real material (realia).

The coding for these categories is based on the set of topics of the different teaching activities, namely communication, reading text, reading corner, and fun activities, which include fables, songs, and puzzles in the first, third, and fifth levels. Writing and grammar activities, in which cultural information might be embedded, will be excluded because they cannot adequately contextualize the cultural information and impart it in a way that would enable students to understand and learn it effectively, since the focus is on linguistic skills rather than on culture.

Establishing the criteria for defining the categories is one of the most important steps in content analysis. The importance of defining categories lies in the fact that they set the parameters for measurement and analysis. The categorization defines the content variables to be counted, studied, and analyzed (Feng, 2004). It also organizes the coding of the content of the text under analysis.

4.1. Sampling

The procedure used in sampling the Amazigh textbooks and the technique used in sampling the teachers interviewed are presented below. The textbook sampling is summarized in Table 1 and the teacher sampling is summarized in Table 2.

In order to account for the progressive nature of the current Amazigh textbook series "Tifawin a Tamazight" (Good Morning Tamazight) throughout the various primary school levels, a textbook from each of the three primary school levels, i.e.

lower (first and second year), intermediate (third and fourth year), and advanced levels (fifth and sixth year), was selected. For this study the first, third, and fifth level textbooks were selected. It is worth mentioning that the first level textbook, "Good Morning Tamazight", which was issued in the three Amazigh varieties, was replaced by a single textbook "Adlisinu n Tmazight" (My Amazigh Textbook). No workbooks or audiotapes were available for the textbooks at the time of the study. Table 1 below summarizes the three textbooks with year of publication and publisher.

Table 1. The Amazigh textbooks

Textbook Level	Name	Publication Year	Publisher
First	Adlisinu n Tmazight	2007	IRCAM
Third	Tifawin a Tmazight	2005	IRCAM
Fifth	Tifawin a Tmazight	2007	IRCAM

The 25 Amazigh teachers in the interview sample were selected on the basis of snowball sampling technique (Bhattacherjee, 2012; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). This technique consists of building up a sample by identifying a few respondents who match the criteria for inclusion in the study and asking them to recommend other potential participants. We relied on some participants to help identify other Amazigh teachers who were willing to take part in the study. This was extremely useful since not all schools offer Amazigh in their curriculum. In addition, many teachers refused to participate in the study because they were worried about being evaluated. Therefore, making connections was useful in identifying and convincing potential participants. Information about the interview sample's gender and mother tongue is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. The interview sample

Variable		Number
Gender	Male	15
	Female	10
Mother tongue	Native	16
	Non-native	9

4.2. Data analysis procedures

The content analysis technique was adopted for the analysis of the cultural content of the Amazigh textbooks because there is a tradition, especially in the area of foreign language textbook evaluation, of using the content analysis technique, for instance, Damen (1987), Feng (2004), Kramsch (1988), and Risager (1991). It involves the choice of topics of the different teaching activities and their coding through the use of the adopted analytical categories. However, instead of grouping

the codes together, the researcher counts the frequency of use of each code (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, 2008). Moreover, the inferred codes are subsequently analyzed qualitatively.

As for interview analysis, a thematic analysis is conducted to code data and generate the categories and the subsequent themes from the answers given by the respondents (Gibbs, 2007). The goal of this technique, constant comparison analysis, is to generate a theory or set of themes (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008, p. 594) in order to better understand a phenomenon.

5.   THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The data in this study were quantified by counting the frequency of occurrence of the variables in the two-recorded categories. Category I examines the cultural content elements or topics included in first-, third- and fifth-level student Amazigh textbooks. Category II describes the modes of presentation of cultural information. The recorded data are summarized and presented in four figures. The first three figures present the total frequency of occurrence of cultural content elements or topics in first-, third-, and fifth-level student textbooks. The last figure presents the manner of presentation of the cultural information in the three textbooks. The resulting data were subsequently analyzed qualitatively. Finally, the views of teachers interviewed regarding the cultural contents of textbooks will be presented.

5.1. First level textbook: cultural content

Figure 1 shows the frequency of the cultural elements included in the first level textbook.

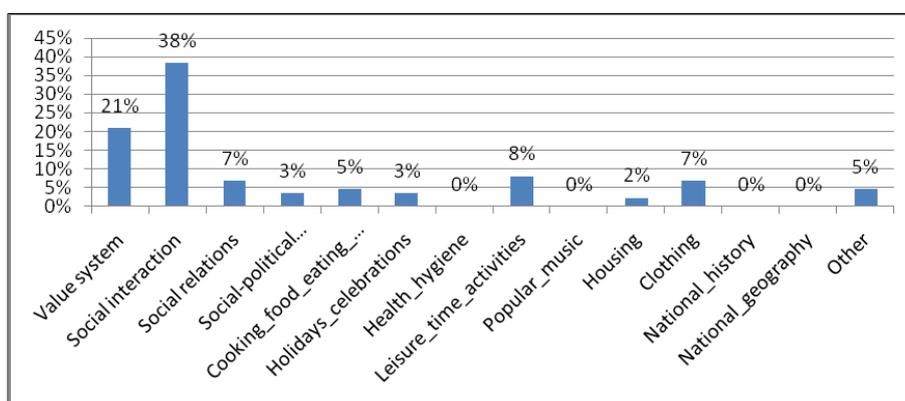*Figure 1: First level textbook cultural elements*

Figure 1 presents the frequency of thirteen different topics or types of cultural content. It also includes a rubric that combines other minor cultural elements. The figures reveal that social interaction is the most frequent cultural topic, with a rate of 38%. The expression of feeling and value system follows with a rate of 21%.

The rest of the cultural elements are represented with much less frequency in this textbook. For instance, leisure time activities have a frequency of 8 % in relation to the other cultural elements, social relations and clothing of 7%; cooking, food, and eating habits and other cultural topics of 5%, social-political institutions and holidays and celebrations of 3%, and finally housing of 2%. However, the rest of the investigated cultural elements, such as popular music and national geography and history are absent from the first level textbook.

Expressions of feelings and value system are also well represented. The latter is dealt with especially in the Amazigh fables and songs at the end of the units. However, social relations are underrepresented. First level textbooks are supposed to include more social relations topics because at this level learners should be exposed to the names of the different members of the nuclear and extended family. However, only a single small four-member family, which is not representative of Amazigh culture, is introduced in the textbook. The family is composed of the father (Idir), the mother (Rabha), the daughter (Dounya), and the son (Tarik). While the parents' names are purely Amazigh, the children's are not. In addition, even their appearance and clothing do not represent those of Amazigh people. Their appearance and generic clothing present them as neutral citizens.

5.2. Third level textbook cultural content

Figure 2 summarizes the cultural elements included in the third level textbook.

Figure 2: Third level textbook cultural elements
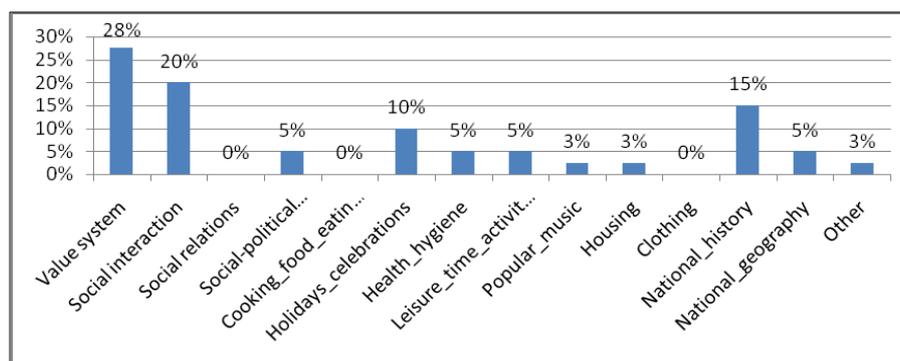
A closer look at Figure 2 shows the value system as the most frequent cultural topic, with a rate of 28%, followed by social interactions of 20%, Amazigh history and

holidays and celebrations with a rate of 15%, and 10%, respectively, are also relatively well represented.

Leisure time activities, national geography, and social political institutions represent a frequency of 5%, while popular music, housing, and other topics constitute 3%. Social relations, cooking, food and eating habits, and clothing are absent from the textbook.

The third level textbook includes fewer cultural elements than the other textbooks. This is due to the fact that the units are smaller than in the first year textbook and that the same cultural topics are used in three reading texts in the three Amazigh varieties in the same units. The Tarifit texts titles are indicated in blue, the Tamazight in green, and the Tashelhit in yellow. The teachers are required to use the text in the students' Amazigh variety. The study has focused on the Tamazight texts.

Scrutiny of the textbook content reveals that the focus is on reading texts that treat specific cultural topics, especially expressions of the value system, national history, holidays and celebrations, etc. The language of social interaction and dialogues are limited compared with the first level textbook. Learners are only introduced to drawings and a few expressions that they have to practice in so-called communication lessons.

The communication lessons aim at teaching learners the language of social interaction through the practice of language, such as how to (dis)agree, argue, express a request, etc., in a poor context. However, the use of isolated and decontextualized expressions in the form of speech bubbles in cartoon-like drawings is less inviting, motivating, and attractive for young learners. An example of such communication lessons on page 48 is as follows. A speech bubble in front of the teacher reads: "do you know ...," "what do you know ...;" one of the students speech bubble reads, "did you find ...," "thanks;" the other student speech bubble reads, "if you can...," "thanks." Mechanical drills are dominant in the overwhelming majority of cases. On the other hand, it is known that young learners like to read lively dialogues, get involved in role-plays and impersonations of real characters, which are absent in the Amazigh textbooks. The onus is on teachers to fill this void. Amazigh teachers were told to be creative as one of them avowed in one of the discussions.

5.3. Fifth Level textbook cultural content

Figure 3 exhibits the frequency of the cultural elements included in the fifth level textbook.

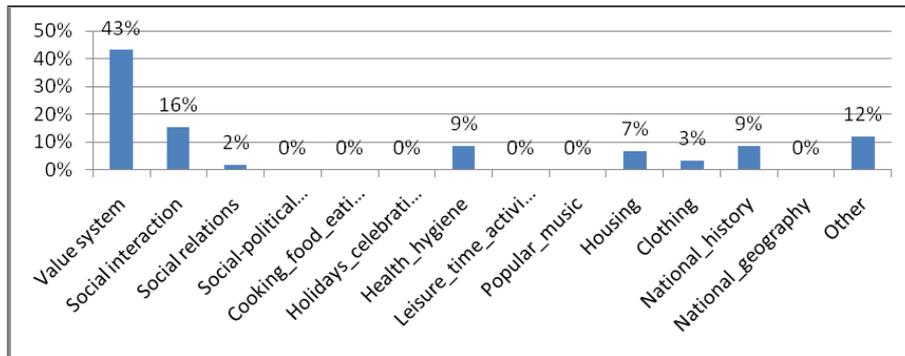*Figure 3: Fifth level textbook cultural elements*

Figure 3 shows that the value system is the most frequent cultural topic with a rate of 43%, followed by social interaction (16%). One can easily observe that the more advanced the level the less focus there is on the language of social interaction.

The rates for the other cultural topics are: 12% for national history, 9% for health and hygiene, 7% for housing, and finally clothing 3% and social relations 2%. Social-political institutions, cooking food and habits, holidays and celebrations, leisure time activities, popular music and national geography are absent from the textbook.

The fifth-year textbook includes more reading texts than the third-year textbook. Most of the texts, especially the reading texts, reading corner, and fables, are about expressions of the value system. Thus, the language of social interaction and communicative activities are limited. Moreover, the so-called communication lessons, such as the ones found in the third-year textbook, concentrate more on the teaching of linguistic structures and lexical items than on communication skills.

By way of comparison, the first-level textbook exhibits social interaction, with a rate of 38%, as its most frequent cultural content, due to the relatively high frequency of communication lessons where it occurs, whereas the third- and fifth-level textbooks show expressions of the value system, with a rate of 28% and 43%, respectively, as their most frequent cultural content, due to their frequent occurrence in reading texts. It is notable that the more advanced the level, the more focus there is on reading and the less focus there is on communication. There is less focus on the language of social interaction and dialogues in the third- and fifth-level textbooks. In the so-called communication activities, the learners are only introduced to some drawings and a few expressions to practice. It seems that communication is relegated to a secondary position in the advanced levels, while it should normally be included at all levels of fundamental instruction.

5.4. Textbooks' cultural content

The analysis of the mode of presentation of cultural content is quite interesting, as Figure 4 reveals. As the three Amazigh textbooks investigated show minimal difference in this regard, the findings related to the mode of presentation of cultural content in the three textbooks are presented in a single comprehensive figure.

Figure 4: Modes of cultural content presentation
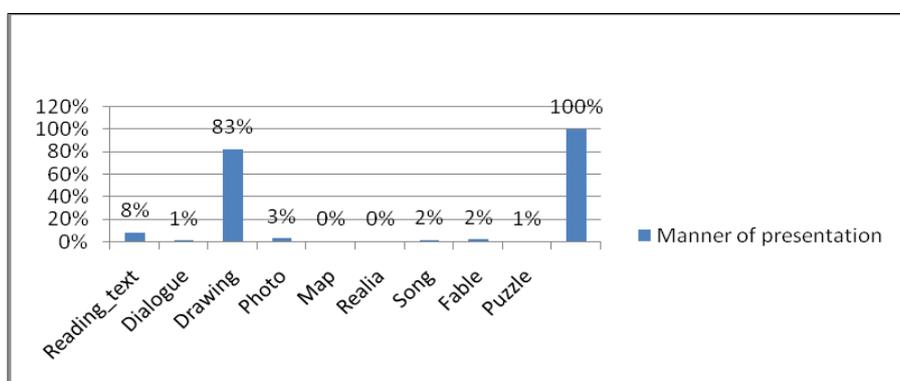
A close analysis of Figure 4 records drawings as the most important means of presenting the cultural content, with a rate of 83%, followed by reading texts, with a rate of 8%. Photos constitute only 3% and songs and fables only 2% of the modes of cultural content presentation in the three textbooks, and dialogues and puzzles only 1%. Finally, maps and photos of realia are used in a very limited way, and, given the large number of drawings, the rate of their use is insignificant. No cultural notes, videos, or audios are provided with the textbooks.

The textbook designers relied mostly on drawings and provided no pictures of real people. The drawings are unnatural and not animated, hence their ineffectiveness in representing Amazigh culture and unattractiveness to young learners. In addition, since the people depicted in the drawings often lack typical characteristics of Amazigh people and their culture, such as complexion and specific types of clothing and jewellery, the cultural messages they could have transmitted are lost. Therefore, the illustrations represent neutral or global, rather than specifically Amazigh people and culture. They could potentially be used to teach any language.

While the narratives (e.g. reading texts, fables, and songs) can provide students with some background knowledge about the beliefs and practices in Amazigh culture, the drawings misrepresent Amazigh culture and give an unreal image of Amazigh people. With the exception of the first-year textbook, there is a noticeable dearth of dialogues. Using dialogues instead of narratives in all of the textbooks would have been more effective in conveying Amazigh culture to young learners,

who tend to prefer to learn by doing and acting out. The learners would have been more active participants in the discovery of Amazigh cultural practices through dialogues as opposed to passively receiving knowledge in narratives.

Finally, photographs and videos, which are effective modes for presenting cultural information, are almost completely absent.

5.5. Teachers' views on the Amazigh textbooks

The teachers' opinions on the cultural content of the Amazigh textbooks are of great significance. The majority of the interviewed teachers were not satisfied with the cultural content of the textbooks. They claimed that Amazigh culture, as represented in the textbooks, served neither the learners nor the Amazigh community. The coding of the qualitative data allows us to distinguish among four main themes, namely (i) insufficiency of the content, (ii) misrepresentation and *folklorization* of Amazigh culture, (iii) bias in the representation of Amazigh culture and the favouring of one region, and (iv) maladjustment of the content to the levels of the learners. Each theme is discussed in detail in the following sections.

(i) Insufficiency of cultural content

The data demonstrates that even teachers with relatively positive opinions of the Amazigh textbooks were not satisfied with the quality, quantity, or mode of presentation of the cultural elements. A native teacher asserts that:

> There are positive elements, but they are insufficient and lack diversity and do not include cultural aspects that should have been covered.

The richness of Amazigh culture made the task of the textbook designers difficult with regard to incorporating culture. This idea is corroborated by a non-native Amazigh teacher who claimed that:

> [The textbooks are] deficient in dealing with the different aspects of Amazigh culture. It is limited to the environment and social relations.

Indeed, incorporating Amazigh culture into the textbooks is not an easy task due to its richness and diversity. One controversial issue that was addressed concerned selecting which cultural elements to include and which to leave out.

(ii) Misrepresentation and folklorization of Amazigh culture

The Amazigh cultural elements included in the Amazigh textbooks are not simply insufficient, but rather they are viewed as misrepresenting and or 'folklorizing' Amazigh culture. A native Amazigh teacher claimed that:

> It is noticeable that there is an over-representation of the folkloric aspect of Amazigh culture, while overlooking real Amazigh aspects, such as customs, traditions, habits, and values.

In line with this view of the folklorization of Amazigh culture, a native Amazigh teacher claimed that:

> The Amazigh culture is confined to fairy tales and songs, while the true Amazigh culture in terms of the people's way of life and their achievements are ignored.

The Amazigh culture presented in the textbooks is confined to the fairy tales and songs, while the small "c" culture of everyday life and the social values are neglected.

(iii) Biased representation of Amazigh culture

The Amazigh textbook cultural content seems to represent the culture of some regions and not others. A native Amazigh teacher declared that there is a lot of bias in the choice of the regional Amazigh culture included in textbooks:

> It is biased and is based on the culture of a certain region.

In line with this, another native teacher went a step further to mention the region toward which the Amazigh culture in textbooks is biased. He argues that:

> The cultural content in the textbooks is biased toward the Souss region, and neglects the other Amazigh regions.

The above teachers' views seem to confirm the widely held opinion that the textbook designers favoured the culture of one region of the country over the others. This means that the culture of other regions is underrepresented.

(iv) Maladjustment of the content to learners' levels

Another problem with the Amazigh textbooks concerns the way the cultural aspects are presented. The cultural elements included in the textbooks are pedagogically and linguistically incorrectly adapted to levels of the learners. A native Amazigh teacher stated that:

> Yes, it is important but it is beyond the reach of the learners at the primary school level because the texts are too long. The teachers themselves find them difficult. The authors of the textbooks do not seem to be aware of the particularities of the primary school education and have thus included long texts that cannot possibly be dealt with in the time allotted to the Amazigh class, namely 30 minutes. They do not proceed in a progressive way and use easy things, as is the case in the Arabic textbooks, for instance.

In line with this, another bilingual teacher argued:

> The textbook's cultural aspects are not fit for the learner, neither in terms of methodology nor lexical content contained therein.

In general, most teachers feel that the cultural content of the Amazigh textbooks does not correspond to the level of the students and that the texts are too long. However, a few teachers abstained from expressing their opinions about the cul-

tural content of the textbooks for reasons to be discussed below. Some of the teachers simply do not speak the language, and feel that part of the problem derives from this fact. Other teachers have no Amazigh textbooks, while others stopped teaching the language because of the difficulties they encountered.

6. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The present section discusses the extent to which the Amazigh culture is represented in the textbooks. More specifically, the type of cultural elements and the manner in which they are presented in the three Amazigh textbooks investigated in this study in light of the main objective set for the teaching of the Amazigh language—the development of communicative competence—will be considered. Moreover, a number of conclusions will be drawn and recommendations will be formulated with the aim to improve the Amazigh language textbooks and teaching.

The analysis of the cultural content of the first-, third-, and fifth-level Amazigh textbooks shows that only two cultural topics, namely the value system and social interactions dominate the three textbooks with no clear distinction among the three levels. Expressions related to the value system and language used in the social interactions are undeniably vital to the learning of any language, as they contribute to the development of communicative competence, which is one of the main objectives set for Amazigh language teaching. However, the predominance of these two aspects of Amazigh culture at the expense of other cultural topics leads to an inaccurate representation of Amazigh culture as a whole.

The textbook analysis also reveals that many of the Amazigh values presented are not exhaustively represented or dealt with in depth. They are basically integrated into narratives (reading texts, reading corner, fables, and songs) instead of being included in dialogues that the learners can role-play. The language functions used in social interactions, which are included in the so-called communication activities, are motivated by structural rather than cultural concerns. This is apparent in the presentation of the cultural topics, which basically consists of a picture with isolated linguistic structures to be learned through drilling and repetition. These teaching activities fail to integrate the language commonly used for social interactions into dialogues and role-plays. While affirming the importance of the linguistic structures, the teaching activities seem to gravitate much more toward traditional concerns with linguistic skills, leaving little room for cultural content and communication in the textbooks.

Communication in real situations, as Cortazzi and Jin (1999) argue, never occurs out of context. As culture is in the background of most contexts, communication is rarely culture-free. Most researchers in the field claim that language is culture bound (Brody, 2003; Valdes, 1986). The lack of task-based communicative activities in the Amazigh textbooks results in a dearth of opportunities for the learners to experience culture. Language teaching that does not integrate the cultural aspects

related to the language does not stimulate the learners' interest, desire, and curiosity, and does not allow them to open to the target culture.

The three Amazigh textbooks investigated in this article suffer from a lack of depth with regard to the presentation of cultural content. As argued earlier, the textbooks include only a four-member family, which is introduced in the first level textbook. This promotes the idea of the nuclear family, which totally contradicts the authentic Amazigh culture in favour of the extended family. The extended family is still the norm in Amazigh communities, especially in the rural areas. Moreover, the physical appearance of the family members, especially clothing and haircuts, do not represent Amazigh preferences and norms at all. In addition, all of the characters in the textbooks are simply hand-drawn, cartoon-like figures, which do not resemble flesh and blood Amazigh people. Amazigh personal names and the naming tradition are not well exploited in the textbooks as well. It should be underscored that Amazigh personal names are a key aspect of Amazigh culture and can play a role in understanding the target culture (Akinyemi, 2005). The textbooks do not exploit Amazigh names as a tool for teaching and learning about the cultural practices. With very few exceptions, the people in the various lessons of the textbook have no names.

This evaluation of the textbooks reveals that the syllabus designers deployed tremendous efforts to include the surface culture by introducing overt elements of Amazigh culture, such as housing, clothing, holidays, food, etc., chiefly through reading texts. The textbooks also include aspects of deep culture, addressing elements such as values, habits, and customs. They are, however, not easy to discern, as they are primarily embedded in readings and songs. Consequently, the focus in the Amazigh textbooks is more on factual rather than procedural knowledge. The analysis reveals that the overarching method used in the presentation of the cultural content in the Amazigh textbooks is one that fosters an understanding of the cultural themes, patterns, and behavior, and not one that aims at producing appropriate behavior. In other words, the cultural content in the textbooks and its manner of presentation do not facilitate the development of the learners' communicative competence.

Thus, the Amazigh textbooks fail to include 'functional culture' (Spinelli, 1985), in other words, those elements of surface and deep culture that must be learned in order to function while travelling, shopping, studying, bargaining, etc. Elements of functional culture are key to acting appropriately in everyday situations, such as using appropriate gestures and performing tasks necessary for day-to-day living, such as shopping, banking, using a telephone, etc., which would encourage learners to use the language in their everyday life and hence help in revitalizing and maintaining Amazigh as an endangered language. Simply put, although the textbooks include various narratives with ample cultural content, they do not teach learners when, why, and how to use aspects of that cultural content in a real life context, skills that the teaching of Amazigh aims at developing in learners.

As far as the presentation of cultural information is concerned, the textbook designers failed to make use of two effective contemporary mediums to illustrate Amazigh culture and language, namely photos and videos. The impact of visual images cannot be underestimated. The presentation of language and cultural information through them is more stimulating and conducive to language and culture learning. Using videos could have provided the learners with real life contexts for the cultural aspects and language functions with visual and audio reinforcement. Like the use of videos, using photos could also have introduced real Amazigh people, which would have enhanced the motivation of the learners. The overuse of drawing at the expense of photos deprives the characters and activities of attraction and enticement. The drawings do not always illustrate native Amazigh culture, but rather present a type of global culture. Though surely unintentional, this may well have been the outcome of the lack of experience on the part of the textbook designers, since Amazigh is a newly taught language, and the resulting haste and improvisation that characterized the implementation of the whole project.

Moreover, the teachers who were interviewed seem to have a negative opinion regarding the cultural content of the Amazigh textbooks. Briefly, they perceived the cultural content in the Amazigh textbooks as being insufficient, misrepresented or *folkloriz*ed, biased, and incorrectly adjusted to the learners' level.

In brief, the conception of culture that informs the Amazigh textbooks is not geared toward developing the learner' communicative competence, nor does it enable them to acquire both knowledge, and the skills that would aid them in using that knowledge appropriately and effectively. The focus seems to be on linguistic structures and factual knowledge instead of procedural knowledge and functional culture. Therefore, it seems that the model followed in Amazigh language instruction focuses on the traditional model, which is based on viewing teaching and learning as knowledge transmission rather than communicative skill development.

7.   RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above discussion and in the light of the conclusions drawn from the data analysis a number of recommendations can be formulated for both the Amazigh textbook designers and teachers:

1) Given the objective of Amazigh language teaching, the focus should be on developing the learners' communicative skills for immediate needs. This would enable them to use the language in natural contexts and with members of the community.
2) The Amazigh language should not be presented in isolation, but should instead be used in its cultural context, giving the words their real meanings. Communication in real life contexts requires a pragmatic competence and an awareness of the culture of the community.

3) The materials developed for the teaching of Amazigh should be more authentic. They must be designed for the Amazigh context, whether as a minoritized mother tongue or a foreign language.

4) Designing a syllabus for Amazigh without taking into consideration the status of the language and the context in which it is being taught and the objectives set for its teaching does considerable harm to the language and prevents learners from valuing it because they can compare it to the other languages that they are learning, namely Modern Standard Arabic and French.

5) Syllabus and textbook designers and teachers should focus more on procedural and functional culture because they can help learners practice the language outside the classroom and realize its value.

6) Textbook designers and teachers should focus on communicative activities, such as dialogue, role play, audio recordings, and videos so as to present the language in a lively way and give learners the opportunity to hear and see Amazigh speakers using their language.

8.   CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the place of culture in the Amazigh textbooks through the analysis of their cultural content and teachers' opinions about it. The data analysis reveals that the textbook designers attempted to include some aspects of Amazigh culture, but failed to introduce them effectively. This is because they relied mainly on narratives and drawings instead of making use of dialogues, photos, audio recordings, and videos, which would have served as a more effective means for exposing the learners to Amazigh culture. The analysis of the content of the textbooks demonstrated that it focuses primarily on two cultural elements, namely expressions of the value system and the language of social interaction. The modes used for the presentation of the cultural content serve to familiarize the learners with the target cultural themes and behavior, but they do not enable them to produce the appropriate cultural behavior, and hence to develop communicative competence. More effort needs to be exerted in order to improve the Amazigh textbooks in terms of both content and modes of presentation to achieve the objective established for teaching the language, namely communicative competence.

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