

Enhancing the Competencies of Moroccan Amazigh Language Teachers Through Pre- and In-Service Training

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Abstract:

Both pre- and in-service training are indispensable for teachers' professional development. The present paper investigates the importance of pre- and in-service training in improving the Amazigh language teachers' competencies. It also explored how in-service training quality enhances the proficiency of Amazigh language teachers, as well as the role of training in providing novice teachers with the necessary competencies to effectively teach the Amazigh language. The participants highlighted the importance of this training. They emphasized that it helped them to embark on the adventure of teaching the Amazigh language. They also affirmed that in-service training courses develop teachers' competencies and performance, and they enhance their abilities in language, pedagogy, and didactics. The highlighted recommendations include focusing more on practicums than theoretical training, extending the training year to a full year, and enhancing the quality of trainers.

Keywords: The Amazigh language; pre-service training; in-service training.

1. Introduction

The Amazigh language is recognized as an official language in the 2011 Constitution¹. The Royal Decree No. 1.19.121, dated Muharram 12, 1441, corresponding to September 12, 2019, was issued in the Official Journal, implementing Regulatory Law No. 26.16 relating to determining the stages of activating the official character of the Amazigh language and how to integrate it into the field of education and in priority areas of public life. However, teaching the language in Moroccan primary schools started in the 2003–2004 school year with 807 teachers (Sadiqi, 2011; Idhssaine, 2022). The number of these teachers reached 1817 during the 2023–2024 school year (El Boutakmanti, 2025).

While the Ministry of National Education (MEN) has the will to generalize the Amazigh language instruction among primary schools, there are diverse challenges and limitations when it comes to pre-service training at the regional centers (CRMEF) and in-service training sessions. Case in point: A number of Amazigh language teachers did not undergo pre-service training before starting to teach the language. Moreover, a considerable number of El Boutakmanti's (2025) participants reported that they had never attended in-service training sessions. Additionally, it is reported that the contents of in-service training sessions lack depth and are mediocre. (El Boutakmanti, 2025)

Given that competent teachers are a key to successful integration and generalization of teaching the Amazigh language in Moroccan schools, the need for good pre-training at CRMEF is very urgent. Additionally, in-service training sessions are compulsory for the sake of guaranteeing a satisfactory follow-up of teachers' competencies along their professional careers. The current paper investigates the importance of pre- and in-service training in enhancing the Amazigh language teachers' competencies. It explores the role of pre-service training in providing novice teachers with the necessary tools to teach the language. Thus, the research questions of the present paper are the following:

- What is the importance of the pre- and in-service training in improving the Amazigh language teachers' competencies?

¹ See the 2011 Constitution of the Moroccan Kingdom, article 5.

- To what extent does current pre-service training provide novice teachers with the necessary competencies to effectively teach the Amazigh language?
- How does the in-service training quality enhance the proficiency of Amazigh language teachers?

2. Literature Review

Expert teachers are those who master professional skills and knowledge (Eliyawati et al. 2023). Furthermore, pre-service training, in particular, and training in general, make effective teachers and positively impact the entire education system (El Boutakmanti, 2011). Following Stronge (2018), the qualities of an exemplary teacher should include five characteristics. First, the teacher must build a positive personality representation. Second, the teacher should master the classroom management and organization. Additionally, the teacher has to be an effective instructor. Moreover, the teacher should monitor the progress of his students and their potential. Finally, an outstanding teacher should be professional. Agnau (2022) mentioned some pedagogical competencies targeted by training the Amazigh language teachers. These include the following:

- Know the reference texts on which the teaching of Tamazight is based;
- Assimilate the historical and cultural dimension of the Amazigh curriculum;
- Master the basic structures of the Amazigh language;
- Immerse oneself in the process of progressive standardization and its management through the cycles;
- Grasp the contents of the educational resources specific to the teaching of Tamazight;
- Plan, manage, and evaluate teaching-learning situations;¹

Gardner (2002), who studied language policy for Basque education, confirmed that in 1986 a major change occurred in the domain of teaching the Basque language, especially when it comes to teachers' profiles. It was confirmed that

¹ See also Nachef (2016) for more details about the Amazigh language teachers' pre- and in-service training.

“Teachers had to be qualified as teachers, hold EGA¹ or a recognized equivalent, OR have specialized in Basque in their university/teacher training college.” (Gardner, 2002: 20)

Ichou & Fathi (2022) studied the effects of the gap between macro and micro levels of Amazigh language planning in Morocco. They confirmed that the fact that these teachers undergo pre-service training “is completely supported by the answers of the teachers’ concerning responses about the question related to pre-service training. 96.1% assured that they have benefited from pre-service training before they become teachers of the Amazigh language” (Ichou & Fathi, 2022: 3707). However, 53% of them have training problems. More than half said that the training that they have undergone is of average quality, and only 10% assessed it as very good training. (Ichou & Fathi, 2022)

Moyo (2001) studied language policy and planning in the educational system in Malawi. He confirmed that the lack of well-trained graduates is among the list of problems that teaching indigenous languages encounters in Malawi. Malawian problems in teaching indigenous languages when it comes to pre- and in-service training are also confirmed by Awoniyi (1982). Furthermore, Boukous (2009) cited that the Amazigh language teachers are trained but affirmed the weakness of this training:

Jusqu’à la rentrée scolaire 2003, le système éducatif n’a accordé aucune place à l’amazighe. En 2009, près du huitième de la population scolarisée dans le primaire suit le cours de langue amazighe, des enseignants sont formés, des supports pédagogiques existent, des filières d’études amazighes sont créées dans quelques universités et des centres de formation des cadres de certaines institutions intègrent l’amazighe dans leur cursus. C’est-à-dire que la langue et la culture amazighes sont présentes dans l’éducation et la formation, et que cette présence est appelée à prendre de la consistance, en dépit de lenteurs qui grèvent la généralisation de l’enseignement, notamment l’absence de cadre législatif, l’insuffisance des enseignants, et la faiblesse de leur formation.” (Boukous, 2009: 17)

On the other hand, Errihani (2006) said that teachers of Tamazight received two weeks of training in the beginning of the school year 2003–2004, the first year of integrating the language into the Moroccan educational system. He added that the

¹ EGA stands for *Euskararen Gaitasun Agiria* which means “Basque language certificate.” The objective of the *Euskararen Gaitasun Agiria* exam is to certify having the C1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference in the Basque language.

Moroccan state organized minimal training efforts in order to assist Tamazight teachers with language pedagogy and didactics. Similarly, Monahan & Severo (2020) supported this by saying, “Teacher training programs were shortened to three weeks, and they started to try to recruit teachers who were already trained in the language” (Monahan & Severo, 2020: 64). Abdelhay. B et al. (2018) also affirmed a similar situation when it comes to teachers’ training in Sudan when they changed teaching in Arabic to English.

Following Panda et al. (2025), in-service training sessions are important for many reasons. These include improving teaching effectiveness, fostering professional growth, adapting to changes in educational standards, and enhancing student outcome. However, in-service training sessions with regard to the Amazigh language instruction are rare and of very low quality (El Boutakmanti, 2025). Furthermore, Moutaki & Taoufik (2023), while talking about the fact of adding a new component to the curriculum of the Amazigh language school subject, namely the Unity Project, confirmed that the new component requires in-service training and educational follow-up, which is a very unlikely process, in light of the absence of supervisors and pedagogical inspectors specialized in the Amazigh language and its didactics.

Furthermore, Belkhir & Abdelhay (2019) suggested a number of steps in order to promote teaching the Amazigh language, among which we find two suggestions with regard to in-service training. These are the following: “Tamazight teachers need in-service training frequently to learn about how to remedy issues such as time and classroom management. And “The ministry of education is supposed to train more inspectors to cover the needs of instructors as the number of demands and challenges is increasing. Four inspectors to cover a whole country are not enough.” (Belkhir & Abdelhay, 2019: 306–307)

3. Methodology

To explore the research questions of the present paper, fourteen interviews ($n=11$) have been conducted with novice Moroccan Amazigh teachers (from 1 to 3 years of experience) using the Easy Voice Recorder application. The interviews

provided me with qualitative data and allowed the researcher and the participants to have a direct interaction. Furthermore, interviews are a suitable way to let the participants freely express their views and ideas. The interview guide contains five open-ended questions. These include the following:

- How do you evaluate the quality of pre-service training in the Amazigh language at CRMEF?
- To what extent did pre-service training help you build the necessary competencies to teach the Amazigh language?
- How do you evaluate the quality of in-service training sessions in the Amazigh language?
- In your opinion, how does in-service training contribute to improving the efficiency of Amazigh language teachers?
- What are your recommendations for improving and developing pre- and in-service training systems for the Amazigh language?

I listened to audio-recorded data once to have a holistic idea about what participants say when answering the questions. I also listened to them another time in order to translate them. It is worth mentioning that we re-listened to each part of all audio-recorded data many times during the translation phase. Additionally, the translated data are read many times in order to be familiar with them. The translated data are coded. This forms the main themes that are discussed in this thesis. Through reading and re-reading my results, I searched for the themes that occurred through the data and thus presented regularities and similarities. The themes that have been constructed are relevant to the investigated research questions. It is significant to point out that during the translation phase, I removed asides and interruptions that were unrelated to my topic.

In terms of the discussion of the current research findings, I followed a qualitative content analysis (QCA). The latter is defined as “an approach of empirical, methodological, controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step-by-step model, without rush quantification” (Mayring, 2000: 2). According to Hsieh & Shannon (2005), QCA

is a research method used to subjectively interpret the content of text data by means of coding and identifying patterns or themes. There are three approaches to QCA. These include direct content analysis, conventional qualitative content analysis, and summative content analysis. The current paper will basically follow a direct content analysis (DCA) in discussing the findings. This choice is supported by the truth that it easily compares what is officially cited at the macro level and what is actually happening in the issue of Amazigh language teachers' training. Moreover, DCA highly organizes the study and provides a clear vision to the reader.

4. Findings

4.1 Evaluating the pre- and in-service training quality

Generally, the current paper participants reported that the quality of pre-service training at CRMEF is acceptable to good. This is supported by a number of quotations. For the sake of clarification, I cite the following:

- “The pre-service training that I underwent was a fair-to-good one.” (O.A.)
- “The quality of the pre-service training is good in terms of theoretical content.” (M.T.)
- “I think it's an average pre-service training.” (T.S.)
- “It's a fair-to-good pre-service training.” (L.E.)

As for in-service training sessions, a significant number of these participants cited that they have never attended in-service training courses with regard to teaching the Amazigh language. This is the case of Mr. O.A. when he said, “Actually, I do not know even if there are in-service training sessions.” It's confirmed by other teachers. These include the following:

- “I have not attended any in-service training courses about teaching Tamazight.” (Mr. T.S.)
- “I have never attended any in-service trainings.” (Mr. L.E.)
- “I did not participate in any training courses.” (Mr. H.S.)
- “I did not attend any of the in-service training courses.” (Mr. M.K.)

Furthermore, these participants affirmed the fact that in-service training sessions with regard to the Amazigh language are limited and their presence in the field of educational in-service training is weak. “Because this aspect is very weak with regard to the Amazigh language.” Said (Mr. H.S.). This is confirmed by Mr. M.F.: “As far as I know, these (in-service training courses) are rare and limited.” Moreover, two other teachers affirmed this perspective by saying, “By the way, it is almost non-existent” (Mr. M.A.). “Tamazight is excluded from training courses” (Mr. M.T.). Given the situation cited above, teachers rely on self-training, such as Mr. H.S., who reported that “the majority of teachers only benefit from pre-service training at CRMEF before being assigned to their workplaces; then they rely on self-training.”

Moreover, other teachers said that there is a certain improvisation when it comes to Amazigh language trainings. “There is a kind of improvisation and a lack of scientific knowledge in trainings,” (Mr. M.T.) In addition to this, Mr. M.A. said that “even if there is a training course, it does not respond to the expectations of the Amazigh language teachers at all.” However, three of these participants reported a positive response when they confirmed that they attended an in-service training course about the new Pioneer Schools project and that “the training session is not bad.” (Mr. A.R.)

4.2 The role of pre-service training in building vital teaching competencies

When the participants of the current paper were asked the following question: “To what extent did pre-service training help you build the necessary competencies to teach the Amazigh language?” All the participants affirmed the importance and indispensability of this training. They emphasized that it helped them to embark on the adventure of teaching the Amazigh language. Mr. S.T. said, “What I gained during the training, even if it was limited, is crucial for starting to teach.” The idea is also confirmed by Mr. L.N.; he cited that pre-service training provided him with the initial support, tools, and raw materials to embark on the adventure of teaching the Amazigh language.

Furthermore, the Amazigh language teachers reported that pre-service training contributed to building professional, linguistic, and pedagogical competencies. Moreover, it provided them with initial tools to begin teaching the language, such as lesson planning, learning management, and the use of modern teaching approaches. The idea is supported by a number of attestations. These include the following:

- “It helped me to some extent. After graduating, I found myself possessing the initial tools to begin teaching the language.” (Mr. O.A.)
- “The pre-service training significantly contributed to building my professional, linguistic, and pedagogical competencies, especially in lesson planning, learning management, and the use of modern teaching approaches.” (Mr. M.T.)

4.3 The impact of in-service training on teacher efficiency

The Amazigh language teachers reported negative responses with regard to the number of in-service training sessions they attended. They confirmed that this type of training is very rare regarding Amazigh language didactics. This issue is affirmed by a number of participants. By way of example, Mr. M.F. stated, “In-service training courses are important for continuing professional development and keeping teachers up-to-date, but unfortunately, they are rare.”

However, the respondents emphasized the importance of the in-service training courses. They affirmed that these courses develop teachers' competencies and performance, and they enhance their abilities in language, pedagogy, and didactics. “High-quality training courses are crucial to developing teachers' performance and competence, and they contribute to enhancing their abilities in pedagogy, education, and language” (Mr. S.T.). Furthermore, this type of training helps teachers to “develop their teaching and assessment skills and keep them informed about the latest curriculum and program updates.” (Mr. L.E.)

Additionally, the Amazigh language teachers responded that Pioneer Schools training is among the in-service training courses that they recently attended. It is confirmed that training allowed them to understand many issues with regard to the new Moroccan projects, namely Pioneer Schools. It also helped them to clarify

much of the confusion surrounding this new project. The idea is clarified by a number of attestations. Here are some examples:

- “The in-service training course on Pioneer Schools helped me to clarify much of the confusion surrounding this new project and how to implement its new methodology.” (Mr. L.N.)
- “In-service training courses contribute to improving teachers' competencies. The last training course helped me understand everything related to the teaching methods used in Pioneer Schools.” (Mr. H.S.)

4.4 Strategic recommendations for enhancing the Amazigh language training system

The participants of the current study highlighted a set of recommendations for enhancing the Amazigh language pre-service training system. These recommendations encompass focusing on practicums more than theoretical training, extending the training year to a full year, and enhancing the quality of trainers. (Mr. M.A.) said, “I suggest emphasizing practicums over theoretical training during pre-service training at CRMEF.” This is confirmed by other respondents of the present paper, such as the attestation of Mr. M.F.: “I propose strengthening the practical component of the curriculum.” Other quotations that support the issues cited above are the following:

- “The training year should be extended to a full year, from September to July.” (Mr. O.A.)
- “The skills of the instructors should be enhanced.” (Mr. L.E.)

Regarding the in-service training courses, the participants cited some recommendations to enhance their quality. It is reported that these training courses should be regularly organized: “Training sessions should be organized regularly and continuously.” (Mr. S.T.) It is also recommended to organize in-service training sessions once there are new issues with regard to Amazigh language teaching: “First, regular and periodic training sessions should be organized, especially when there are new developments in the field of teaching the Amazigh language.” (Mr. M.K.)

5. Analysis and Discussion

The participants of the current study reported that they had undergone pre-service training in teaching the Amazigh language at CRMEF. This issue is one of the positive points regarding Amazigh language teaching. It is worth noting that pre-service training at CRMEF targets a set of skills as cited by Agnau (2022). Given that these teachers benefited from this training and that they have provided positive responses regarding its quality, this means that they have gained these skills and basic competencies to start teaching the Amazigh language.

The present study participants emphasized the importance of pre-service training and its crucial role in building their initial knowledge to embark on the adventure of teaching the Amazigh language. This means that MEN should keep up the same strategy to train Amazigh language teachers and avoid any patchwork approach to providing for these teachers. Furthermore, it has to enhance, promote, and develop the pre-service training at all levels.

Moreover, the Amazigh language teachers confirmed the indispensability of in-service training. They affirmed that such training plays a great role in developing teachers' competencies, and it provides them with any updates regarding Amazigh language teaching. However, this type of training is rare, as it is reported by the respondents of the present paper. Thus, MEN has to seriously work on the workshop of organizing in-service training courses in a regular manner so that these teachers will benefit from any pedagogical updates.

The results of the current study with regard to training are in line with Ichou and Fathi (2022) and Gardner (2002), who studied language policy for Basque education. He confirmed that in 1986 a major change occurred in the domain of teaching the Basque language, especially when it comes to teachers' profiles.

However, the results are in opposition to previous research (Moyo, 2001; Errihani, 2006; Boukous, 2009; Monahan & Severo, 2020). Moyo (2001) studied language policy and planning in the educational system in Malawi. He confirmed that among the list of problems that teaching indigenous languages encountered in Malawi, we found the lack of well-trained graduates.¹ Furthermore, Boukous

¹ See also Awoniyi (1982) for details about Malawian problems in teaching indigenous languages.

(2009) cited that the Amazigh language teachers are trained but affirmed the weakness of this training.

On the other hand, Errihani (2006) said that teachers of Tamazight received two weeks of training in the beginning of the school year 2003–2004, the first year of integrating the language into the Moroccan educational system. He added that the Moroccan state organized minimal training efforts in order to assist Tamazight teachers with language pedagogy and didactics. Similarly, Monahan & Severo (2020) supported the issue by saying, “Teacher training programs were shortened to three weeks, and they started to try to recruit teachers who were already trained in the language.” (Monahan and Severo, 2020: 64)¹

The participants of the current study reported negative responses when it comes to in-service training. First, some of them said that they have never participated in this type of training. It is confirmed that this kind of training is very weak and limited. However, they emphasized the fact that these in-service training courses are crucial for increasing the knowledge, proficiency, and advancement of teachers as well as allowing them to benefit from any pedagogical updates regarding Amazigh language teaching.

Moutaki and Taoufik (2023), while talking about the fact of adding a new component to the curriculum of the Amazigh language school subject, namely the Unity Project, confirmed that the new component requires in-service training and educational follow-up, which is a very unlikely process in light of the absence of supervisors and pedagogical inspectors specialized in the Amazigh language and its didactics.

The results of the present paper are in line with Belkhir & Abdelhay (2019). They suggested a number of steps to promote teaching the Amazigh language, among which we find two suggestions with regard to in-service training. These are the following: “Tamazight teachers need in-service training frequently to learn about how to remedy issues such as time and classroom management. Furthermore, “The Ministry of Education is supposed to train more inspectors to cover the needs

¹ See also Abdelhay. B et al. (2018) for a similar situation when it comes to teachers’ training in Sudan when they changed teaching in Arabic to English.

of instructors as the number of demands and challenges is increasing. Four inspectors to cover a whole country are not enough.” (Belkhir & Abdelhay, 2019: 306–307)

6. Conclusion

The objective of the present study was to investigate the importance of pre- and in-service training in improving the Amazigh language teachers' competencies. It also explored how in-service training quality enhances the proficiency of Amazigh language teachers, as well as the role of training in providing novice teachers with the necessary competencies to effectively teach the Amazigh language.

First, the participants reported that the quality of pre-service training at CRMEF ranged from acceptable to good. Second, the findings highlighted the importance and indispensability of this training. They emphasized that it helped teachers to embark on the adventure of teaching the Amazigh language. Furthermore, the Amazigh language teachers reported negative responses with regard to the number of in-service training sessions they attended, while they emphasized the importance of the in-service training courses. The respondents affirmed that these courses develop teachers' competencies and performance, and they enhance their abilities in language, pedagogy, and didactics. Moreover, the results highlighted a set of recommendations for enhancing the Amazigh language pre-service training system. These recommendations encompass focusing on practicums more than theoretical training, extending the training year to a full year, and enhancing the quality of trainers.

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