

# The Teaching of the Spanish Language in Northern Morocco: Between Strength and Decline

*La enseñanza de la lengua española en el Norte de Marruecos: entre la fortaleza y el declive*

Nasma Irakrak  
Universidad de Sevilla (Spain)



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## Abstract:

The current situation of the teaching of the Spanish language in the North of Morocco is experiencing a notable setback due to the lack of interest of Moroccan youth in studying the language of Cervantes compared to other languages such as English. This work aims to know the current state of Spanish language teaching in northern Morocco and its future prospects, placing emphasis on its strengths. On the one hand, its vitality stands out from different elements: the historical Spanish presence in Morocco, the economic, political and cultural relations between both countries, immigration and its influence on the dissemination of Spanish, the media and the influx from the Moroccan audience in the north to the Spanish channels. On the other hand, we reflect on the different causes that have caused a quantitative decline in the demand to study Spanish.

This study is based on mixed technique with a survey, with the aim of finding out the current state of Spanish language teaching in northern Morocco. As a notable result, the Spanish language, especially in the northern fringe, there has been a decrease in the interest of Moroccan youth in the study of the Spanish language in recent years. The great global economic crisis of 2008 and subsequent years; the serious financial problems of developing countries and of Europe itself in particular, much more burdensome for southern countries like Spain; the stoppage of investments, cancellation of agreements, suspension of in-person classes, etc. caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic: these are some of the main causes that have motivated such a decline in the demand for Spanish studies.

## Keywords:

Cultural relations; Language instruction; Northern Morocco; Spanish language; Teaching

## Resumen:

La situación actual de la enseñanza de la lengua española en el Norte de Marruecos está experimentando un retroceso notable debido a la falta de interés de la juventud marroquí para estudiar la lengua de Cervantes frente a otras lenguas como el inglés. Este trabajo pretende conocer el estado actual de la enseñanza de la lengua española en el norte de Marruecos y sus perspectivas de futuro, poniendo énfasis en sus fortalezas. Por un lado, se destaca su vitalidad a partir de distintos elementos: la presencia histórica española en Marruecos, las relaciones económicas, políticas y culturales entre ambos países, la inmigración y su influencia en la difusión del español, los medios de comunicación y la afluencia de la audiencia marroquí de la zona norte a los canales españoles. Por otro lado, se reflexiona sobre las diferentes causas que han provocado un retroceso cuantitativo en la demanda por estudiar español.

Este estudio se basa en la técnica mixta mediante encuesta, con el objetivo de conocer el estado actual de la enseñanza de la lengua española en el norte de Marruecos. Como resultado destacable, la lengua española, especialmente en la franja norte primer dato reseñable se ha producido una disminución del interés de la juventud marroquí hacia el estudio de la lengua española en los últimos años. La gran crisis económica mundial de 2008 y años sucesivos; los graves problemas financieros de los países en desarrollo y de la propia Europa en particular, mucho más gravosa para los países del sur como España; el parón de inversiones, anulación de convenios, suspensión de clases presenciales, etc. que ha supuesto la pandemia mundial de COVID-19: estas son algunas de las principales causas que han motivado tal retroceso en la demanda de estudios de español.

## Palabras claves:

Aprendizaje de lengua; Enseñanza; norte de Marruecos; lengua española; relaciones culturales

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Contacto: [nasma.irakrak@gmail.com](mailto:nasma.irakrak@gmail.com)

## 1. Introduction

The economic crisis of 2008 and the following years, the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021, and, more recently, the rising inflation of raw materials, fuel, electricity, and essential food products—due, among other factors, to the war between Ukraine and Russia—are striking events that have impacted the economy and social well-being of Spanish society.

These events have brought serious social and economic consequences, such as job insecurity, the loss of purchasing power in wages, and growing inequalities in income distribution. These factors of instability in the Spanish economy have negatively affected the interest of Moroccan youth in studying the language of Cervantes as a foreign language, in contrast to other languages like English. The majority of young Moroccans associate learning Spanish with a potential migration project to Europe for economic, cultural, or family-related reasons.

A notable decline can be observed in the number of students enrolled in Morocco's public educational institutions, which is continuously decreasing due to the emergence of private academies and educational centers that promote English as a second language. Furthermore, educational cooperation programs between the Spanish Ministry of Education and Culture and the Moroccan Ministry of National Education (MEN) have been canceled, which previously aimed to foster interest in Spanish as a primary option among the various foreign languages available (Instituto Cervantes Yearbook, 2021).

However, the geographical proximity, shared history, and cultural and linguistic ties between Spain and Morocco make the presence of Spanish in Northern Morocco essential. The Spanish language enjoys and will continue to enjoy a prominent role in the media, socio-economic, diplomatic, and cultural relations, as well as in literary creation. The relationship between Spain and Morocco is ever-changing yet constantly active, as evidenced by the continuous interest not only in speaking Spanish but also in using the language as a vehicle for culture, education, and a bridge to Europe.

The existence of three main channels for teaching Spanish in Morocco further confirms this: The Moroccan formal education system, the Spanish educational initiative in Morocco—managed by the Spanish Ministry of Education, which oversees a significant network of Spanish schools offering formal education—and the Instituto Cervantes. Specifically, through this institution, Spanish language and Hispanic studies departments exist at universities in Rabat, Casablanca, Fez, Tetouan, Agadir, Tangier (School of Translation), Nador, Mohammedia, Meknes, and Marrakech (in development) (VV. AA, 2021).

All these factors contribute to the growth and dissemination of the Spanish language in Morocco. Additionally, in 2022, the Spanish government established the Global Observatory of Spanish, which, like in other countries, will directly address the needs and challenges of the Spanish language in Morocco (Agencia Efe, 2022).

In this study, we will use survey techniques as a research tool to examine the development of Spanish in Northern Morocco. We will highlight its strengths and vitality based on various elements: Spain's historical presence in Morocco, the economic, political, and cultural relations between both countries, the role of the media, and finally, the interest among Moroccan youth in studying the Spanish language. The online survey is directed at high school students from public institutions in Tangier (Morocco). Lastly, we will provide a reflective analysis of the Moroccan educational system concerning Spanish language teaching in the country.

The general objective of this study is to assess the current state of Spanish language education in Northern Morocco and its future prospects, emphasizing its present vitality while also reflecting on the causes of its decline.

### 1.1. The Situation of Spanish in Morocco: Past and Present

Currently, the Spanish language in Morocco is experiencing a certain decline compared to the expansion of English and French language studies. The figures indicate that “over the past twenty years, there has been a loss of students in secondary education, and the same has happened with university students enrolled in Hispanic studies departments” (VV. AA, 2021).

From 2001 to 2007, Spanish language studies were highly sought after by Moroccan students in high schools, academies, and universities. During the 2002/03 academic year, there was an increase in the number of students learning Spanish, despite the significant percentage gap between Spanish (español) and English (inglés). This trend is illustrated in Table 1 (Sánchez-Brunete, J. M., 2003).

**Table 1.** Foreign Language Teaching in Moroccan Secondary Education (2002-2003)

ENSEÑANZA DE LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS EN LA SECUNDARIA MARROQUÍ (2002-2003)			
Lengua	N.º de clases	N.º de alumnos	N.º de profesores
Inglés	13.517	475.275	3.441
Español	1.601	50.965	591
Alemán	268	8.050	123
Italiano	64	1.904	35

Source: own elaboration

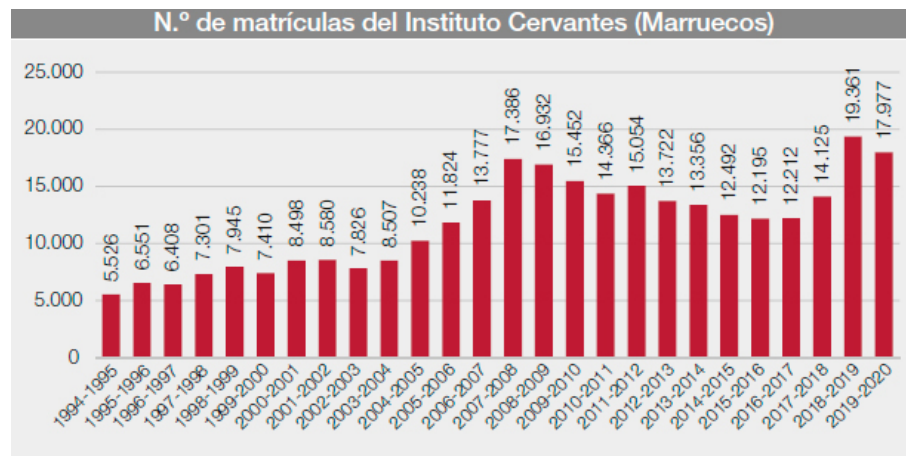
### 1.2. The Decline of the Spanish Language in Morocco in Recent Years

In recent years, several indicators have emerged showing the decline of the Spanish language in Morocco. One clear sign is the elimination of many Spanish language classrooms in high schools and universities, particularly in southern Morocco. For instance, in 2017, only 40 students enrolled in Spanish language studies at the University of Agadir (Achraf, H., 2017).

Undoubtedly, the global economic crisis has impacted the Spanish economy, leading to budget cuts in cultural and linguistic cooperation programs. As a result, the Spanish job market has lost much of its appeal for Moroccans, as Spain is no longer seen as a destination offering strong professional development opportunities. Another key factor to highlight is the shift in Morocco's economic focus. Today, Morocco invests in a variety of economic sectors, not only in Spain but also in the Gulf countries, China, Germany, and France. Consequently, English has become a higher priority, as it offers greater opportunities for advancement in the international job market.

From a linguistic perspective, Spanish is losing speakers compared to other languages in the country. Since the creation of the Instituto Cervantes in 1991, student enrollment has grown significantly. However, a major setback occurred during the years of the economic crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic:

**Image 1.** Spanish students in the Moroccan public secondary education system



"This upward trend can be observed in the number of enrollments, which increased from 5,500 (first recorded in 1994-1995) to 17,000 (2007-2008). However, the critical year of 2008, when the global economic crisis erupted, represents both the year of the best results for the Instituto Cervantes in Morocco (up to that date) and the beginning of a decline that continued in the following years, reaching 12,000 enrollments in 2015-2016." (VV. AA, 2021)

Furthermore, one of the main factors contributing to the decline of Spanish is the reform of the Moroccan academic system, which has reduced the presence of the Spanish language in the curriculum, giving more space to other languages.

**Table 2.** Spanish students in the Moroccan public secondary education system

Alumnos de español en la enseñanza media pública marroquí					
1975-1976	2000-2001	2002-2003	2014-2015	2017-2018	2020-2021
7.228	36.839	50.965	79.493	69.819	42.250

Fuente: Gil Grima (1977), Martínez Alonso (2020: 368) y elaboración propia con datos de las AREF (consejerías de Educación de Marruecos) para el curso 2020-2021.

Source: own elaboration

As shown in Table 2, the years of significant enrollment losses at the Instituto Cervantes coincided with the economic crisis, specifically the debt crisis from 2014 to 2017, when enrollments remained at approximately 12,000 per academic year. We also observe that during the 2018-2019 academic year, there was a notable increase in students, reaching approximately 20,000 enrollments. At this point, Moroccan interest in Spanish studies seemed to revive, making Spain once again a desirable destination for studying, working, or traveling. However, student numbers declined again in 2020 due to the COVID-19 crisis, dropping to 17,977 enrollments.

Spanish has lost prominence in public secondary education over the past decade, primarily due to the introduction of English in schools and, consequently, in university programs. In Ta-

ble 2, we can see the decrease in the number of Spanish language students over the years, with a particularly significant decline in the 2020-2021 academic year. This drop can be clearly explained by language policy changes in educational reforms that prioritize French and English, the lack of professional opportunities for Spanish language students, and the cancellation of educational cooperation programs.

**Table 3.** Number of Enrollments at the Instituto Cervantes (Morocco)

Alumnos de español en la enseñanza media pública marroquí					
1975-1976	2000-2001	2002-2003	2014-2015	2017-2018	2020-2021
7.228	36.839	50.965	79.493	69.819	42.250
Fuente: Gil Grima (1977), Martínez Alonso (2020: 368) y elaboración propia con datos de las AREF (consejerías de Educación de Marruecos) para el curso 2020-2021.					

Spanish at the university level is experiencing the same downward trend, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Students of Spanish in Moroccan Universities

Estudiantes de la especialidad de Español en las universidades marroquíes				
2003-2004	2005-2006	2007-2008	2017-2018	2020-2021
2.601	2.288	3.460	2.692	1.767
Fuente: elaboración propia con datos aportados por los departamentos de estudios hispánicos para el curso 2020-2021.				

The sharp drop in the number of university students enrolled in Spanish was significant, as highlighted in *El español en el mundo 2021. Anuario del Instituto Cervantes*. In the 2020-2021 academic year, the number of enrolled students dropped to 1,767 compared to 2,692 in the 2017-2018 academic year.

In general, as Javier Galván, former director of the Cervantes Institute in Rabat, notes: “The number of Spanish workshops in the Moroccan educational system is decreasing, that is a reality; however, on the other hand, we see that the number of Moroccan citizens who speak Spanish is growing” (VV. AA, 2021). It is a fact that interest has decreased in public schools and universities; however, in the socio-economic world, Spanish remains an attractive language, especially in northern Morocco. The economic relations between both countries continue to be significant, as Spain is Morocco’s main trading partner.

It is also worth remembering that the shared history between Spain and Morocco and their geographical proximity have made Spanish one of the foreign languages present in the Moroccan linguistic landscape, particularly in the north, where there is a higher number of speakers who know and use the language.



## 2. Methodology

The research methodology is mixed. Descriptive statistical results and qualitative data are obtained.

The data collection tool is a semistructured survey. The survey is a technique for collecting information through written questions organized in a printed questionnaire. It is used to investigate facts or phenomena in a general (non-specific) way:

It is a research method capable of providing answers to problems both in descriptive terms and in terms of variable relationships, after the systematic collection of information, according to a previously established design that ensures the rigor of the information obtained (Buendía et al., 1998, p. 120).

It is a tool to collect data, understand and assess the level of Spanish among Moroccan students.

The survey is aimed at students of various levels who study Spanish in the formal education system of Morocco. All students who have taken the Spanish language subject participated, including those from both the scientific and literary branches.

The survey did not include the names of respondents, preserving their anonymity to ensure they felt comfortable and secure during the process. Beyond the main advantage of anonymity, it is worth noting the high number of completed surveys. Although it was anonymous, minimal identifying information was collected, such as the name of the high school where the subject was taken and the students' grade level. The survey was conducted in most of the high schools in the city of Tangier, such as Ibn Al Khatib, Allal El Fassi, Abbi El Abass-Sebti, etc.

This study opted for a digital tool: The Google Form, to reach the largest possible number of students and facilitate data collection and processing. The Spanish teachers at each school also collaborated to support the dissemination.

The survey was distributed during periods of high student attendance, for example, during exam season. The link was shared among academics and education professionals via social media and email.

### 2.1. Objectives

The main goal of this survey, as previously mentioned, is to assess the level of Spanish in Moroccan education, the interest of Moroccan youth in the language of Cervantes, and their knowledge of Spanish reality.

It also aims to collect proposals to improve the teaching of the Spanish language in Morocco by asking students in which areas they would like to see improvements in their education. In this regard, we draw on the valuable experience of a large number of students pursuing a degree in Hispanic Philology, who already have university-level experience.

From these objectives, we seek to obtain constructive feedback that will give teachers a realistic view of their subject (empathy) and highlight its strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, they will understand the problems; on the other, they will receive students' suggestions regarding how the subject should be taught. Naturally, these recommendations may help tea-

chers identify which aspects interest students the most. Furthermore, the survey will encourage students to directly contribute to their education in a simple and efficient way, as completing the survey takes only a few minutes. This way, Spanish language students can feel that their opinions are being heard, while the survey helps channel their participation.

The survey on Spanish language teaching in Morocco arises from the need to understand first-hand the situation of Spanish education within the Moroccan school system. The changing relationship between Spain and Morocco has influenced the development of Spanish usage and learning, which has gone through several phases from the Protectorate era to the present day. This evolution has also affected the Moroccan educational system, which has been undergoing ongoing reforms and changes.

## 2.2. Research procedure

A survey completed online by users was chosen as the study approach. To avoid influencing responses, mechanisms were put in place to ensure anonymity.

The process involved designing a simple questionnaire in Spanish aimed at students of the Spanish language within the Moroccan education system. Around 60 students were contacted during the June 2023 exam period, and 45 completed questionnaires were collected.

## 2.3. Survey Development

The survey was developed following these steps:

Identification and Definition of the Problem: Defining the problem, establishing objectives, and selecting the applied methodology.

Work Plan Development: Organizing tasks, preparing questionnaires, designing the sample and its distribution, planning fieldwork, executing the plan, carrying out fieldwork, collecting and verifying questionnaires, processing and interpreting results, and preparing reports.

Evaluation and Analysis of Results

Below is a brief breakdown of the survey development steps:

### 2.3.1. Definition of the Survey's Objective

It is crucial to clearly define the specific information desired from respondents. We also consider this first step to be the most interesting, as it guides the development of the questions, response scales, and the overall survey structure.

### 2.3.2. Definition of the Measurement Scale

The scale largely determines the content of the questions, the structure of the survey, and the data collection process. We have selected the following type of measurement: a five-point scale –Poor, Very Poor, Fair, Good and Very Good.



### 2.3.3. Definition of the Number and Type of Questions

The number of questions could become quite extensive; however, once we gathered the necessary information and clarified our objective, we set a limit of 24 questions for our survey. These include open-ended, closed, and categorized questions:

- ✓ Open-ended questions: Respondents can answer freely, elaborating as much as they wish.
- ✓ Closed questions: Respondents choose the answer that best reflects their opinion from only two options: Yes or No.
- ✓ Categorized closed questions: These include predefined categories of responses along with the question.

In the categorized closed questions, responses involve rating. The respondent reads a scale with increasing intensity in the response options.

### 2.4. Survey Template

The complete survey template is available at the following link:

<https://forms.gle/W6dcrBsi8RjxKjoV6>

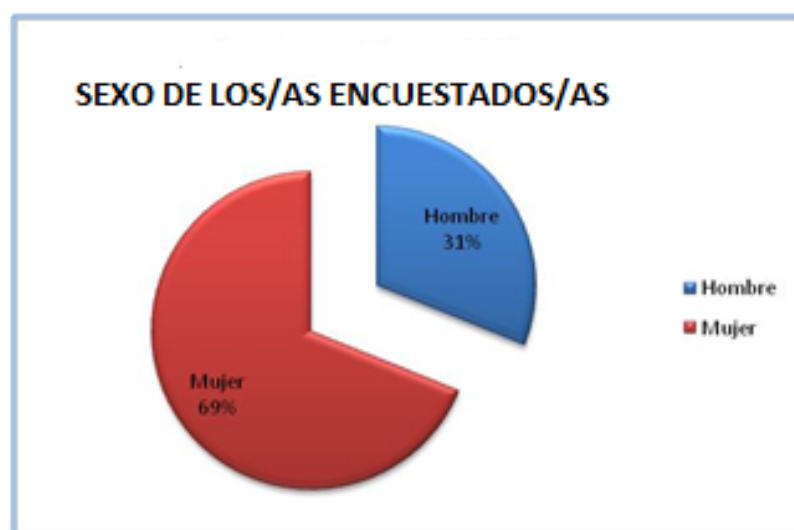
## 3. Results

### 3.1. Quantitative results

Demonstrative graphs showing the distribution of responses to each question.

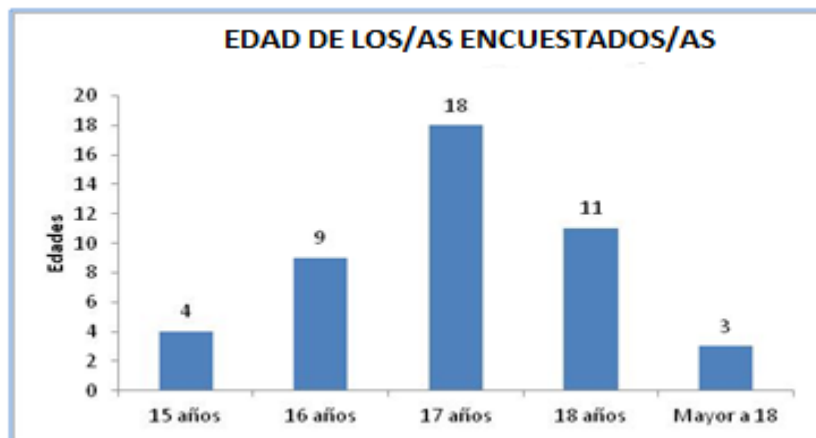
The total number of surveyed students is forty-five. Each graph displays the percentage of students who selected each response. The legend in each graph uses color to explain the obtained answers.

**Graph 1.** Gender of the Respondents



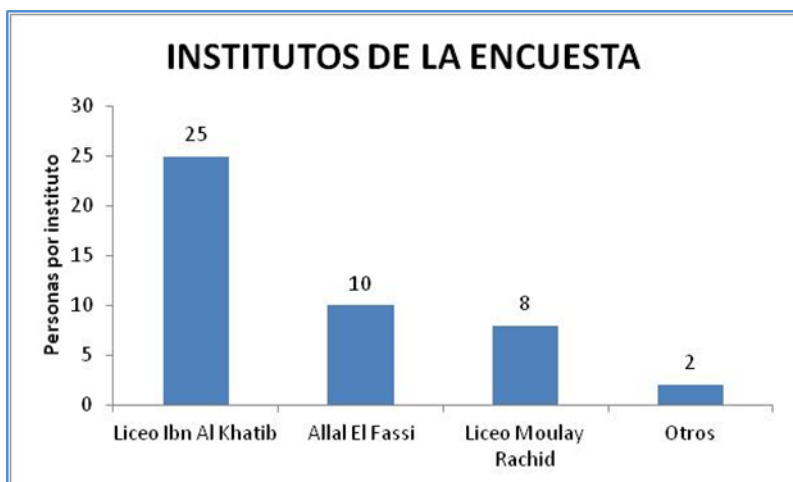
The first graph shows the gender distribution of the respondents. As can be seen, the vast majority are women, making up 69% of the total (31 out of the 45 respondents).

**Graph 2.** Age of the Respondents



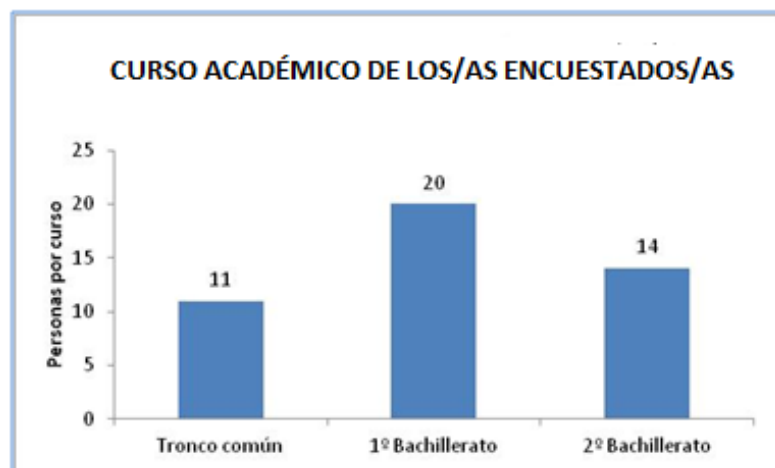
Students aged seventeen, with a total of eighteen respondents, represent the largest age group among the participants, showing an increasing distribution up to that age, and a decreasing one afterward. However, it is also worth noting that those aged eighteen make up a significant percentage as well, with eleven of the respondents being that age.

**Graph 3.** High Schools Where the Survey Was Conducted and Responses Were Obtained



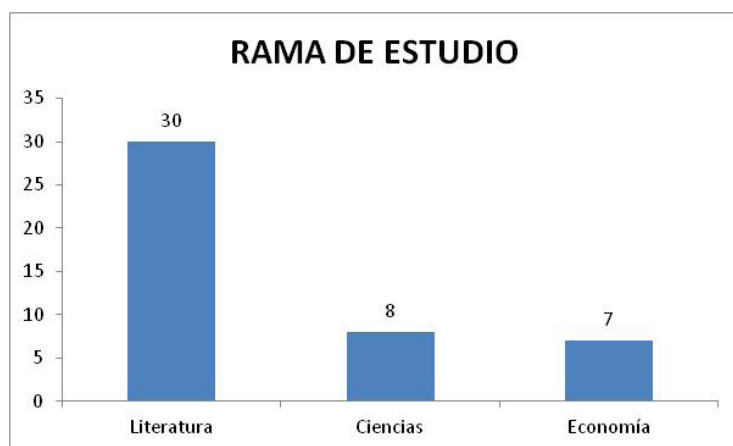
Despite the wide distribution of the survey across numerous high schools, the vast majority of students who responded are from Ibn Al Khatib High School, accounting for over 55% of the total responses.

**Graph 4.** Academic Year in Which the Surveyed Students Are Enrolled



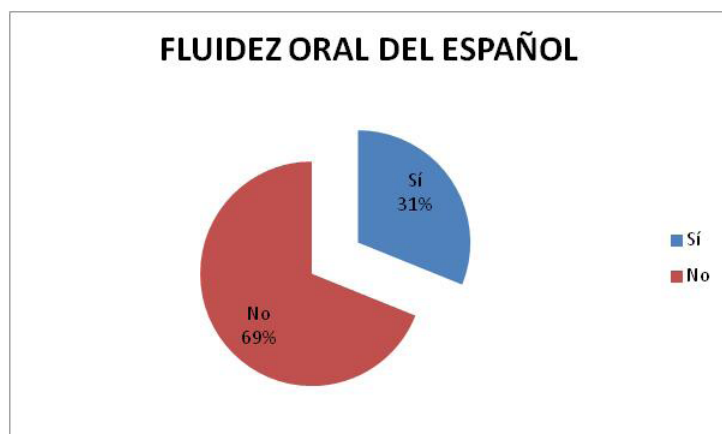
This graph shows that the majority of respondents chose to study Spanish during high school (thirty-four out of forty-five respondents, which is over 75%), compared to those who began studying Spanish earlier, during the so-called “common core,” equivalent to lower secondary education.

**Graph 5.** Field of Study



The large percentage of students who responded, that is, 66.67%, are studying the field of literature and languages, perhaps due to the greater affinity for languages in this field.

**Graph 6.** Oral Fluency in Spanish



This graph shows that the majority of respondents have chosen a negative response, with 69%, that is, thirty-one students, believing they cannot achieve oral fluency in Spanish based on the knowledge acquired in the classroom. In contrast, fourteen students, the remaining 31%, responded affirmatively.

This significant difference can be explained by the absence of conversation classes: oral skills are not practiced in the classroom, alongside the limited number of Spanish class hours per week, as will be seen later. On the other hand, the lack of motivation among students to participate in classes also indicates, in advance, the importance each student places on acquiring a high level of oral competence. The conclusion, therefore, is clear: it is essential to strengthen conversation classes in the classroom.

**Graph 7.** Nationality of the Teaching Staff

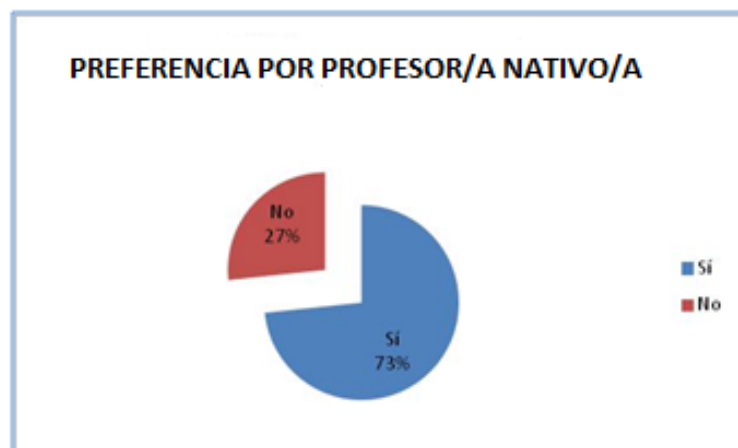


We know for certain that all the teachers in the Moroccan educational system are of Moroccan nationality, as it is one of the requirements to become a Spanish teacher. This condition also has a historical precedent dating back to 1976, when the Ministry of Education had to implement an emergency plan that, on the one hand, aimed to train new cohorts of teachers to take charge of teaching the subject in high schools, replacing both French and Spanish foreign cooperants, and on the other hand, to create "nurseries" of students to feed the Spanish de-

partments of the country's universities, who would later, in turn, become teachers themselves (M. El Khoutabi, 2005).

The students have clearly expressed the existing reality. In this sample, 100% of the students studying Spanish have never had a native teacher. This highlights that no student combines Spanish classes in the Moroccan educational system with classes from the Instituto Cervantes.

**Graph 8.** Preference for Native Teachers



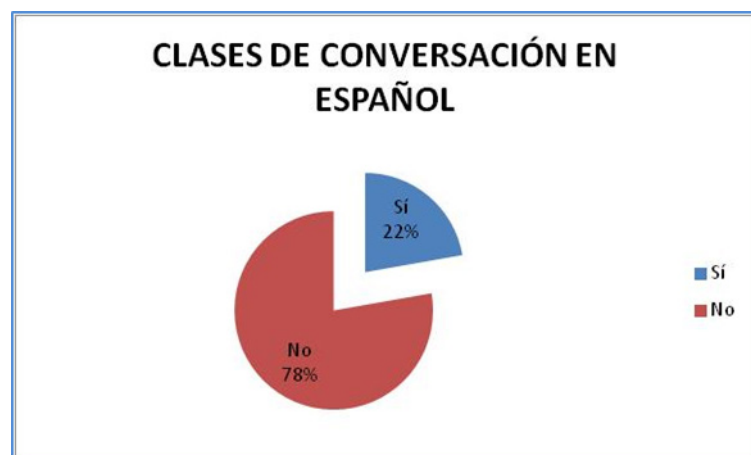
The resulting sample in this case shows that 33 students, representing 73% of the total, prefer classes with a native teacher, while 12 of them, or 27%, opt for a teacher who is, in this context, understood to be Moroccan. There is always a general preference for native speakers in language teaching, although this idea is not universally shared, as both types of teachers have their strengths and weaknesses.

The native Spanish-speaking teacher, in this case, has an authentic pronunciation of the language and knows how to provide the best input for their students. However, their limited linguistic training in the local language and unfamiliarity with the students' native tongue require them to have strong theoretical preparation in linguistics and explicit knowledge of language learning.

On the other hand, the non-native teacher is capable of identifying incorrect usage, is more alert to possible structural mistakes, and knows how to offer the most effective learning techniques due to their own experience as a language learner, in addition to being a teacher. They are better equipped to anticipate errors and difficulties, show greater understanding and empathy toward students' challenges, and can share the same native language with them as a foundation, among other advantages. In other words, a student may feel more comfortable with a Moroccan teacher who speaks their language and understands their culture.

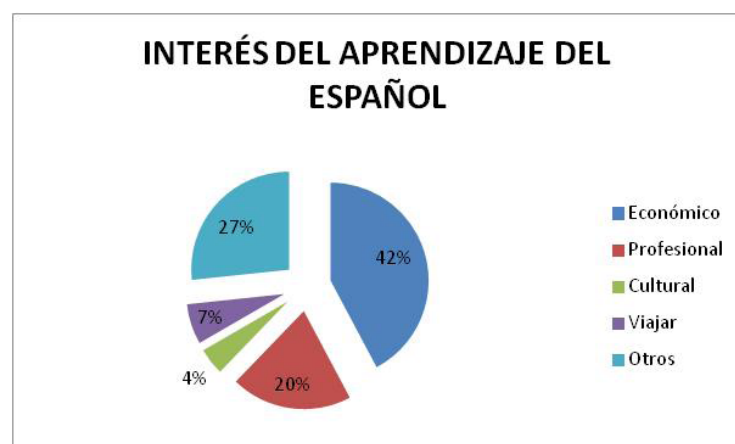
The idiosyncrasy of Moroccan culture often clashes with the customs, beliefs, and practices of other European countries—Spain, in this case.

**Graph 9.** Availability of Spanish Conversation Classes



In the Moroccan educational system, conversation classes are not formally included in the teaching curriculum. However, there are activities related to the development of communicative competence. For this reason, 35 students, representing 78% of those surveyed, reported that they have not had oral conversation classes, although in recent years there has been a growing trend toward incorporating conversational practice into regular classes.

**Graph 10.** Interest in Learning Spanish

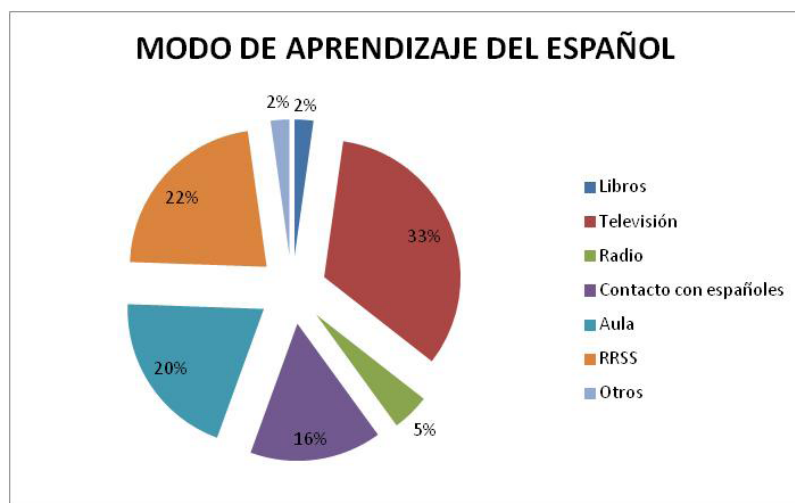


This diagram shows that nine students (20%) of the total respondents chose professional interest as their main motivation, while nineteen students (42%) selected economic interest. This can be explained by Spanish investment in Morocco, as well as the various companies that have established themselves in the country, requiring a strong command of the Spanish language. These factors motivate students to study Spanish with the aim of finding employment or pursuing further education.

It is also worth noting the economic factor related to immigration to Spain, which is seen as a symbol of modernity, wealth, and prosperity—an image deeply ingrained in the minds of adolescents. For them, Spain represents the gateway to Europe, a place to seek work and improve living conditions. However, this image has been somewhat diminished by the economic crisis of 2008.



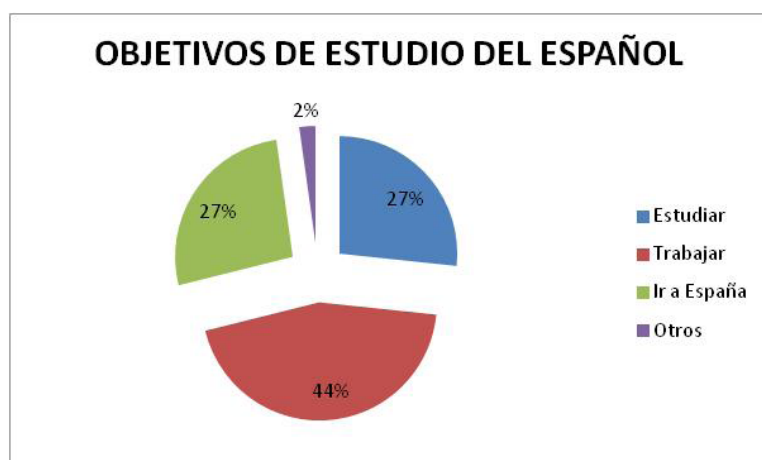
**Graph 11.** Methods of Learning Spanish in Morocco



The highest figure resulting from the survey—fifteen out of forty-five students, or 33%—reflects a reality of the country: they have learned Spanish through television. This is due to the fact that Spanish TV channels can be received in northern Morocco. Their entertainment, music, and sports programs are of great interest to the general Moroccan public and attract a wide range of social groups.

On the other hand, the use of new technologies and the rise of social media—mainly Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram—have made learning Spanish easier for a significant portion of the respondents. In fact, no less than 22% of the total, ten students, a considerable number, have gained knowledge of Spanish thanks to YouTube channels. Other media, such as radio programs and broadcasts, which in the past helped inspire dreams of a better quality of life, have now faded into the background.

**Graph 12.** Purpose for Studying Spanish

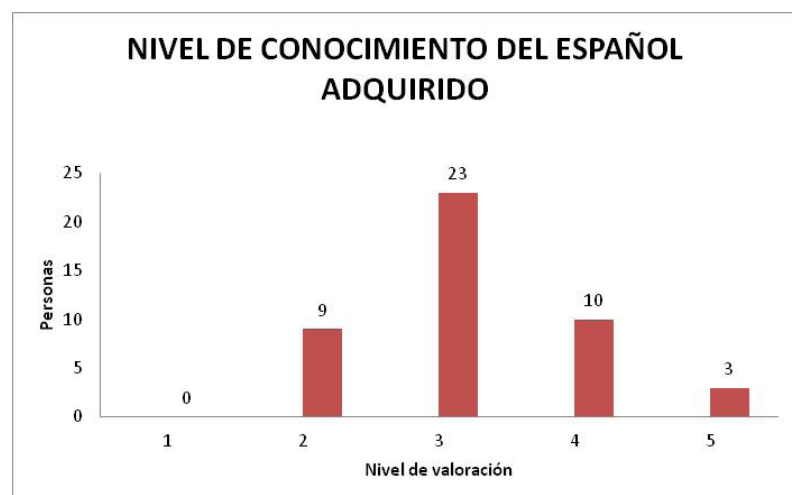


A large percentage of respondents (44%), that is, 20 students, chose employment as their main objective for studying Spanish. This is because Spanish is the most sought-after language in the job market of northern Morocco by Spanish companies. There is a high demand for Moroccan speakers who are fluent and have full command of the Spanish language in all its aspects.

In this sense, the Spanish language should become a useful tool that enables young people to learn another language and culture, providing them with new resources to incorporate a different perspective into their own worldview. At the same time, it becomes a powerful personal asset that can be leveraged in different ways and for various purposes: from performing temporary jobs to pursuing more comprehensive training that grants access to more qualified positions in the labor market, where Spanish is increasingly in demand.

Also noteworthy is the purpose of studying Spanish for academic reasons or to travel to Spain—both chosen by 27% of students (12 individuals each)—a motivation that, as previously mentioned, is mainly tied to immigration to major European countries.

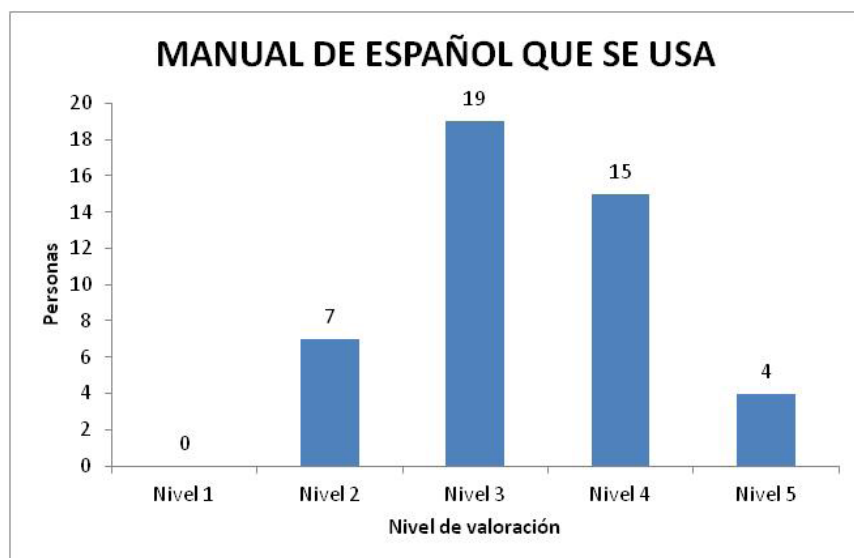
**Graph 13.** Level of Spanish Proficiency Acquired



On a scale from 1 to 5—where 0 indicates a poor or very poor level of Spanish and 5 indicates a very good level—the highest percentage corresponds to students who rated their Spanish proficiency as intermediate: 23 students out of the total, or 51%. This figure is both striking and meaningful. It is very likely that the lack of conversational practice leads students to perceive their level as lower than it may actually be.

It appears that students assess their knowledge primarily through their ability to demonstrate oral skills and comprehension—especially in relation to the constant influx of information from media and social networks, which, as previously mentioned, serve as a key source of Spanish exposure for the Moroccan population.

Additionally, 29% (13 students) are satisfied with the knowledge they have acquired. Notably, none of the students chose the lowest rating, meaning no one completely dismissed the value of the education received. In other words, the “very low level” option received no responses.

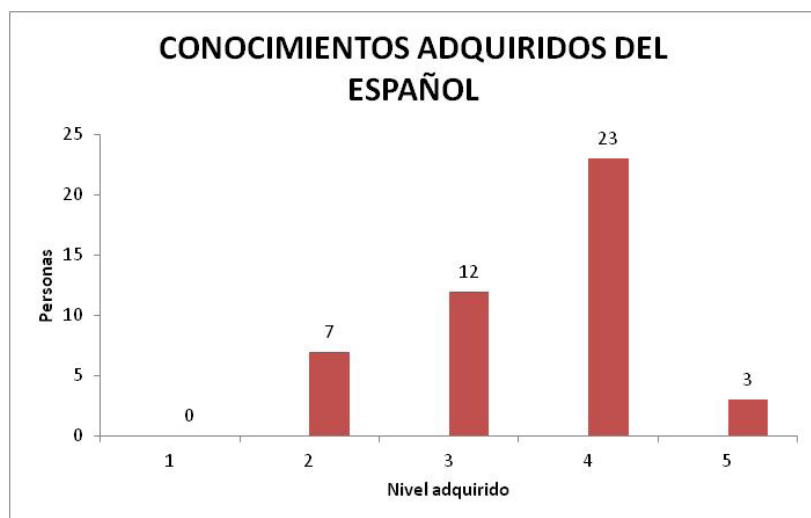
**Graph 14.** Spanish Textbook in Use

The graph shows that nineteen students, or 42% of the total, rated the Spanish textbook used as “good.” This is attributed to the development of new teaching materials adapted to the updated curriculum, such as *Español para dialogar* (aimed at the common core level), *Español para progresar* (for the first year of high school), and *Español para profundizar* (for the second year of high school).

The main goal of these new textbooks is to address sociocultural aspects in a special way, primarily aiming to help students learn Spanish to talk about their own world and topics that interest them, while also discovering the keys to a shared heritage. The materials have been presented in a way that is attractive to students, thanks to their engaging content and motivating methodology. The topics have been selected based on the students’ world and interests, and the proposed methodology incorporates a renewed perspective and reflection on the sociocultural components of the teaching approach.

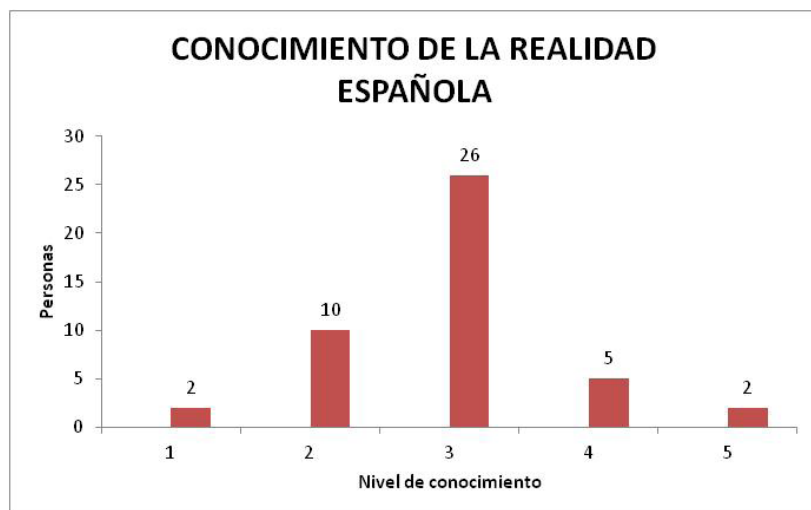
In this way, students can use Spanish to talk about their own world and the things that matter to them in their environment. This aligns with the core principles of foreign language didactics, which focus on learner-centered education rather than teacher-centered instruction.

**Graph 15.** Acquired Knowledge of Spanish



Looking at this graph, it can be seen that a high percentage of students among the total respondents have rated their acquired knowledge as good or high (thirty-five out of forty-five students, a large majority). These responses may be due to the reform implemented a decade ago in the Moroccan education system.

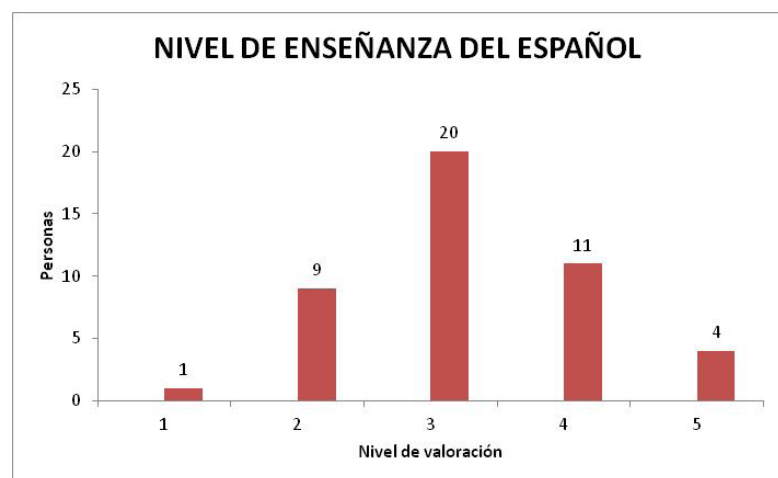
**Graph 16.** Knowledge of Spanish Reality



An intermediate level of knowledge about Spanish reality is evident among the students. Undoubtedly, the media and social networks contribute to this. Looking at this graph, it can be seen that the majority of respondents have a good or average image of Spain, thanks to the textbooks used in teaching, which nowadays present an appealing image of a modern and democratic country. Today's textbooks also aim to shape society and the image citizens have of themselves – in other words, their identity markers. The goal is to build a culture-based society, open to knowledge and identity, and to foster spaces for creation that break away from dominant archaisms.

However, the old Spanish textbooks, published in France – such as *Pueblo 1* and *2*, *Vida y Diálogos de España*, among others – portrayed an image of Spain filtered through a French lens: women dressed in mourning, desolate and gloomy villages; ultimately, a picture of an underdeveloped country that held little or no appeal for a young audience. This outdated and archaic image of Spain, transmitted through these old French textbooks, was part of Moroccan education in the 1960s and 70s, supported by the French who introduced these materials, which conveyed a negative and highly stereotyped view of Spaniards. Nor did they reflect Morocco's true identity.

**Graph 17.** Level of Spanish Language Teaching.



A few years ago, Moroccan education underwent a full reform, which is why twenty surveyed students chose an intermediate level and eleven students selected “good”, as we know that the Moroccan educational system carried out a reform process reflected in the CHARTE (National Charter for Education and Training Project of November 1999), known as “The Decade 2000-2010,” considered the national decade of education and training.

The main objectives of this project were: combating illiteracy, improving the quality of education, reducing inequalities based on environment and gender, and developing private education, which currently depends on the Moroccan Ministry of National Education – the body that organizes and manages public general and technical education.

The figure of nine surveyed students who chose the “fair” option likely refers to those who did not benefit from this reform, due to the slow pace that characterizes the reform process in Morocco and the lack of necessary resources for the development of the educational system.

**Graph 18.** Number of Spanish Language Class Hours



This graph shows the limited number of Spanish language class hours in the Moroccan education system, as twenty-two surveyed students – nearly 50% – indicated that they receive three hours of Spanish classes per week. This can be explained as follows:

Spanish is the third language in the Moroccan system. There are not many hours of Spanish per week, due to the large number of subjects students are required to take. As a result, Spanish is viewed as a secondary subject in comparison to Arabic, French, and more recently, English.

**Graph 19.** Most Difficult Language Skill



A large majority – twenty-six students, representing 58% of respondents – identified speaking as the most difficult language skill. As previously mentioned, this is mainly due to the lack of conversational practice between students in the classroom, which leads to a lack of opportunities for dialogue outside the educational setting.



### 3.2. Qualitative results.

There is a correlation between the quantitative and qualitative results.

Why do you study Spanish and not English or another language? Nearly 30 students surveyed stated that they study Spanish for professional reasons. Additionally, it is worth noting that 15 respondents did not have the option to choose Spanish; it was imposed on them.

Students can choose from several languages, depending on the school: English, Spanish, German, or Italian. This is where one of the main challenges arises: the vast majority – about 90% – choose English, as parents are convinced that their children will have better opportunities if they study it.

There is therefore a strong societal demand in Morocco for a basic language education trio: Arabic-French-English, leaving very little space for Spanish. In some cases, when there are no more spots available for English, students are enrolled in Spanish by default. Otherwise, Spanish classes would remain empty, leading to a lack of motivation – a concern frequently expressed by Spanish language teachers.

Is learning Spanish easy or difficult for you? Justify your answer.

Twenty-five respondents indicated that learning Spanish is easy, due to Spain's proximity to Morocco and the family connections that students have in Spain. Meanwhile, 20 respondents find Spanish difficult, mainly because of its grammar, which they perceive as more complex compared to other languages like English.

What do you think is necessary to improve the teaching of Spanish in Morocco? The majority of respondents – nearly 40 out of 45 – highlighted the need to increase Spanish class hours, dedicate more time to communicative activities, and called for a profound change in teaching methodology. They also expressed a real need for educational cooperation, and the provision of financial and educational resources to support the teaching of Spanish in Morocco.

From your point of view, indicate two strengths and two weaknesses of Spanish language teaching in Morocco.

Answers varied, but some points were common across many respondents. A commonly mentioned strength was the relative ease with which Moroccans can learn Spanish. A frequently cited weakness was the lack of necessary resources for teaching Spanish and a general lack of motivation.

In what situations or contexts have you been able to put your Spanish knowledge into practice?

Nearly 40 students said they practiced their Spanish with Spanish tourists visiting Morocco or through work in Spanish-speaking call centers.

What is your image of Spain?

In general, 30 out of 45 respondents have a negative image of Spain due to the economic crisis and lack of job opportunities. The remaining respondents have a positive image, thanks to the portrayal of Spanish culture by the media.

If you watch Spanish TV or listen to Spanish radio, do you think it helps improve your Spanish? If yes, name at least one program.

All respondents expressed interest in various Spanish programs, especially sports and cultural shows.

It is worth highlighting, as mentioned earlier, the significant influence of Spanish media – particularly radio and television – in shaping cultural perceptions. Spanish channels commonly received include TV1, La 2, Antena 3, Telecinco, La Sexta, Canal Sur, and Canal+, in addition to Moroccan television which also broadcasts a news bulletin in Spanish.

Another factor reinforcing Spanish influence is the increasing flow of Moroccan students and workers to the Iberian Peninsula. This presence is especially noticeable in the linguistic domain, particularly in one of the most characteristic features of spoken Moroccan Arabic – code-switching. This phenomenon involves mixing two languages within the same conversation.

If you browse social media and YouTube channels, which pages and channels do you find most appealing, and what are your thoughts? Almost all respondents – 44 out of 45 – mentioned using YouTube videos for language learning, although they did not specify particular channels. Forums and information pages were also highlighted as attractive tools for learning.

## 4. Conclusion

Despite the decline in Spanish language studies in northern Morocco, Spanish continues to be vital and present in the Moroccan educational system. There is a significant network of Spanish institutions where studies can be carried out from primary to high school, following the official Spanish curriculum. In the field of language and cultural promotion, the Instituto Cervantes also has a substantial number of centers, especially concentrated in the north.

The survey conducted within Moroccan society has revealed important insights into the state of Spanish teaching in northern Morocco. Through thorough fieldwork carried out in schools in Tangier, along with the analysis of students' responses, this study reflects the sociocultural and pedagogical reality of Spanish education in Morocco. It also confirms the strong presence of Spanish in the north, leading to the following conclusions:

There is a clear interest among Moroccans in the Spanish language, directly linked to economic factors. The establishment of numerous Spanish companies encourages cultural exchange. Commercial relations and economic interests between the two countries are increasingly significant, and thus, Spanish is gradually becoming an economic asset. Knowledge of Spanish is valuable in the Moroccan job market and can provide employment opportunities.

The survey also revealed the negative image of Spain held by Moroccan youth, mostly due to the economic crisis and limited job prospects. However, the influence of the media and new technologies in Spanish language learning was also emphasized.

The Moroccan education system has been undergoing ongoing reform, and some improvements have been made – particularly in favor of English, which has gained prominence in language instruction. However, reforms in Spanish education have not met the expectations or needs of Spanish learners. Several obstacles were identified, including the lack of conversation classes and insufficient oral practice in classrooms. Students also complained about the limited

number of Spanish class hours per week, which contributes to their lack of motivation. Another key issue is the shortage of essential resources for teaching Spanish in public schools.

Nevertheless, Spanish stands out for its vitality, creative dynamism, rich cultural legacy, and rapid expansion. Spanish economic interests in Morocco continue to grow, with an increasing presence of companies based in the Iberian Peninsula. Additionally, there is a large Moroccan community residing in Spain – now the largest foreign community in the country. This is also fueling a growing interest in the Spanish language and culture, supported by family ties within Morocco.

All these factors – shared geography, history, and cultural elements – emphasize the necessity of a strong relationship between the two nations.

It is worth noting that economic and ideological migration and population flows have contributed to the expansion and adoption of Spanish as a transnational language. Spanish has also been promoted by university departments focused on integration – whether labor, economic, social, educational, or sociolinguistic – viewing the language as a factor of inclusion or exclusion.

Spain's external educational actions in Morocco have a long-standing tradition, reinforced by Spanish schools located in the country. These institutions strengthen educational, cultural, and historical ties between the two countries. As a result, there is growing interest among Moroccan students in pursuing higher education in Spain. The Spanish Ministry of Education continues to support Spanish instruction in Moroccan secondary education and plans to expand bilingual sections to teach scientific and business subjects in Spanish.

At the university level, the implementation of Spanish for specific purposes is being considered, particularly in fields such as business and management. With over 500 million speakers worldwide, Spanish is becoming a powerful tool for global communication. It enhances academic cooperation, promotes cultural exchange, and provides access to a rich literary and historical heritage.

In the Hispano-Moroccan context, the internationalization of both educational systems, effective mobility within today's socio-economic environment, and the thriving cultural relations between the two countries all contribute to a mutually enriching interaction – one in which the Spanish language plays a central role.

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