



## Adaptations of English into Algerians' linguistic practices on Facebook and Instagram: a qualitative analysis

تكيف استعمال اللغة الإنجليزية في الممارسات اللغوية الجزائرية على  
فايسبوك و أنستاغرام: تحليل نوعي

Adaptation de l'anglais dans les pratiques  
linguistiques algériennes sur Facebook et Instagram:  
analyse qualitative

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### ملخص

هذه الورقة هي محاولة للنظر في مدى إدماج اللغة الإنجليزية وتبنيها في الممارسات اللسانية الجزائرية على الخط كنتيجة لحاجات المستخدمين الاتصالية (اللسانية والثقافية). لتحقيق هذا الهدف، تم اللجوء إلى بحث كيفي لأنه ملائم لدراسات التركيز على اللغة مع اعتماد تحليل الخطاب عبر وساطة الحاسوب كإطار نظري. ولقد تم إدخال خمسة أمثلة توضيحية لغاية تحليل المحتوى الكيفي. وقد تم اختيار بيانات شاشة الهاتف الجوال لموقعي الفيسبوك و الإنستاغرام بصفة اعتباطية. وتكشف الدراسة عن تكيف اللغة الإنجليزية في الممارسات اللسانية الجزائرية على الخط وفق خمس طرائق: - المزج بين الإنجليزية وأصناف لغوية أخرى؛ استعارة كلمات انجليزية؛ تعريب الإنجليزية؛ إدماج مفاهيم ثقافية عربية في التعبير بالإنجليزية؛ واستعمال الإنجليزية لصياغة معنى ثقافي عربي؛ واستعمال الإنجليزية لصياغة المعنى الثقافي العربي.

الكلمات الدالة: التكيف؛ الإنجليزية العالمية؛ الإنجليزية المعولة؛ الممارسات اللسانية؛ فيسبوك؛ انستاغرام؛ السياق اللساني الجزائري.

### Abstract

This paper is an attempt to examine the extent to which English is being integrated and adapted into the Algerian linguistic practices online as a consequence of people's communication needs (linguistic and cultural). In order to reach the objective, qualitative research has been designed because it is suitable for language-focused studies, with adopting computer-mediated discourse analysis as its theoretical framework. Five illustrating examples are incorporated for a qualitative

analysis. These screen data have been randomly selected from both of Facebook and Instagram. The study reveals that English has been adapted into the Algerian linguistic practices online in five different ways: mixing between English and other language varieties; -borrowing of English words; Arabised English; integration of Arabic cultural concepts into English expressions; and use of English for the conceptualisation of Arabic cultural meaning.

**Keywords:** adaptation; global English; linguistic practices; Facebook; Instagram; Algerian linguistic context.

### Résumé

Cette étude est une tentative pour voir à quel degré l'anglais est intégré dans les pratiques linguistiques algériennes en ligne comme conséquence des besoins communicationnels (linguistiques et culturels). Afin d'arriver à ce but, la méthode qualitative est conçue car elle est la plus adéquate avec les études de langue ciblée, en adoptant une analyse de discours par ordinateur comme son cadre théorique. Cinq exemples sont incorporés pour une analyse qualitative. Ces données d'écran étaient triées d'une façon aléatoire de Facebook et d'Instagram. L'étude démontre que l'anglais est adopté dans les pratiques linguistiques algériennes en ligne dans cinq différentes variétés de langue: mélange entre l'anglais et d'autres variétés de langue; -empreint de mots anglais; anglais arabisé; intégration de concepts culturels arabes dans des expressions en langues anglaise; usage de l'anglais pour formuler une signification culturelle arabe locale.

**Mots-clés:** adaptation; anglais global; pratiques linguistiques; Facebook; Instagram; contexte linguistique algérien.

### Introduction

Several linguistic practices have been observed as far as the use of English by the Algerians online is concerned. The language is gradually integrated into the Algerians' linguistic uses and it is generally used alongside the other widely used varieties, namely Algerian Arabic and French within the same conversation. This integration occurs in varying degrees, since the language is most of the times localised in the new context of language use, in ways that meet the communication needs of the people. English is actually being used hand in hand with other dominant language varieties in unprecedented way, as it used to have very limited functions. However, it is becoming more and more embedded within people's informal communication leading accordingly to the emergence of new multilingual practices.

The incorporation of the global language into Algerian linguistic behaviours online can be arranged in a continuum, stretching from switching completely to English, on the one hand, to nativizing it, on the other. The



former involves preserving the morphological, syntactic, semantic, and orthographic features of English, while the latter, however, refers to the adaptation of the language into the linguistic, cultural, and (sometimes) the orthographic system of the local varieties. Thus, the new communication media did not only intensify the presence of the global language in Algeria but also contributed to its adaptations into people's communication needs and the spread of these practices to a larger community. In this respect, it is of a paramount importance to analyse the ways in which English has been adapted in the Algerian linguistic landscape online because despite the large amount of scholarly investigations related to English-Arabic contact situations, linguistic and cultural bi-directional influence of the aforementioned languages has not been fully discussed from both micro- and macro-sociolinguistic perspectives.

### 1. Literature Review

English could easily monopolise the domain of online communication, in spite of the steady growth rates of the languages represented on the Internet. The dominance of the language in the digital world can be due to two major factors. On the one hand, English-speaking experts and developers have launched Internet as well as most communication technologies. On the other hand, English has already been installed, in a host of various countries in the world, as the language of sciences, technology, education, and wider communication. Kashru (1985) classified the global spread of English into three categories; the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle. This tripartite distinction includes; countries where English is used as a native language, countries where it is used as a second language, and others where it is given priority for foreign language education, respectively (Crystal, 2003).

In addition to that, English is widely used as a lingua franca in international settings, business relations, commerce, politics, tourism and so on. So, it was natural for English to be the lingua franca of the Internet, as well, which joins together people from all over the world and that is becoming a mirror of the "real world" practices. Ironically, the globalisation of English led to its localisation into the many new contexts of use, causing accordingly the emergence of new divergent varieties, often known as "World Englishes" (Kashru, 1985).

The term World Englishes, according to Naporatilor and Devianti (n.d.: 108), refers to: *"the different forms and varieties of English used in various*



*sociolinguistic contexts in different parts of the world*". This phenomenon has been the result of the nativisation of the global language in different countries like India, Singapore, Nigeria, China, etc. Kashru (1985) perceives the concept of World Englishes differently from what is widely discussed in traditional applied linguistics that considers the consequences of language contact as a negative language transfer, also referred to as "interlanguage".

Therefore, the phenomenon requires to be studied from a sociolinguistic perspective as being a natural consequence of the integration of English into the linguistic and cultural practices of its new speakers in different localities rather than comparing it to the linguistic behaviours of its native speakers. Actually, the focus on error analysis, the misconception of the linguistic uses of the outer-circle communities, and the ethnocentrism of inner-circle users (Kashru, 1990 cited in Bolton, 2004, p.389) limits our understanding of what World Englishes really mean (Kilickaya, 2009).

English is being continuously indigenised and this is becoming, especially, salient online, the context that paved the way for the emergence of many other new linguistic practices. Zahali (2016) has even expected the emergence of Algerian English that was initially used by the youngsters online, because the use of English in informal situations in the real life was relatively limited. In the same vein, Zahali (2021) observes that English has been localised by the Algerians on Facebook in a way that meets their linguistic and cultural needs, leading to the emergence of many linguistic phenomena; namely mixing between English, Arabic, and French; the use of the Arabic script to represent English; last but not least, the use of English to represent local cultural meanings.

Thus, the process of globalisation has been paralleled by localisation. This dual process is often labelled "glocalisation"; referring to different levels of "cultural conceptualisation" (Sharifian, 2016). The latter includes: "1) use of English to encode cultural conceptualisations that were not originally associated with the language, 2) spread of Anglo-English cultural conceptualisation to non-Anglo speech communities, and 3) blending of cultural conceptualisations" (ibid: 1). In other words, the concept of glocalisation implies incorporation of features from global and local aspects leading to the development of a third system of representation that is based on hybrid elements.

This, according to some studies, implies 'linguistic creativity', since users make use of available resources to create new linguistic versions through 'relocalising' these resources (Leppänen et al., 2013; Li, 2017 cited in Tankosic and



Dovchin, 2021). Indeed, the new digital context led to unprecedented language contact, which contributed, in its turn, to the emergence of linguistically innovative practices. In this sense, English is being relocalised in the several contexts and localities it has acquired. Linguistic 'relocalisation', accordingly, refers to: "*new local meaning-making linguistic practice in which language users not only borrow, repeat, mimic certain linguistic resources available to them but they also make new local linguistic connotations*" (Pennycook, 2010 cited in Tankosic and Dovchin, 2021, (n. p.)). Thus, for some researchers, what is going on to global English in the new localities goes beyond traditional translingual practices such as codeswitching and linguistic borrowing, which imply language boundaries, but it has to do with linguistic relocalisation.

## 2. Methodology

As has been mentioned earlier, this paper attempts to analyse how English has been integrated and adapted into the Algerian sociolinguistic context online. It is arranged, hence, under the frame of Internet linguistics (Crystal, 2005) and it adopts the approach of computer-mediated discourse analysis (Herring, 2004) because it is suitable for corpus-based investigations. The research in this sense adopts a non-participant online observation as it is based on the collection and the analysis of linguistic material collected from both research sites, Facebook and Instagram, in order to attain the research objectives.

Online observation, "*the process of 'virtually being there', watching the digital communication you will eventually analyse as it unfolds on a web site or in a network of connections across sites*" (Androutsopoulos, 2014, p.77), constitutes the source of knowledge and screen-data, "*digital written language produced by people online*" (ibid: 78). Content required for the study is collected randomly and organised later according to the themes discussed. Consequently, five discourse phenomena related to the uses of English have been selected during the process of online observation and then analysed qualitatively. The corpus of the research covers different areas of the way the global language is being localised by the Algerians online.

## 3. Adaptation Forms of English

Language use online indicates humans' ability to be 'linguistically creative' as they succeeded to adapt to new language contexts leading accordingly to innovative linguistic practices. In this respect, the global spread of English to new localities exhibits speakers' ability to be "*creative designers of meaning*' since the processes of relocalisation produce new meanings through integration,



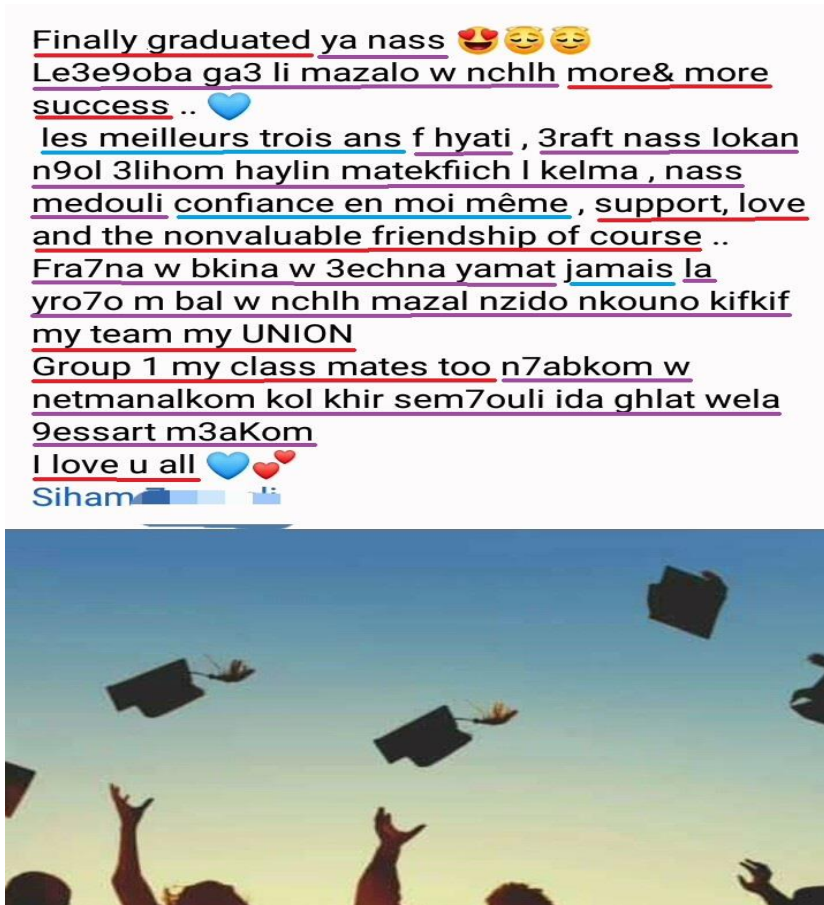
*adaptation, and reorganisation*” (Axelsson et al., 2003 cited in Tankosic; Dovchin, 2021, (n.p.)). Indeed, this research reveals that English is being integrated and adapted according to the communication needs of the Algerians on Facebook and Instagram. Five linguistic phenomena have been observed: 1) mixing between English and other language varieties, 2) borrowing of English words, 3) Arabised English, 4) integration of Arabic cultural concepts into English expressions, and 5) use of English for the conceptualisation of Arabic cultural meaning.

### **3.1. Mixing between English and other Language Varieties**

English is increasingly integrated and adapted into Algerian uses online due to the intensive incorporations of lexical material from the language especially on Facebook and Instagram. Mixture between Arabic, French, and English became a common phenomenon online. Consequently, language mixing is no longer restricted to French and Arabic. Because of historical reasons, French has always monopolised this domain of language use. However, this monopoly seems to be retreating, at least in the virtual world for the moment, because of steady integration of English to everyday uses online by the Algerians. The following illustration can be considered as a typical example that is often encountered online.



Figure 1. Mixing between English and other language varieties



\* For analytical purposes, the screenshot above has been modified relying on technical possibilities provided by the device used (laptop) in order to indicate the different language varieties used: sentences and sentence fragments in English are underlined in red, the Arabic ones underlined in purple, and the parts in French have been underlined in blue.

The basic syntactic structure of this status update is Algerian Arabic, while the linguistic material from both of English and French has been inserted without changing the grammatical structure of the text. Another important aspect of this hybridity of language varieties is that the foreign material used has not been adapted into the grammatical features of the recipient language (Algerian Arabic) but it preserves its original form. Thus, the way English (and French) is used in this example is consistent with Poplack and



Meechan's (1995:200 quoted in Gafaranga, 2007: 19) definition of code-switching: *"the juxtaposition of sentences or sentence fragments, each of which is internally consistent with the morphological and syntactic (and optionally phonological) rules of its lexifier language"*. Most English material involved (underlined in red in figure 1 above), which includes fragments of sentences and only one full sentence, has maintained its original grammatical features.

Actually, such behaviours are not new for the linguistic landscape of the country because Algerian Arabic has always been characterised by this mixture of languages because of its rich history of different civilisations and occupations since ancient times. However, these practices are adopting new features due to the changing contexts of language use. English has not really been used within colloquial uses of Algerians, except in some regions in the western part that use some loan words. Yet, because of public education of English at all levels (primary, middle and secondary schools as well as universities), it has spread to almost all parts of the country especially amongst youngsters; even though this spread goes in slow rates but it is remarkable. Besides that, many other factors contributed to the growth rates of English use in Algeria, including the Internet, social media, Hollywood movies, tourism, interest of Algerians in immigration, the globalisation of English, among others.

Another new feature that has been observed in such linguistic uses online is the use of these forms (code-mixing, code-switching and borrowing) in written domains. In fact, these behaviours have always been used in informal spoken situations, yet the new media of communication gave them the opportunity to be used for written purposes for the first time. This is so significant in the sense that these spoken-only practices have been unofficially codified. Codification plays a great role in language maintenance. In other words, the use of English amongst Algerians will spread to more audience and will be preserved thanks to the affordances of digital communication. Interestingly, due to the informal and text-based uses of English by Algerians online, the language is witnessing many new linguistic features, as it is being intensively adapted according to the local linguistic and cultural needs of the users.

### 3.2. 'Borrowing' English Words

Integration of English into the linguistic practices of the Algerian context in the new media of communication is significant not only due to its relatively intensive use alongside the other dominant varieties but also due to its





indigenisation and localisation. In other words, lexical material taken from English is being adapted according to the communication (linguistic and cultural) needs of the users. This has important dimensions at the linguistic as well as the social levels, since the language is being used for more functions rather than restricted to academic situations. It is also open to users who do not necessarily master it. The adaptation of lexical material according to the recipient language features is often referred to as borrowing (Spolsky, 1998).

Figure 2. 'Borrowing' English Words



The English word **“to crush”** has been repeatedly used in this Instagram status update and comments (in example 2 above). The stem has been maintained, yet it has been modified according to the morphological features of Algerian Arabic and the words have been typed in the Arabic script rather than Latin (see item 4.3. below). It has been used four times in different conjugation forms:

- I didn't crush (ماكر اشيت), the stem has been added a prefix (ما) to indicate negation and two suffixes (ي+ت) to indicate the personal pronoun (I) and the tense of the verb (the past).
- I crush (نكر اشني), the same stem is added a different prefix (ن) and a suffix (ي) that indicate the doer of the action (the subject I) as well as the present simple.
- They crush (يكر اشيو), the word is made up of the stem with a prefix (ي) and a suffix (و+ي) that indicates the conjugation of the verb with the personal pronoun (they) in the present simple.
- I crushed (krachit), unlike the previous cases, the word is written in Latin script. It is made up of the stem with a suffix (i+t) indicating the conjugation of the verb with the personal pronoun (I) in the past simple.

The different cases mentioned above go in tune with the definition of borrowing proposed by Poplack and Meechan (1995: 200 quoted in Gafaranga, 2007: 19), who believe that: *“borrowing is the adaptation of lexical material to the morphological and syntactic (and usually phonological) patterns of the recipient language”*. This phenomenon is also referred to as language mixing by Morimoto (1999: 23 quoted in Guafaranga, 2007: 22) who defines it as *“a phenomenon in which morphemes from two languages (...) are combined to form a word (or a phrase)”*. Therefore, the main characteristic of linguistic borrowing highlighted in this paper is “adaptation” of lexical items into the features of the recipient language. Adaptation in this sense is the result of combining between different morphemes from two languages (like in the examples above) as the stem is in English while the prefixes and suffixes are in Algerian Arabic.



In youth speech, it is becoming widespread to use English vocabulary<sup>1</sup> (most of the times adapted morphologically or orthographically – written in Arabic letters) like “taguitek” (I tagged you), “followitek” (I followed you on social media), “krachit” (I crush on someone), etc., which indicate the spread of English into the colloquial uses of Algerians. This is significant in two main ways; on the one hand, English is no longer restricted to the academic domain as its usage in Algeria was restricted to particular domains, namely education, research and business. However, it is gradually seeping into the low domains with taking new forms of use thanks to chat culture, which contributes to the spread of such practices amongst the youngsters. Therefore, the spread of informal style is mainly because of the informal nature of the new communication media.

On the other hand, this linguistic phenomenon represents a new version of the traditional rivalry between the two world languages, English and French, on the Algerian linguistic landscape. Indeed, English is competing French in Algeria, the largest Francophone country after France. What is special in this case is that English is not only taking over the high domains that have been traditionally monopolised by French, such as education, international communication, diplomacy, etc. but rather it is gradually seeping into Algerians' everyday uses especially via different forms of code-switching and linguistic borrowing, though the use of English amongst Algerians is still low if compared to French but this can mark the very beginning of a transitory period.

In fact, language change takes a long time, especially if it takes place naturally without a deliberate intervention by humans via language planning. Recently however, many governmental decisions undertaken especially since 2019 (during the presidency of President Abd El Madjid Tebboune) go in favour of the promotion of the English language at the expense of French in Algeria. Amongst the most remarkable decisions, the introduction of English in primary schools beginning with third grade and enabling all university teachers to have a second bachelor degree in English.

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<sup>1</sup> - These words, which are generally associated with social-media terminology, have been originally appropriated from and then reappropriated into English to refer to new meanings, uses and contexts. The same words have also been localised into new localities.



Besides, the use of such loans does not require competence in English, unlike other forms of code-switching; i.e., users are not necessarily Arabic-English bilinguals<sup>2</sup>. In this respect, Gafaranga (2007: 23) assumes: “*borrowed forms are typically known and used by both bilingual and monolingual speakers, they are widely distributed through the community (...)*”. In addition, due to the fact that different strings of the Algerian society are represented online (people who belong to various age, gender, education, ethnic, regional, etc. categories), are accordingly exposed to this type of English use (borrowed forms and mixed up with other linguistic varieties). Therefore, English is gradually spreading to a larger audience from different social categories regardless of their educational degrees. As a result, these uses might be unnoticed with time, exactly like many similar lexicons borrowed from other languages that are widely used in some Algerian regional dialects; like Spanish in the west part and Italian in the east. What is more interesting about borrowing English linguistic material is that it exceeds the spoken uses to written domains.

### 3.3. Arabised English

In addition to the aforementioned forms of adaptation (morphological and syntactic), English is also often represented in Arabic script instead of Latin. Traditionally, linguistic adaptation is particularly salient at the phonological, morphological and syntactic levels. However, due to the text-based and informal nature of communication which dominate the virtual world, adapting language systems occurs at the level of orthography as well. As has been noticed in the above cases (see figure 2), the borrowed versions of the word “to crush” have been written in both Latin and Arabic scripts<sup>3</sup>. The following example is an illustration of this phenomenon.


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<sup>2</sup> - Tamazight is also another local language used by a large social group in Algeria. However, since I am not competent in the language, it did not take part of the research objectives.

<sup>3</sup> - The phenomenon of having two optional scripts of one language is referred to as “diagraphia” (Palfreyman and Al-Khalil, 2003) and it has been used to describe the Arabic language that acquired a new writing system after the spread of computer-mediated communication.



Figure 3. The Use of the Arabic Script to Represent English



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




انستقرام الصفحة فيه 7 الاف واحد مابقاليش بزاف على  
المليون غير 993 ألف برك.. وقادر نلحق مليون بسهولة بصح  
أنا ماشي حاب نلحق ياسكو قادر كي نلحق لمليون نولي  
نتشقلب..

1- نولي نقول ساو بين كل شهيق وزفير..  
2-نولي ندير لي ستوري شوقو وين راني شوقو اليوم الفلاح  
حتلي سماد هاي كوالتي.. تسقيت بمياه معدنية..  
3-نبدا نحكيلكم على قصة نجاحي وكيف العالم حاريني وأنا  
كافحت ووصلت..  
4-نولي نكتيلكم الجمل تاع التنمية البحرية "افعلها أنت  
تستطيع وكذا"  
5- سجله فيدال  
6- نولي ندير اشهارات لزيت الزيبان .  
7- سجله كوتينيو  
8- كيف كيف كوتينيو (اموجي حزين) .  
9- نولي ندير التركيب الضوئي على أضواء الشهرة هاهاها .  
10- نولي نقلكم الشهرة مخلاتناش نعيشو ...

إمالا خلونا هاك رانا ملاح.. وراه الرابط في التعليقات ماذا  
بيكم متحمسوش وتلحقوني للمليون ليه ليه ماذا بيكم غير  
اذا... انا

 Naima   
منديرك ابوني منتشر على شهري  
15 m J'aime Répondre

 Auteur  
دلاع  
Naima   
ليك ليك لي مايفهموش الهزل اند ذاي  
تايك ات سوو سيريزولي..  
13 m Haha Répondre 14 

 you   
دارهالي واحد مرة مي كنت فايقة      
عليها وقلتلو اينوت سيبك انقليش     
نقول وين شافهة وهم يهزو فيها من انستاا  
3 j 4 J'aime Répondre 

\* The different language varieties have been indicated via underlying them with different colours (red for English, blue for French, orange for Standard Arabic, purple for Internet jargon, and Algerian Arabic expressions are not underlined).



These screenshots of a status update and some selected comments of the same post contain important forms of linguistic practices. What is interesting is that in spite of the fact that both French and English are employed, no Latin letters are used in the whole text. That is, there is code switching without script-switching<sup>4</sup>. These two languages have been Arabised in the sense that Arabic letters have been used to represent foreign words instead of Latin but their original meaning is maintained. Hence, in addition to the previous forms of adaptation, English has also been adapted into the writing system of Arabic due to the spread of online text-based communication. Such linguistic practices have further indications, as they represent new forms of multilingualism, borrowing, and code switching that emerged because of the proliferation of the new interactive media. Moreover, this is also an indication of the shift towards the use of the Arabic script rather than Latinised Arabic<sup>5</sup>, which was dominant at the beginning of the ubiquity of chat culture (Zahali, 2021).

Equally important, adaptations of linguistic material from English by the Algerians in the new media of communication are not only restricted to structural features (phonological, morphological, and scriptural levels) but they are also used in ways that fit the cultural needs of the users. Actually, the integration of the English language into the Algerians' everyday uses goes beyond linguistic structures, as it has to do with cultural representations as well. According to Sharifian (2016), the idea of cultural conceptualisation incorporates the use of English to encode local cultural meanings that were not originally represented in it, spread of Anglo-English cultural conceptualisations to other communities, and combining both local and English cultural conceptualisations together. While the second and the third cases are natural consequences of the spread of English to non-English

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<sup>4</sup> - Code-switching without script-switching is exhibited in two ways: 1) use of Latin script to represent Arabic meaning – often referred to in the literature as Latinised Arabic – and 2) use of Arabic script to represent French and English words and expressions – I use the label Arabised French and English to refer to this phenomenon. They are both encountered on the Algerian sociolinguistic practices online and they are used to fulfil several functions (Zahali, 2021; 2022).

<sup>5</sup> - Latinised Arabic (LA) was first used as a strategy to overcome technical constrains since Arabic was not represented online, yet LA is still maintained even after introducing Arabic into the technology, due to sociocultural factors. Recently, however, a gradual shift towards more use of Arabic script instead of LA has been observed (ibid).



speaking communities because of language contact, the first case marks the difference and it can even be considered as the main reason behind the development of new forms of English that are becoming increasingly mutually unintelligible.

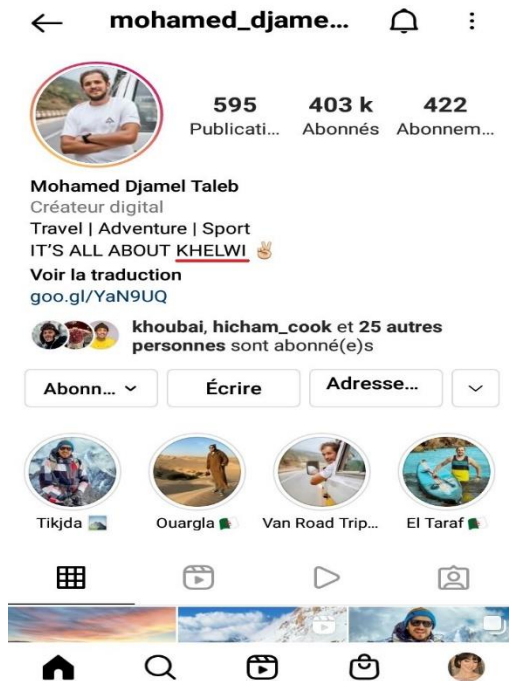
### 3.4. Integration of Arabic Cultural Concepts into English Expressions

Languages vary not only in lexicon, phonology and grammar but also in conceptual representations that are culturally constructed. In other words, in addition to language variations that occur at the structural level, the ideas/concepts encoded by the different linguistic systems vary tremendously. Accordingly, units of conceptualisation in a particular language do not necessarily have equivalents in the conceptual system of another language. In this regard, languages are perceived as “*systems through which we express the ways in which we conceptualise experiences of different kinds*” (Palmer, 1996 cited in Sharifian, 2013: 91). For that reason, translators, for instance, always pay attention to the two strata of representation, linguistic as well as cultural.

Since cultural groups in the world have different life-experiences, they obviously develop different systems of conceptualisation even if they use the same language. This what might explain mutual unintelligibility between dialects of the same language, especially if they are distributed in a wide distance. Consequently, language contact often leads to mutual borrowings of cultural conceptualisations: “*conceptual structures that have cultural basis, embody group-level cognitive systems or worldviews, and are encoded in and communicated through the features of human languages*” (Sharifian, 2011; 2015 cited in da Silva, 2020: 45). For example, many Arabic cultural concepts have been officially borrowed into English because they do not have equivalent terms, such as *Hadj* and *Hijab*. Such a phenomenon has also been observed on the linguistic practices of the Algerians on social media. The following example is an illustration of the way in which Arabic meanings are represented in English.



### Figure 4. Integration of Arabic Cultural Concepts into English Expressions



The biography (descriptive expression) of this Instagrammer is written in English. The first line tells his followers about the themes of his Instagram page (travel, adventure, and sport) while the other line describes what the overall aim of the page is: “It’s all about *khelwi*”. The expression is written in English, except the last word, which an Arabic concept is written in Latin script (the one underlined in red in figure 4 above). Linguistically speaking, this is a form of code switching without script switching that is often encountered on social media. Yet, the word is typically Algerian and it refers to a person who enjoys himself alone (mainly in nature). It has been treated as if it were an English word since the idea is best represented in its original wording. That is, the word has been borrowed into the English language with maintaining its original meaning and pronunciation while changing its writing form. In this sense, it would be difficult to be understood by non-Algerian followers.

This is a typical example of language contact online and shows the effective role of social media in intensifying the globalisation of English to more





domains and audience, on the one hand, and its localisation to meet communication needs, on the other. The spread of Vlog (video blogs) culture has significant impact; especially that it is attracting more attention amongst people as a new form of entertainment. Algerian vloggers (on Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Facebook) often use English<sup>6</sup>, in addition to other languages, in order to have more followers, who are not necessarily only Algerians because the more followers they have the more money they earn. Actually, the use of English by these “influencers”/ “content makers”<sup>7</sup> does not only guarantee the spread of English vocabulary to more population, but also contributes to increase its prestige in the country, where French is still considered to be more prestigious at the local level. This is especially the case because “*social-media terminology has not only been relocalised in the local online context but also with reference to offline environments*” (Tankosic and Dovchin, 2021: n. p.). Thus, the impact of these users, especially as far as vocabulary, conceptualisation and prestige are concerned, expand to ‘real world’ situations.

Indeed, the prestige of English in Algeria is in frequent increase, especially as a result of “unplanned” prestige planning handled by these “content makers” online. In other words, in addition to governmental attempts to promote the use and prestige of the language due to its global importance and its role in the Arabisation policy<sup>8</sup> via promoting its status in all educational levels of the country to cope with the rapid worldwide changes, the impact of these social media users is also remarkable. So, these two types of language planning, whether planned (via governmental decisions) or unplanned (via online influencers), undeniably contribute to language, social, cultural, economic and political changes at the long run. Linguistically speaking, English is being integrated into the Algerian

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<sup>6</sup> - This exhibits considerable gender differences, though both male and female vloggers tend to use English due to its global reach; females seem to use it because of their preference of prestigious speech forms. Yet, this requires further investigations.

<sup>7</sup> - I have literally translated these two concepts from Arabic (مؤثرين / صانعي محتوى) referring to social-media users who make and share content on their accounts and who enjoy accordingly a large population of followers. They are also more likely to influence in a way or another the life style of their followers.

<sup>8</sup> - Actually, English has first been introduced into the Algerian educational system as one of the measures to substitute French, especially because it links North African countries to the Middle East alongside Standard Arabic.



linguistic practices at both levels, academic as well as informal situations leading accordingly to many new multilingual behaviours (in all linguistic aspects: phonological, morphological, syntactic, orthographic and stylistic).

In addition to this linguistic phenomenon, integration of Arabic cultural concepts into English expressions, another form of cultural conceptualisation has also been encountered online – the use of English to represent Arabic cultural meanings.

### **3.5. Use of English for the Conceptualisation of Arabic Cultural Meaning**

The impact of the first language (L1) on the second language (L2)<sup>9</sup> in contact situations is unavoidable because linguistic elements unconsciously transfer from L1 into L2 at all levels; phonological, morphological, syntactic and stylistic. The latter occurs when speakers literally translate meaning; i.e., they transfer words as isolated items (Benzoukh, 2020) without paying attention to the way/style of encoding meaning. In other words, speakers use L1 conceptual structures to represent L2 meaning. In spite of the fact that this type of interference, referred to as “interlanguage” in applied linguistics research, is often perceived as a negative transfer that needs to be overcome in order to achieve a native-like competence of L2, it can also be regarded as a variety of language that emerges as a result of interaction of elements from both languages. In other words, contact between two different language systems may lead to the emergence of a new form that is neither L1 nor L2. Actually, this is how pidgins and creoles emerge and develop. As far as English is concerned, its contact with other languages throughout history has led to the emergence of World Englishes.

Interestingly, literal translations of meaning from L1 to L2 do not always occur unconsciously as a result of lack of competence, but rather it is sometimes used as a communication strategy to fulfil particular discourse functions (such as humour). Therefore, English is used by the Algerians not only to represent Anglo-English cultural meanings but also for the

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<sup>9</sup> - Second language in this sense is perceived from a psycholinguistic approach, referring to an additional language acquired after the first language has already been established, rather than from a sociolinguistic approach, referring to a second official language that is mainly used for utilitarian functions.



conceptualisation of local cultural meaning. This phenomenon is further illustrated in the following example.

**Figure 5: Use of English for the Conceptualisation of Arabic Cultural Meaning**



These comments tackle an Arabic idiomatic expression that has been literally translated into English. To put it in other words, the Arabic idiomatic expression has been consciously and intentionally conceptualised in the English language. Therefore, someone who does not understand the real



meaning might misunderstand the expression. In this sense, a linguistic system has been borrowed for the conceptualisation of meaning that is originally represented via a different system. (According to Leppänen et al., 2013; 2015 cited in Tankosic and Dovchin, 2021: n. p.), “*meaning-making processes in relocalisation can bring a distinctly different meaning to the existing linguistic and multimodal resources because of the recombination of different linguistic and cultural repertoires*”. In the case mentioned here, combination occurs between a linguistic system (English) representing another language’s cultural meaning (Arabic), which is different from combining between two cultural meanings represented by two different language systems that is generally exhibited via code-switching/mixing and borrowing. Interestingly, one of the commenters (in figure 5 above) wrote below his/her translation “in an Indian accent”, referring to knowledge about the fact that words are in English but meaning is not because Indians are well known of their divergent dialect of English especially in terms of accent and cultural conceptualisation.

Thus, such linguistic behaviours cannot be considered as an outcome of linguistic gaps, as this is not a problem of lack of vocabulary or knowledge about the language. People in these cases are using a different coding system to represent their local cultural meanings that were not originally conceptualised in this way. This has led to an amalgamation of two different ways of representation; meaning is expressed via a new writing system. Hence, the digital media of communication are considered as arenas where local and global features blend for self-expression.

## Conclusion

Analysis of the screen data gathered reveals that the English language used by the Algerians online is being adapted in ways that meet their communication needs. The language is not only adapted according to the new affordances and constraints of the communication technologies, but it is also being used to fit Algerian linguistic and cultural features. In other words, in addition to the new characteristics that English has acquired online, such as abbreviations, acronyms, contractions, letter/number homophones, among others; it has also witnessed the introduction of many new innovative linguistic strategies of communication.

Various cases of adaptation of the English language by the Algerians on Facebook and Instagram have been encountered. The global language started to seep gradually into people’s everyday interactions online leading to its relocalisation, since it is not only employed in academic situations as it used



to be at the begging of its introduction to the country. It is used alongside the other widely used language varieties; namely Algerian Arabic, Standard Arabic, and French in the same conversation. That is to say, English is taking over some of the informal as well as formal language situations that have traditionally been dominated by French because of historical reasons. Interestingly, borrowed linguistic material from the English language has acquired many innovative structural features. Lexical items are most of the times adapted into the grammatical and orthographic systems of the Arabic language. Moreover, the language has even been used to conceptualise local cultural meaning either through literal translation of Arabic meaning or integrating Arabic cultural concepts into English expressions.

Thus, understanding these phenomena goes beyond superficial structural analysis, as deep interpretations related to the contemporary sociocultural and digital contexts of language use are required. Such linguistic practices like code transfer between languages (code switching), adapting language structures into recipient language features (linguistic borrowing), and new cultural conceptualisations should be perceived as gates leading us towards a better comprehension of the nature of human language, which is more complex than being a mere set of symbols combined together by rules for encoding meaning. Actually, the new translingual encounters online question traditional theoretical frameworks modelled for language and prove once again that prescriptive grammar limits our understanding of humans' ability to be linguistically creative.

In this regard, reappropriation/relocalisation of linguistic material from the English language to new localities throughout the world, especially via social media, reflects humans' ability to adapt to new situations and make use of the resources available. Indeed, the digital context of communication provides unprecedented affordances: various languages, multimodal discourse elements, large potentially-global audience, different chat possibilities, etc. Even technical constrains do no longer hinder communication, as people use innovative strategies, combining accordingly between technological, local and global features. Therefore, these practices are not coincidental because humans, throughout history, always tend to use available possibilities for self-expression and self-representation, which indicate their social and cultural identities and belonging. In other words, blending of linguistic and cultural resources on social media reflects the steady local-global overlap because of unprecedented globalisation at all



levels, on the one hand, and relocalisation of this process, on the other. Ironically, both of global and local features are affected because of the increasing globalisation.

Accordingly, interaction between global and local resources, at the linguistic levels, has bi-directional impacts, unlike what is generally assumed that globalisation is a new form of imperialism. As far as the global spread of English is concerned, it is always perceived to bring about linguistic as well as sociocultural influences at the expense of other languages and cultures. Indeed, languages are witnessing expansions of meanings and conceptual representations because of continuous integration and adaptations of English terminology, especially via social media that proved to have effective role in transferring languages and cultures to new contexts and localities. Yet, this relocalisation is transforming English too; that is, not only recipient languages are expanding and influenced, even the global language is engaging in semantic and cultural broadening, as well.

Therefore, Language descriptions and analysis are required to go outside the box and get rid of the shackles of outdated rules of standardness, which in themselves have been modelled by scholars attempting to study language in a different context. In other words, linguistic theories must also be reappropriated, in ways that reflect contemporary language situations as well as linguistic practices. Algerian Arabic for instance, as indicated in the above illustrations, succeeded to regenerate itself through absorbing and innovating new linguistic practices that reflect the digital reality. Therefore, the traditional French conceptualisations that characterise most Algerian dialects do no longer fit their needs alone; for that reason, it was necessary to expand linguistically with acquiring new codes of representation. This exactly what happened to the global spread of English, which could not preserve the original Anglo-linguistic features, but rather it is being adapted wherever it goes. Similarly, Standard Arabic also seem to have a potential to recure/reconstruct itself online and succeeded, to some extent, to get out of its historical stagnation.

At this level, many research areas are to be highlighted for further investigation in an attempt to comprehend the possible impacts global processes, in general, and social media, in particular, have on the diverse languages and cultures of the world. Such areas like, whether or not relocalisation of English into Arabic linguistic practices is widening the gap between the high and the low varieties of Arabic diglossia. Besides, research



also needs to shed light on how Standard Arabic is benefitting from lexical and cultural expansions online and what implications does this have on the future and development of the language. It is also interesting to study the impact of the new global and digital realities on the other languages used in Algeria, namely Tamazight and French, at both micro as well as macro level. Last but not least, it is of a paramount importance to uncover how different discourse elements/semiotic resources are combined together by language users for meaning construction as well as interpretation, as separating between language systems and insisting on standardness which implies languages having unique features characterising and differentiating them seems to be unable to explain the roles and nature of semiotic elements within discourse. The latter is becoming increasingly more multimodal than ever before, since it is no longer only combining between verbal and non-verbal cues, but elements like image, sound, voice, colour, emojis, layout, etc. all together contribute to meaning-making practices in digital discourse, which is transmitted to 'real world' situations as well.

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