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The Language Planning of French and English in Algeria: Historical Perspectives and Current Issues

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L'aménagement linguistique du français et de l'anglais en Algérie : perspectives historiques et enjeux actuels

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# **The Language Planning of French and English in Algeria: Historical Perspectives and Current Issues**

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## **L'aménagement linguistique du français et de l'anglais en Algérie : perspectives historiques et enjeux actuels**

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### **Introduction**

Currently, the French language is the second most widespread language in Algeria. It is believed to be the second most spoken language after French itself – more even than in Canada. More precisely, it is nearly institutionalized in most private and state administrations and institutions, except for some areas like religious spheres, city halls, or law courts.

In Algeria, French is ubiquitous ; it is the language of research, dictation, and writing in various faculties, as is the case in medical science, for example. Pupils in primary school also attend French courses regularly with full examinations, just like parallel modules of math, Arabic, and religion. This explains why many families send their children to private French learning schools between the ages of 5 and 12. Furthermore, the landscape in most northern cities of the country appears entirely French ; all headings of grocery stores, fast food restaurants, chic and simple restaurants, youth dormitories, advertisement panels, etc., are printed in bold French – and in many cases, both the style (à-la-française) and language coincide. Inside state institutions, like pharmacies, laboratories, chemical industries, etc., all posted notes are written in French ; additionally, reports are released by heads and co-workers in French. On television, ministers and higher-ups representing the political and elite layers express themselves in French live when it comes to any official announcement. Moreover, when these individuals switch to classical Arabic, speeches often revert to French during pauses or slips of the tongue. It is noteworthy that the southern side of Algeria is less exposed to such phenomena. Above all, however, erroneous utterances, pronunciations, or written errors in French by any adult are often considered a shameful indication of their intellectual and educational level, as French has been inevitably held as a symbol of prestige, education, and self-status in daily Algerian life. This cohort of individuals with a high level of French proficiency is called passive Francophone speakers.

Although the Arabization reforms were promoted before independence (by Zawaya, Friday sermons, teaching the Qur'an from father to son) and later by many successive government mandates (declaring Arabic as the first national language by President Ben Bella and the extensive language policy applied by President Houari Boumediene), the French language has endured to this very day as a symbol of prestige and modernism. Regardless, in an abrupt social reaction by the Algerian people on February 22, 2019, following the presidential electoral issues (2019–2023), marches of thousands of citizens filled many streets of the country on a Friday noon. For the first time in the history of Algeria, massive protests openly and fearlessly rejected the fifth mandate. On the one hand, people opposed many political issues that, as they claimed and wrote on signs, have plagued the country since independence. On the other hand, concerning this topic, the people requested the substitution of French with English in all aspects of daily life. Henceforth, this work is technically a bridge between French, which is intertwined with Algerian culture and history, and the new language policy starting from post-Hirak (post-march), which will depend on the people's willingness, policy, and time. Above all, only time may assert and shape such results ; otherwise, the following lines below will explain step by step the background of French in Algeria and its fate vis-à-vis the future and English, which is globalizing the world.

## **1. Language Policy in Algeria: From Colonial Legacy to Modern Challenges**

### **(Colonial Legacy and Early Language Policies (1830–1962) .1.1**

A vigorous sociologist or sociolinguist cannot deny that all lands of the world marked different peoples scripturalising truly poles apart languages and that the scale of footing and thumbing got altered from a place to another since the modern era to the nameless, perpetual past. Algeria, however, still can be retained as one of the rarest samples of lands that cradled and amassed more peoples of various languages. For history, this strategic Mediterranean space was exposed to many indigenous tribes and conquests like, for instance, the Berbers, the Romans, the Vandals and the Byzantines, the Arabs (Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid, etc.), the Ottomans, the Spanish, and lastly the French (1827–1962). It is believed that the Berber people are meant to be the indigenous people of Algeria—who named it Numidia. With the early Arab missionaries who settled down from Saudi Arabia to North Africa, Arabic sustained to be the widespread language as

a large variety countering no reluctance thanks to the massive conversions. Besides, Berber, with all of its varieties, remained as well the widespread language among Kabyle people, Mzabi people, Chaoui people, etc., as a sign of identity clinging. Insofar as this paper is apprehensive as regards the language policy, Algeria is undergoing a radical regeneration. The following lines develop more about Arabic versus French.

The French language was initiated first with the early invasions following “the fan incident” in 1827, which declared the battle of Navarin. As the French invaded more lands of the Algerian territory following 1830, the French language became ubiquitous, mostly in the northern lands, for the French policy aimed at urgently erasing the Arabic identity. This can be well sensed in De Montagnac’s vocalized passage in 1843: “All populations who do not accept our conditions must be erased” (as cited in Leclerc, 2001). France, afterwards, intensified its policy based on four or five main delicate domains: military power and adaptation to all the Algerian territory, political power for manipulation, brainwashing and world general opinion vindication, judicial power for morality, and the imposition of the French language. Nearly, France “disintegrated all social, economic, and cultural traits of the Algerian identity to be substituted by the colonial State referents by means of army strength, political power, judicial power, and mainly the imposition of the French language” (Leclerc, 2001). Following the escalation of the worsening reality behind the isolated borders, the Algerian citizens were further deprived of access to pursuing studies neither in Arabic nor in French: a slow cadence rendering the people illiterate through time unconsciously. Otherwise, the lesser opportunities which were ceded inside the French schools were meant for both a language policy and evangelization. In 1932, France announced a new law regarding the Arabic language; it was since then and on when Arabic was considered a foreign language in all the Algerian territories (as cited in Hadjira Medane, 2015, p. 41). As was the case, Arabic noticed a sharp degradation, as there were no academic spheres except some left *zawaya* (most were destroyed) which delivered Quranic lectures and introductions, as Duc d’Aumale noted, but were still meant and leased by the colonizer to serve other occult purposes (as cited in Colonat 1987, p. 83). Henceforward, as most citizens seemed regular—excluding those who fled to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Tunisia for scholarship—it became undeniably a must to exchange communication with the colonizer in French only. Civic spheres like cinemas, markets, railways, etc., which were constructed by the French administration, appeared given posts only in French. Posters, panels, advertisements, journals,

libraries, etc., were all francized; that is, any local Algerian individual would be obliged and urged to pursue learning in/about French even though he was illiterate. Besides, many ladies headed working in the flats of French endemic people downtown; some of them even lived in their houses to do all kinds of tough home work. Eventually, the “OAS”, French military forces, were against the latter idea, which incarnated in killing Algerian workers inside the French flats in case of search warrants.

In the countryside, citizens suffered two devastating policies: the “burnt earth” and hunger in 1944–1945 (the receipt year). Following this rhythm, besides the French language policy practiced in the landscape, learning French whether in written or oral skills became inescapable before earning a piece of bread; talking French became inevitably a total must to survive where the French people were about. Furthermore, the elite layer was not skeptical about using French as a weapon to make the Algerian case heard on the international level, as it was the only way-out language to pursue justice, identification, and dignity. Ironically, it turned out to be a sort of blowback against the French language policy. Three pertinent soft revolutionists among whom were Kateb Yacine, Mohamed Dib, and Mouloud Feraoun: those who wrote better than French native speakers as believed.

Following 1962, the independence year – since 1827 – the first constitution declared Arabic as the official language of Algeria: “The Arabic language is the national and official language of the State”. However, following all the language policies granted by the constitution’s reforms, it appeared well obvious, through still even the landscape and despite all the efforts made to render Standard Arabic a national language of all domains of civic life, the French language remained privileged and protruding in Algerian society. Grandguillaume (2002) noted that “the role of the French language as regards daily socio-economic life made it impossible to deny it as a language of promotion to many Algerians” (as cited in Bistolfi & Giordan, 2003, p. 147).

## **1.2. Post-Independence Language Policies and Contemporary Challenges (1962–2019)**

Eventually, as French was the language of science reaching its utmost levels of readership, seeking medical sciences, literature, philosophy, sociology, and petroleum domains in the twentieth century, most translated sciences into French paved the way for Algerian students, as it was already their second language. As escalating knowledge is a privilege to a minority of people who pursued their studies in years of poverty and radical reformulation after

independence, the use of French outdoors in daily communication became a sign of prestige and education. In numerical terms, it is believed that 87% of the population was literate when France invaded Algerian lands; whereas, on the D-day of independence in July 1962, only 10 to 13 percent of the population was humbly educated (some say only 500 had reached the baccalaureate certificate).

In October 1963, the first Algerian president, Ahmed Ben Bella, proclaimed that Islam is the religion of the Algerian State but did not emphasize Literary Arabic, as it was believed that the Arabic of that stage was intruded upon by many foreign words; besides, Classical Arabic was used except in prayers. Practically, Ben Bella endorsed learning Arabic in all Algerian Primary Schools in 1963 with a schedule of 7 hours out of 30 hours per week. In 1964, this number advanced to 10 hours per week. As there were nearly no pedagogically skilled teachers in primary schools, the president, by announcing recruitment, sought help from Syria and Egypt.

After framing the military on June 19, 1965, by Colonel Houari Boumediene against his peer Ben Bella for an ouster, this successor bore a penetrating animosity towards the French language. Clues of this abhorrence were evident when he was nominated the first Arab president who spoke Classical Arabic in the United Nations in April 1974, despite his well-advanced French. Unlike the erstwhile president, many historians noted that the colonel-president imposed Arabization by force and it was the first step towards a better Arabic language policy. On June 19, 1965, Boumediene presented a discourse regarding “the National Charter” in a conference mentioning central points. He contended that, though there are several concurrent languages in the national territory and numerous Arabic dialects undeniably imposed by many French words being part of the Algerian historical cultural background, Literary Arabic must be thoroughly sovereign. The level of Arabic, as Boumediene supplemented, is a fundamental issue of the country. Finally, he added that the local dialects, which are different from other dialects in various areas whether in the South or in the North, risk Algerians’ sharp incomprehensibility with other Arab nations like Damascus, Iraq, Egypt, etc., if the situation continues fifty years from that date (date of the conference). Inclusively linguistically speaking, Colonel-president Houari Boumediene operated on leveling up the status of Classical Arabic, erasing as much as possible local dialects and regionalism, and unifying and consolidating nationalism. Practically, following the “National Charter” many administrations, like education (Taleb Ibrahim, minister) and justice

mainly, responded to his appeal to Arabize all French texts, laws, and panels. Regardless of all these efforts, and mainly after Arabizing the faculties of law and history, the students displayed no enthusiasm for the new status. This was proved by a questionnaire conducted by the University of Berkeley in 1968; the results showed that 80 percent of students favored continuing to teach in French in local universities.

In 1979, President Chadli Bendjedid ascended to the presidency and also engaged in promoting Arabization and “Islamization”. As religious languages do not die, Chadli believed that Arabic would become a necessity and help in learning and Arabizing as Islam urges practitioners to read the holy Quran in Arabic during prayers. Furthermore, he ordered pupils to boycott all establishments associated with French cultural means (*établissement de la mission culturelle française*). Concerning Tamazight, this third president sidestepped applying any rule related to its teaching, claiming it could lead to national division and regionalism. In 1981, Bendjedid approved a new decree, n° 81-36/March, which granted Arabization to state administration landscapes like the police, civil protection, customs, hospitals, universities, and so on; a step mostly sensitive on the linguistic level. In 1986, the Algerian Parliament adopted a new law defining the creation of the “Arabic Language Algerian Academy” (*L’Académie Algérienne de la Langue Arabe*) under the new consensus law n° 86-10/August, 1986 (article n° 5), which worked on promoting Classical Arabic and most importantly including it in all varieties of science and disciplines. In 1991, President Chadli Bendjedid prescribed a new law with reference to language policy, which is believed to be a radically unparalleled plan to integrate Classical Arabic once and for all in Algeria. The law n° 91-05/January, 1991 concerned a commitment to—if not exaggerated—a hundred percent Arabization of all administrations, establishments, institutions, and even recruitment contests. Nevertheless, this decree was never applied as the successive president, Mohamed Boudiaf (1992), froze the law n° 91-05 in 1992, assuming that the circumstances did not allow such a gigantic once-for-all language policy. In fact, this step was predictable earlier as he addressed the people in Algerian Arabic—not Classical Arabic—so that they would understand with ease.

The successive Colonel-president Ali Kafi (1992–1994) referred to the earlier law adapted by Chadli Bendjedid (n° 91-05) in upgrading and approving two new laws: one presidential and one legislative. The first one, n° 92–303/July 4, 1992 highlighted that nationalizing and spreading Literary Arabic in all classes of state administrations, establishments, and institutions



is a compulsion that cannot be revised. The second decree, on the other hand, n° 92-02/July 4, 1992, which seemed obviously contradicting the first one, maintained to “suspend” the earlier law n° 91-05/July 16, 1991, which concerned generalizing Classical Arabic fully hundred percent all over the country. During Colonel Ali Kafi’s tenure, the language policy, just as was the case with two contradicting laws, seemed not to have salient maintenance by the polity, perhaps due to the political rhythm being a bit alternative and hazy. However, in a juncture unlike the previous years, the English language was introduced to be taught in primary schools for the first time in 1993, presenting strong competition to the French language. Despite the newly introduced foreign language (neutral regarding Tamazight and French), the French language maintained its dominance. Indeed, the National Centre for Analysis and Studies Planning noted that only 55,950 pupils out of 4.7 million chose to study English after a recommendation from their parents in the 1997–1998 school year.

In 1994, the fifth Algerian president was Liamine Zeroual, a 61 percent vote gainer who delivered speeches in Algerian Arabic and French. During his mandate, thousands of protests hailed from Berbers in the country questioning the status of Tamazight in nationalism. At the moment of the reaction summit, the Algerian Government disclosed no response to the Berber appeal. Unexpectedly, the government called out parents to choose what language (amongst French versus English) they preferred their children to be taught in primary schools under the title that English is the language of science and technology. Practically speaking, the English language, again, was but a theory far away from being implemented; some say it was due to the parents’ preference for French, while others say it was due to the lack of skilled/enough English teachers (TOEFL). As no official response was vocalized by the Algerian authorities, August 18, 1994, was a D-day when all Berber territories protested, leading to a serious strike and recanting school seats. It was mainly known as “the strike of schoolbags” (*la grève des cartables*). As the case kept an alternative status for more than nine months by appealing for Tamazight to be included in education, President Zeroual announced a presidential decree, n° 95-147/March 17, 1995, mentioning the creation of the Supreme Bureau for Tamazight (*haut commissariat à l’amazighité*). Concerning Classical Arabic, this fifth president decided to regenerate the law n° 91-05/January 16, 1991—which had theoretically no chance of applicability—and reset it in law n° 96-30/December 21, 1996, by which he nominated the use of Arabic in the non-Arabized spheres so far,

like university faculties mainly. However, by the course of two years later, and as the civic rhythm was deteriorating in Algeria (the black decade), on June 5, 1998, Matoub Lounes (a famous Kabyle singer) was assassinated, causing sharp riots in Berber territories. Eventually, the rage in Berber cities put an end to all Arabic posts, panels, advertisement papers, etc. except those written in French and Berber.

As Zeroual resigned, leaving behind the palace of Moradia in Algiers, the capital, on April 27, 1999, his successor was Abd Al Aziz Bouteflika. The latter spoke in Algerian Arabic in a populist manner that some considered comprehensible to all ages; besides, he spoke French with a highly advanced quality, particularly when responding to questions from external Western channels. Bouteflika was, in fact, aware of the Berber versus Classical Arabic issue but never claimed that Algeria had linguistic problems. However, to alleviate the tension, and following some constitutional adjustments, the parliament declared in April 2002 that Berber was also a national language for the first time—but implicitly not official.

During his second mandate (2004–2008), in 2005, Bouteflika responded to the Berber movement with reluctance:

“No country in the world has two official languages, and this will never be the case in Algeria, where Arabic will remain the only official language as stated by the constitution. [...] But this does not preclude learning about Tamazight and its variations and dialects”. (October 4, 2005, National Television)

Though there are indeed countries that admit and adapt two official languages (18 countries in Africa), the Algerian government did not support the idea of abandoning unilingualism, which is a significant pillar of national unity.

Regarding the deep-rooted issue of Arabic versus French, the president enacted law n° 05–07/August 23, 2005, which oversaw the private schools teaching languages—primarily French. The president implicitly instructed private schools operating in Kabyle territories to prioritize the Arabic language and adhere to the national Arabization program. He declared, “It is absolutely clear that any private institution which does not prioritize Arabic as national and official must be removed”. (President Bouteflika, 2005). Practically speaking, not long after this declaration, in March 2006, Bouteflika ordered the closure of 42 Francophone establishments operating within the country. Ostensibly, Arabization was supported by a language policy as detailed in “Article 33” of the regulatory law of January 2008:

teaching is provided in Arabic at all educational levels, whether in public or private institutions. Concerning Tamazight, as highlighted in “Article 34,” the core did not emphasize its application compared to Classical Arabic; it was rather a superficial recommendation. Technically speaking, the 2008 law was an updated version of the earlier executive decree n° 76-35/April 16, 1976. Both laws supervised the extension of Arabization in law courts, city halls, universities, etc. For example, though in 2008 nearly all law courts were Arabized, law n° 08-09/February 25 (2008) further clarified the use of Arabic in law courts, including debates and sentencing, in Arabic only. On February 7, 2016, the Algerian Parliament called for constitutional reform; indeed, it was approved by 499 parliamentarians—but still denied by two deputies—and for the first time in Algerian history, Tamazight, like Arabic, was recognized as both a national and official language. The latter is clearly stated in “Article 3”: Tamazight is equally [like Arabic] a national and official language”. (The Constitution).

All things considered, although the efforts of all presidents (government-authorized language policy) have been dedicated to Classical Arabic, the French language remains fundamental in many fields of Algerian society and daily life. A clear example is the years 1987, 1993, and 1997 when parents were surveyed by the government to choose between French and English to be taught in primary schools, as they could not be included in one curriculum. In several expected referendums, ninety percent of parents chose French over English throughout Algeria. Today, in 2019–2020, the status of spoken languages, particularly in northwestern cities, still privileges French—and its speakers—over other languages such as Arabic, Tamazight, and English.

## **2. From Grassroots Movements to Official Language Policies: An Analysis**

(2019)The reason why French is still part of Algerian society nowadays lies in the fully Francized landscapes gradually engrained over many years of “parsimonious” Arabizing reforms. Eventually, people who pursued pedagogical academic scholarship in colleges after independence earned an advanced civic rhythm compared to those who did not pursue their studies due to harsh conditions and poverty. Yet, teaching was nearly entirely in French; therefore, French and education became two sides of the same coin. Moreover, even with the successive second generation since independence, most graduates seemed to exhibit traits of successful people in life, such as general practitioners, teachers, chemists, etc. They appeared advanced compared to regular people in terms of lifestyle, purchasing power, health

status, social acceptance, etc. GrandGuillaume (2002) attested, “it ended up impossible to deny the role of French within the socio-economic life as a language of promotion to many Algerians” (p. 147). However, many faculties could not follow the Arabizing reforms—as mentioned in presidential and legislative decrees and laws earlier in “History”—such as Medical Sciences, Chemistry, IAP (petroleum studies), and many other faculties. In addition, fields based on scientific attestations were much better expected than those in Law, Arabic teaching, and Religious Studies. Over time, the French language—and even the one code-switched or code-mixed with Arabic—came to symbolize two important components in any society: prestige and education. This portrayal might be a salient plausible reason why French is intricate in Algerian society. On February 22, 2019, many Algerians took to the streets to express their refusal of the 2019–2023 presidential election, which would seemingly nominate the current president Bouteflika for a fifth consecutive mandate. In general, the march was not an organized plan; it was impulsive, potential, and spontaneous. On the succeeding Friday (February 29), thousands of Algerians flooded countless streets of the country, wishing and begging marchers not to destroy, insult, invade shops, or cause any immoral act that could lead to a quandary of rabbleroxing between the police and the people. As hundreds of media outlets worldwide demonstrated, all that protesters were seeking was depicted on skins, panels, shirts, flags, dyed hair, and so on, with all the recognized peaceful forms of expression in the streets. In an odd scene, marchers shared milk, dates, and bottles of water with the police corps, who stood unable to react as no riots were committed. Specifically, the loud populist acoustics characterized two widespread expressions in the country: “silmiya silmiya” and “la li al ouhda al khamissa,” meaning “peaceful, peaceful” and “no to the fifth mandate”. As the case escalated irreducibly with more and more protesters each ongoing Friday, although President Bouteflika resigned—as his ouster was among dozens of requests—the people demanded other political and civic requests like the prosecution of many political personalities, military leaders, and other well-off businessmen.

Far from any political analysis, a noteworthy sociolinguistic high point reveals that the protesters demanded the government, in an unprecedented show of vigilance since independence, to substitute French with English in all schools, universities (chemistry, medical sciences, biology, and other technical-scientific fields), and in many forms of expression. The core of this request is not only concerned with which option suits the science of language but

rather with a matter of discounting the French language, seen as a symbol of objectionable acculturation deeply rooted in colonialism from 1962 to the present. As a result, and still in the core of language vis-à-vis the government, despite some arrests by the authorities following the Hyrak, the government (specifically the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education) declared some changes live on television and social media (mainly Facebook). As these responses were palpable and practical in some ways, the French government condemned them both tacitly and directly as hasty decisions, predicting potential failures. France had promoted its language policy after independence by mobilizing “L’Institut français” in Oran and Algiers, facilitating trade-offs and swaps, hosting general practitioners and specialists for special studies, offering scholarships for students, and providing many other “occult” and prominent privileges inaccessible to neighboring countries or even others of the coalition. As the Algerian government appeared through mass media serious and cautious in response to the people, and mainly after the government required shops, groceries, and business spheres to have Arabic headings instead of French, France again endorsed its language policy (in September 3–4, 2019), stating that the visa gate is open to any Algerian. For instance, visas for regular Algerians had been completely denied access and suspended for six months earlier. Among the decisions that followed the higher-ups’ or even the people’s decisions are the following:

- Tayeb Bouzid, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, replied to a student general practitioner who asked about the possibility of using English instead of French, stating that this matter particularly goes back to the public of academicians after a survey they conclude (as cited in Al Masdar Newspaper, August 20, 2019).
- Minister of Education, Abd Al Hakim Belabed, announced that primary/middle/high school recruitment contests will no longer include French language skills examinations (June 1, 2019).
- Tidjani Hassane Heddami, Minister of Profession and Social Insurance, officially promised that insurance sector workers will be trained in English courses following the 2019–2020 academic year.
- Algerian authorities desire a survey ahead querying about the matter of French versus English. Besides, Tayeb Bouzid affirmed that a covenant will be signed shortly with the U.S. Ambassador Jean Derocher, delving into eight issues concerning “data and social promotion” (as cited in Al Ain Newspaper, June 27, 2019).

- The new university of medical sciences in Oran City recently hung its identical panel written in Arabic subtitled in English in June 2019.
- Many pages and profiles on Facebook called for a cessation of using French ; moreover, some commented on various publications that they no longer read French commentaries.
- Numerous shops on well-known avenues labeled their groceries, restaurants, and shops in English.
- At USTO University in Oran City (Scientific Studies), the student administrative file recap (Bachelor's and MA degrees) was printed in Arabic on the right with an English translation on the left. Additionally, the department headings were translated into English instead of French.
- Many families are subscribing their children to English and American schools like Metro Languages, BLC, and the American Corner. Between this and that, it is imperative, based on all the proofs and facts that followed this “Hyarak” (the peaceful march), that the generator of this government-authorized language policy is the people. This is a significant proof showing that language policies worldwide cannot be solely governmental decisions but must be man-made as well. Such particulars remind us of the “Quiet Revolution” pursued by the Quebecois in the 1960s when they demanded to use French in administrations instead of English. Regarding the current Algerian case – since this paper is being written in the middle of the “Hyarak” – only time can assert whether such policy decisions are applicable and factual on the ground. However, such analyses (like the one at hand) explain at least why such future linguistic changes occur in given shapes instead of others. The opportunities for such second language changes in a given country are outgrowths of such a gargantuan people's movement, or otherwise.

## **Conclusion**

Algeria is a country that suffered a serious French language policy from 1830 to 1962. A sound proof of this is its francized landscape reaching many domains across all the administrations of the country. The foundation was laid in the early days when the French authorities operated on eradicating Algerian culture from its roots. However, as Arabic was part of Algerian culture (Islam urges prayers in Arabic), France continually undermined the language, achieving their goal with ease. Consequently, many Algerians

found themselves with poor Arabic proficiency, as they were deprived of any form of scholarship for decades, neither in Arabic nor in French. After independence, French did not seem to be torn from the system; henceforth, it became symbolized with self-esteem and prestige. The ego of holding on to “prestige” and “social acceptance” in Algerian society handicapped the process of getting rid of French after independence. Moreover, despite all the presidential and legislative reforms concerning Arabization, French continued to be “an informal second language”—though many linguists asserted its degradation in terms of mastery and learning among youngsters. In February 2019, the people protested against the fifth mandate, raising three main demands in the streets: ouster of the fifth mandate, justice against authority figures, and replacing French with English. Eventually, the days following the Hyrak ended with fruitful results like the elimination of the fifth mandate, prosecution of several politicians and leaders with sentences ranging between 15 to 20 years in prison, and the sowing of the seeds of a new language policy regarding French versus English. Linguistically speaking, language policies around the world, whether direct or indirect, receptive or impulsive, play out over time to show their results. This means that any language policy can benefit from its reforms over a period of twenty to forty years—a whole generation. As is the case, Algeria, like all past examples of countries or regions which sought language change (such as Quebec, Catalonia, Papua New Guinea, etc.), is committed with time to clear-cut and declare that French is finally discarded from society and replaced by English. The years 2045, 2055, and up to 2070 will serve as sound proofs to assert such results.

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## Abstract

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Algeria, a Mediterranean region exposed to various conquests, was deeply influenced by French colonization from 1830 to 1962. The French aimed to erase Arabic identity, making French the dominant language through military, political, judicial, and educational measures. This led to widespread illiteracy and the marginalization of Arabic. Post-independence, despite efforts to revive Arabic, French maintained a strong presence. Post-1962, Algerian leaders sought to promote Arabic, facing challenges in a society still influenced by French. Initial efforts under President Ben Bella were modest, increasing Arabic hours in primary schools. Boumediene's era saw forceful Arabization, yet students favored French for higher education. Bendjedid continued Arabization, but Tamazight faced neglect. Zeroual and Bouteflika's tenures highlighted ongoing tensions, with some progress for Tamazight. Despite governmental efforts, French remained dominant in education and daily life. The 2019 protests underscored a desire to replace French with English, reflecting a shift in public sentiment against colonial remnants.

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## Keywords

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Colonial legacy, French language, Arabization, Independence, Language policy

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## مستخلص

تعرضت الجزائر، المنطقة المتوسطية، للعديد من الفتوحات، وتأثرت بشدة بالاستعمار الفرنسي من عام 1830 إلى عام 1962. سعت فرنسا لمحو الهوية العربية وجعلت اللغة الفرنسية هي المهيمنة من خلال التدابير العسكرية والسياسية والقضائية والتعليمية، مما أدى إلى انتشار الأمية وتهميش اللغة العربية. بعد الاستقلال، وبالرغم من الجهود المبذولة لإحياء اللغة العربية، ظلت الفرنسية تحافظ على وجود قوي. بعد عام 1962، سعى القادة الجزائريون لتعزيز اللغة العربية، وواجهوا تحديات



في مجتمع ما زال متأثراً بالفرنسية. كانت الجهود الأولية تحت قيادة الرئيس بن بلة متواضعة، حيث زادت ساعات اللغة العربية في المدارس الابتدائية. شهد عهد بومدين تعريباً قسرياً، إلا أن الطلاب فضلوا الفرنسية للتعليم العالي. واصل بن جديد التعريب، لكن الأمازيغية واجهت الإهمال. أظهرت فترات زروال وبوتفليقة التوترات المستمرة، مع بعض التقدم للأمازيغية. بالرغم من جهود الحكومة، بقيت الفرنسية مهيمنة في التعليم والحياة اليومية. سلطت احتجاجات 2019 الضوء على رغبة في استبدال الفرنسية بالإنجليزية، مما يعكس تحولاً في الرأي العام ضد بقايا الاستعمار.

### كلمات مفتاحية

كلمات مفتاحية : الإرث الاستعماري، اللغة الفرنسية، التعريب، الاستقلال، السياسة اللغوية

### Résumé

L'Algérie, une région méditerranéenne exposée à diverses conquêtes, a été profondément influencée par la colonisation française de 1830 à 1962. Les Français visaient à effacer l'identité arabe, rendant le français dominant par des mesures militaires, politiques, judiciaires et éducatives. Cela a conduit à une large illettrisme et à la marginalisation de l'arabe. Après l'indépendance, malgré les efforts pour revitaliser l'arabe, le français a maintenu une forte présence. Après 1962, les dirigeants algériens ont cherché à promouvoir l'arabe, faisant face à des défis dans une société toujours influencée par le français. Les efforts initiaux sous le président Ben Bella étaient modestes, augmentant les heures d'arabe dans les écoles primaires. L'ère de Boumediene a vu une arabisation forcée, mais les étudiants préféraient le français pour l'enseignement supérieur. Bendjedid a poursuivi l'arabisation, mais le tamazight a été négligé. Les mandats de Zeroual et Bouteflika ont mis en lumière les tensions continues, avec quelques progrès pour le tamazight. Malgré les efforts du gouvernement, le français est resté dominant dans l'éducation et la vie quotidienne. Les protestations de 2019 ont souligné un désir de remplacer le français par l'anglais, reflétant un changement dans l'opinion publique contre les vestiges coloniaux.

### Mots-clés

Héritage colonial, langue française, arabisation, indépendance, politique linguistique