

English Language Use at The Corporate Level: A Sociolinguistic Approach in The Algerian Context

استعمال اللغة الإنجليزية على مستوى المؤسسات: مقاربة
لغوية-اجتماعية على مستوى الجزائر

L'utilisation de l'Anglais dans les Institutions: une approche sociolinguistique dans le contexte algérien

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Introduction

Algeria is a complex and a multilingual country. It witnessed various settlements during different periods of its history. As a result, the sociocultural and sociolinguistic history is shaped by different and various civilisations in the past, starting from the Phoenicians until the French occupation. These invasions make of Algeria a particular sociolinguistic context. It is a well known fact that Algeria has been considered as a francophone country. It is the most influenced country among all the Maghrebian countries and even after independence and the process of arabisation, it still has a special status as it is a tool for development and modernization. However, we have recently noticed that another linguistic option is emerging, it is English.

Arabic, including Classical Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, Vernacular Arabic with its different dialects, Berber dialects and French are the languages belonging to the linguistic repertoire in Algeria. But what about the status of English ? What is the real place of English at the level of institutions ? Is there a displacement between French and English ?

1. English as a global language

The different countries all over the world feel the need to communicate and be understood. This cannot be done without a common language which can gather the world's nations. It can be done thanks to English, the global language which has an important role of facilitating communication between the different countries in the whole world.

We have noticed lately, the emergence of English as the most important language in the world, being considered as a global and as a very important

language accepted and adopted by native and non-native speakers. People all over the world consider English as a universal language used everywhere and understood in foreign countries. There are 5000 different languages around the world and English ranks the first one among all the other distinctive languages.

Crystal (2003 :2) defines the global language, he says :

“English is a global language, they would say. You hear it on television spoken by politicians from all over the world. Wherever you travel, you see English signs and advertisements. Whenever you enter a hotel or restaurant in a foreign city, they will understand English, and there will be an English menu.”

English is an international language ; it is a global language, a language of modernity, technology and international communication. A great number of people around the world use it. They use it as their native language or a language acquired as a second or foreign language. Bhatia and Ritchie (2013 :571) speak about the great number of users, natives and non-natives, they say :

“It is spoken as a first language and as a second or official language along with one or more languages by around 750 million. Speakers of English as a second language will soon outnumber those who speak it as a first language. Around 800 million people are believed to speak English as a foreign language.”

English is used almost everywhere in the world, at different domains such as airports and aviation. In all airports of the world or on board planes, instructions are written in the local language and in English. When it comes to box office, for music and film industry, Hollywood is the first film industry in the world and eighty percent of songs are in English.

English is the lingua franca of international business. It moved from a situation where it was only a language spoken in some countries to another situation where it becomes a global language, used and known almost in all countries.

Oakes (2008 :19) claims the need of acquiring this language in comparison to French, French which has been for a long time considered as the language of prestige and fashion. But in modern times, prestige is not enough, technology and science are more important :

“There is a widespread belief that French is the second language of the world and that all visitors will know it, however, in recent years, with more people travelling and with more international investment, companies and the government alike have started to see the need for English.”

English has a special history, it moved from a status of no importance to a remarkable place, a more important one in the world. It knew different stages and different periods.

To know English, implies discovering the beginning of that language and its evolution.

English has been influenced by other languages. It is a mixture of German, French and Latin. The English language we use and speak today is not the language that existed hundreds of years ago because of different historical events. The history of English has been divided into many periods. They are called: old English, middle English, modern English and late modern English that we know nowadays. Culpeper (2005 :1) resumes the history of English as the following: “ ‘The most important factor in the development of English has been the arrival of successive waves of settlers and invaders speaking different languages.’”

English becomes the language for unifying people living and coming from different parts of the globe. It is the most used language in the world because of the great number of users, either natives or non-native speakers. Millions of people use English as a national language, a second language or foreign one. The number of users of this language increases year after year. They know the importance of this language and how it can help them in their lives. In this concern, McIntyre, (2009 :31) suggests: “ We could say that English is now a global language simply by virtue of its being spoken by such a large number of people worldwide.”

2. Multilingualism/Plurilingualism in Algeria

Every human being should have a natural potential to acquire more than one language. Acquiring a new language can help the learner to be more efficient in communication in his L1, his first language and to help his memory.

Multilingualism is a social environment where people speak more than one language. It can result from many reasons such as colonization, settlement and migration. Edwards (2013 :7) describes multilingualism and its causes as the following :

“Multilingual realities arise in a number of ways. Immigrants, whether settlers or invaders, bring languages into contact and sometimes, as with imperialist and colonial expansion, it is unnecessary for many people to physically move ; their language may make its presence felt through military, religious, or economic force requiring”.

In Algeria, many languages and dialects coexist. Classical Arabic, colloquial Arabic, Berber dialects and French are part of the sociolinguistic behaviour and they fulfil many social functions in Algeria. Multilingual speakers acquire a language or different languages, in addition to their L1, their mother tongue. They are used for different purposes, but there are some cases where all the languages are used together like it is the case of the language of phoning. We have noticed the expansion of the use of mobile phones (Smartphones) ; and a real emergence of mobiles in Algeria. People use a mixture of codes and dialects, varieties and new abbreviations. We can associate the mobiles with the creation of a new language variety and these abbreviations are mutually intelligible. They are understood by the community where they are used. The language of the phone (if we can call it this way) is a mixture of Algerian Arabic, modern standard Arabic, French and English. This language is due to the changes and evolution of the society. It is clear that whenever the society changes, the language changes. It is never stable. There is a strong relationship between society and language as language has a social function. Multilingualism in Algeria is considered as a linguistic richness.

Algerians are living in a complex sociolinguistic situation, in a complex reality where Classical Arabic or Modern Standard Arabic should be used for tradition and the two foreign languages namely French and English for modernity. After independence in 1962, with the policy of Arabisation, Arabic has been introduced in education and the use of French reduced.

Many voices are rising against the French language in our country. They consider it just as a consequence of a long period of colonisation and they are welcoming English because it represents science and technology. The aim of the spread of English is to unify people around the world. It is a good idea to accept other cultures and to be more tolerant.

3. English at the Algerian institutions

The Algerian people are aware of the importance of English, they are for learning foreign languages in general and English in particular ; English is a worldwide language, the universal language of the modern world, scientific knowledge and technology.

Our language is full of foreign words coming from different languages and among these languages, is English. Words like: shopping, jogging, smartphone, weekend, e-mail, parking, facebook... etc are all English ones.

English is used in different areas alongside local languages, domains like tourism, travelling. In international flights, safety instructions are given in

English, Arabic and French. Advertisement, mass media (television), computer sciences (Software & hardware...)

Passports are still provided in Arabic, French and English. The notes and the instructions of medicines are written in French, Arabic and sometimes even in English.

For some important companies such as, Sonatrach, the company of gas and petrol, (Société nationale pour la recherche, la production, le transport, la transformation et la commercialisation des hydrocarbures), Ooredoo, Mobilis and Djezzy, (telecommunication companies), courses of English are given, general English and technical one so as to help employees in their job, and keeping their professional development continuous.

For employees of Algerie Telecom, a training is proposed to them, employees coming from all parts of Algeria in order to help them in their jobs, (for contracts and to exploit English documents...)

4. Teaching English in Algeria

Although English is used in different sectors, the most important way of the spread of that language in Algeria is teaching. It is the domain which witnesses its development.

We give a considerable attention to English in education. It promises an open door to the modern life, to media and science. Teaching English in Algeria is a vital need, it encourages the learners to be tolerant and accept other foreign cultures. It aims at developing their intellectual spirit and promoting their critical thinking.

English is really present in the domain of education, after the reforms of 2002, English starts to cover seven years of studies, four years in middle school and three in secondary school.

In the middle schools, the teaching of English moves from second year to the first one.

At the level of university, in scientific fields, English is taught to help students for further studies.

In the field of translation at university, Arabic and English are obligatory, French is optional. We can choose German or Spanish instead.

Even though a lot of efforts have been made by the Government to encourage the use and the learning of English, French remains in the leading position, owing to its historical background. For instance, the hours of teaching French are superior to the ones of the teaching of English. Moreover, most of the scientific fields at university are taught in French.

Learners should be aware that English is not only a matter learned like all other fields but as a vital need and part of education like all the rest of the world. It is the language of international communication, diplomacy and sport.

Teaching in Algeria should be improved, teachers need to be trained, through scholarships and they need to be introduced to modern methods of teaching, methods to attract the learners because the problem is that the learners are passive and not very active in class and outside. The reason behind this behaviour is that these learners are exposed to English only in classrooms, once they are out, they find themselves code switching. Learners should be involved in studying English for their future jobs. They should improve their English if their knowledge is weak.

Teachers should use innovative methods to teach that necessary language, using games and quizzes for the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary and rely more on ICTs (information and communication technology).

More and more private schools open their doors in Algeria. Schools where different foreign languages are taught but English remains the language chosen by far.

English for specific purposes (ESP), special English is provided for specific purposes. Private schools provide a modern and an updated program aiming at meeting their needs.

Some doctors, scientists, engineers, psychologists feel the need to learn English because they know that English is spoken by a significant number in the world and this language will help them when travelling abroad, they will be able to communicate easily and fluently. They know that French will not help them in the domain of their job. They can be updated because most of documents, articles and scientific books are in English. They need also English in some international conferences.

Age is an important factor for acquiring a language. It will be a great idea to introduce English at an early age for a better future, more connection to science and technology and for future jobs and in order to prepare them to get a head start for future career. English should be taught from primary school because children have the capacity of acquiring different languages at the same time.

According to the latest instructions and articles, English will be introduced at the level of university in various domains. It will be the language of instruction. It is a good initiative but it will take time because teachers should be trained in English first. How can this reform be applied if the teachers themselves lack fluency in English.

5. English and Economics in Algeria

Teaching and economics are the two major domains in Algeria where English has a distinct place.

English is considered as the language of unity in the world. It is the language of modernity, technology, science and business. So, people around the world are trying to learn it for an economic necessity. English is not used only in multinational companies but also in the engineering industry.

We all know that language is tightly linked to economics and vice versa. A century ago, economy in Algeria was based on agriculture but at present it is based on exports of fossil fuels. In Algeria, when people are able to use English correctly, a better economic performance will result especially in the business field.

When Algerians are able to e-mail in English, they will achieve their goals exchanging with foreigner businessmen in meetings, especially when they have a position of responsibility, or in employment sector, when applying for a job or being interviewed for a job. English will help its users to be open-minded and accept foreign cultures as well as in their career prospects.

When politicians go abroad, those who do not know English use French. They should speak English because it can be understood by the others, as being a lingua franca or at least they use Arabic, their native language and the interpreter will do the translation.

Thanks to internet, English spread more and more. The web facilitates communication in all fields. Youtube videos of native speakers of English teaching grammar and vocabulary are available for native and non-native speakers and other online videos for learning and improving English mastery and other free online resources are available for everyone.

The variety (American English /British English) or the accent we speak is not really important for non native speakers, what is important is to master an academic language, to speak, understand and to be understood. The way we speak is without importance to be mentioned.

6. Competition between French and English

French and English derive from the same family but a real competition exists between the two European languages.

If we want to speak about the origins of English, and its relationship with French, we will say that what makes French and English sharing the same linguistic features is that French had a great influence over English, during the

Norman conquest. It was an era where French had more prestige than English in England. French was the language of high class, business and education. On the other hand, English was used by the low class, for every day life interactions. There are a lot of similarities in vocabulary between the two European languages.

There have been calls for the displacement between French and English because people consider English much more as the language of science, technology and international business. Bhatia and Ritchie (2013 :566) describe the competition between the languages :

“English has effectively dethroned its competitor languages, such as French and Russian, in this arena and continues to do so with more vigor and dynamics ; thus becoming the single most important language of globalization”

The claims to substitute English for French started after the Algerian independence. The Government aimed at eradicating French and establishing English as the language of modernity and technology. Hence, it was much more a political policy than an economical and a technological one.

In recent years, English started to compete with French. It is not an easy task to replace French, considered as the language of the last colonizer, a language which lasted more than a century. A language which has a great background in our country (history). The impact was and is still great. Despite all the efforts made by the government to remove French from Algeria, it still has a special status even if officially, it is not recognized. French is an important language in the Algerian repertoire. We cannot say that it is used exclusively in Algeria, but when you go to the other countries of the Maghreb, you find French and French speakers with different levels of proficiency.

English is linked to other languages in Algeria. Kaplan and Baldauf (2007 :122) refer to this link :

“The future of Arabic-French or Tamazight-French bilingualism in Algeria also depends on the future status of English and the struggle between the two European languages, French and English. Between the 1970's and the end of the 1990's, several Anglophone institutions and scholars predicted the replacement of French by English in the francophone bastions of the Maghreb in general and in Algeria in particular.”

But some predictions are not correct, some years ago, some people predicted the death of Berber. It is not the case. It is a national language, and according to the recent reforms, it becomes a compulsory language taught at school. In some cities or it can be a choice either you study it or not.

The competition of the two European languages was tackled by Chemami (2011 :232) :

“Technically, speaking English is apprehended as a second foreign language in Algeria. Its teaching is in competition with the French language since the year 2000 at the first grade level of middle school. However, in universities, 95 % of undergraduate and post-graduate courses in sciences or in medicine are taught in French language.”

French can be seen as a heritage in Algeria. It belongs to the linguistic repertoire. English is gaining ground because French is rejected. A large part of the Algerian population considers it as a bad consequence of a long colonialism ; they see French as the language of oppression, they prefer the learning and use of English in order to be more faithful to their country. That is to say, that this category of citizens in Algeria do not really want to add and adopt another language, a language which is really useful, but they want to replace a foreign language by another.

Attitudes towards French in Algeria differ from a group to another, in this concern, Oakes (2008 :19) states: “To some, French is the language of colonialism and humiliation while to others it is a language of art and culture and very often a key out of the country.”

If we deal with attitudes and acceptance of one foreign language instead of another. People consider French as the language of a long colonisation but what about English ? What about linguistic imperialism ? English has been imposed to all the world. How does English reach the level of globality ? English has been ignored a long time then it became and is becoming the language the most used in the world, in different domains and at various levels. The language of knowledge, science and modernity.

It is not an easy task to replace a language which has been present for more than 130 years and which has a special effect on people. The majority of the Algerian people speak French with different levels of proficiency, and it is not easy for them to move to English directly because of many problems.

The difference between French and English in the use, in Algeria, French is the first foreign language but it does not seem as foreign as it should be because it is spoken spontaneously, without thinking about using it. Algerians generally use French in everyday life interaction, maybe they use only French or a mixture between French and Algerian Arabic or French with Berber. Algerians are bilinguals, using French and Algerian Arabic or French and Berber, and they code switch, moving from a code to another. French is the language used in some institutions such as banking, companies of telecommunication... whereas

English is also a foreign language but less mastered by the population because it is not really a part of our repertoire, our language is full of English words but we do not really consider them as English words because they have been adopted in our vocabulary.

Those who know English in Algeria, they have been in touch with it at school or they learned it because they need it in their jobs.

French is a means of instruction, it is used in politics, medicine, media and education. If we compare the two foreign languages, French is regarded as the language widely studied even if Algerian Arabic (dialectal Arabic) is full of words coming from French. This linguistic phenomenon is called borrowing, we take a word from another code and we adopt it and adapt it in our current language.

Despite all the efforts done by the government to remove French from Algeria, Algeria remains a francophone country and French is considered as a powerful foreign and second language in Algeria.

English is not used in daily life like French which seems to us that it is a part of our culture. English is taking ground but it needs time to be spread.

Hamzaoui (2017 :79) describes the linguistic situation in Algeria, the status of French and English and the comparison between them: "In Algeria, the power of the English language and its spread is clearly noticeable. In fact, it is the most important foreign language taught after French, which is actually regarded as a second language pervading big portions of the society at large."

According to Hamzaoui, French remains the first foreign language which is spread in Algeria, and English ranked after French but the number of users of English is increasing.

Conclusion

Children represent the future generation, if they conceive the acquisition of a new language as a positive thing ; it means that they want to open themselves to the modern and the developed world.

Using French in the Algerian context should not be seen as a negative consequence of a long colonisation, but as richness since another language is acquired and mastered. People associate French with colonialism and English with technology, modernism and science. However, for others, having a positive attitude, they see foreign languages as richness.

We can say that English is a substitute for French in other countries but not in Algeria.

It is important to acquire English because it facilitates communication and makes it easier with other countries and to improve life conditions. It is a mistake to say that English will be a substitute for French. We are sure that Algeria can never become a monolingual country.

In the light of the comparison above between the status of French and English, we think that people want to learn English and use it for specific purposes but they don't consider English and French as rivals. We have noticed the maintenance of the ex-colonial language in daily life and the acceptance of acquiring another important, powerful foreign language.

French is used in everyday life communication, it is used for communication and fashion. However, English is used for business, future jobs, technology, science and international relations.

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Abstract

The fundamental objective of this research is to stress the crucial role English has in the whole world in general and in Algeria in particular and the current status of English in Algerian institutions. English is seen as an

indispensable language in the modern world. This paper attempts to give an overview of the importance of this language in our country. We focus on English, as the most studied language all over the world. We deal with its use in Algeria with a sociolinguistic approach. English is taking ground but the most important domains where English is present are education as English is taught to learners from middle school, for public schools and from the primary level for private schools. The second domain where English is present is in economics. People feel the need to know and master this global language because it opens a window to the modern world where technology and science co-exist. Moreover, it helps people develop their personal and professional competencies. We also focus on the ranking of the different foreign and European languages in Algeria, to find out any displacement between French and English. If we speak about rivalry between the two European languages: French and English, we would say that it turns in favour to French since it is a part of the Algerian linguistic repertoire due to a long colonisation.

Keywords

language, English, French, institutions, Algeria, teaching, economics and displacement..

مستخلص

ان الهدف الأساسي من وراء هذا البحث هو التأكيد على أهمية اللغة الإنجليزية في العالم بشكل عام وفي الجزائر بشكل أخص.

تعتبر الإنجليزية لغة أساسية في العالم الحديث وعلى ذلك فان هذا العمل هو محاولة لإلقاء نظرة شاملة حول أهمية هاته اللغة وتم التركيز على الإنجليزية باعتبارها أكبر لغة عالمية من حيث الدراسة كما تم البحث في إطار مقارنة لغوية اجتماعية. الإنجليزية موجودة في الجزائر ولكن بشكل أكبر في المدرسة حيث يتم تدريسها للمتعلمين ابتداء من الطور المتوسط في المدارس العمومية وابتداء من الطور الابتدائي في المدارس الخاصة. يعتبر قطاع الاقتصاد ثاني قطاع يتعامل بالإنجليزية حيث نلمس حاجة الأفراد للتعليم والتحكم في الإنجليزية كلغة عالمية لأنها تفتح نافذة على العالم الحديث أين تتعايش التكنولوجيا والعلوم بالإضافة الى انها تساعد على دفع الافراد الى تطوير كفاءتهم الشخصية والمهنية. نركز أيضا خلال البحث على ترتيب مختلف اللغات الأجنبية العالمية والأوروبية في الجزائر للكشف عن وجود إزاحة بين الفرنسية والإنجليزية. إذا تكلمنا عن منافسة بين اللغتين الأوروبيتين الفرنسية والإنجليزية يمكننا القول ان الكفة ترجح لصالح الفرنسية لأنها جزء من الرصيد اللغوي الجزائري بسبب الحقبة الاستعمارية الطويلة.

كلمات مفتاحية

كلمات مفتاحية: اللغة الإنجليزية، الفرنسية، المؤسسات، الجزائر، التعليم، الاقتصاد، إزاحة.

Résumé

L'objectif fondamental de cette recherche est de démontrer l'importance du rôle de l'Anglais dans le monde en général et en particulier en Algérie. L'Anglais devient indispensable dans le monde moderne. Cet article donne un aperçu de l'importance de cette langue. On se concentre sur l'Anglais car c'est la langue la plus répandue dans le monde. Cette recherche, d'une approche sociolinguistique a pour but de voir le statut de l'Anglais au niveau des institutions. L'anglais est présent en Algérie dans deux domaines importants. L'éducation est le domaine numéro un où nous trouvons l'Anglais, son apprentissage commence dès le moyen pour les écoles publiques et dès le primaire pour les écoles privées. Le deuxième domaine où l'Anglais connaît un grand changement est le domaine économique. Les algériens sont conscients de l'importance de cette langue au niveau international et dans leur carrière professionnelle car c'est la langue de la science et de la technologie. On insiste sur le classement des langues étrangères et langues Européennes en Algérie. On se demande s'il y a un remplacement du Français par l'Anglais. La rivalité entre les deux langues (Français et Anglais) tourne en faveur du Français.

Mots-clés

langue, Anglais, Français, institutions, Algérie, remplacement.