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Has French Won the Conflict?

An Investigation of Algiers Interlocutors Attitudes Towards French

هل حسمت اللغة الفرنسية الصراع لصالحها؟ دراسة لمواقف سكان الجزائر العاصمة من اللغة الفرنسية

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Abstract

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The present study probes the attitudes of the Algerian capital inhabitants towards French. It aims to gain insight into the factors inducing the massive shift to the French language amongst Algiers interlocutors, and thus find out whether the previously cited language has ended the existing linguistic strife to its favour or not. Feedback from 67 participants on an online structured questionnaire in both Standard Arabic and French revealed that notwithstanding its widespread use, French is still competing with the other linguistic codes, mainly Standard Arabic. Additionally, respondents attitudes towards French are in positive correlation with their linguistic choices. Moreover, French has considerably impacted the local Algerian Arabic dialect and hence the latter is gradually ceding its position to a new variety. Finally, the study has accounted for this massive use of French in the light of the sociolinguistic principle labelled as the linguistic inferiority principle, originally coined in relation to minority languages. The principle states that a language is considered inferior as long as it belongs to a socially subservient group.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة مواقف سكان العاصمة الجزائرية تجاه اللغة الفرنسية بهدف التعرف على العوامل الكامنة وراء التحول الهائل للمتكلمين في الجزائر العاصمة إلى اللغة الفرنسية، وبالتالي معرفة ما إذا كانت هذه الأخيرة قد أنهت الصراع اللغوي الحالي لصالحها أم لا. كشفت ردود فعل 67 مشاركاً على استبيان منظم تم انجازه عبر الإنترنت باللغتين العربية الفصحى والفرنسية أنه على الرغم من استخدامها على نطاق واسع، لا تزال الفرنسية تتنافس مع الرموز اللغوية الأخرى وبشكل رئيسي مع اللغة العربية الفصحى. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، كانت مواقف المشاركين تجاه الفرنسية متناسبة طردياً مع خياراتهم اللغوية. علاوة على ذلك، تبين أن الفرنسية أثرت على اللهجة العربية المحلية بشكل كبير، ومن ثم فإن الأخيرة في طريقها للتخلي عن مكانتها للهجة جديدة. أخيراً، تناولت الدراسة هذا الاستخدام المكثف للغة الفرنسية في ضوء مبدأ انجماعي لغوي يدعى مبدأ الدونية اللغوية، والذي تمت صياغته أول مرة في مبحث اللسانيات المتعلقة بلغات الأقليات و ينص المبدأ على أن اللغة تعتبر أقل شأنًا طالما أنها تنتمي إلى مجموعة تابعة اجتماعياً.

مواقف
العاصمة
الفرنسية
التحول
الصراع اللغوي.

1. Introduction

In his *Le Français Quelle Histoire!* (2011), Jean-Benoît Nadeau reports that amongst the unofficially French-speaking countries, Algeria counts 20 million speakers of French, a number which constitutes half of the country's population. Regardless of the reported number accuracy, the statement itself remains valid and sound. That French is massively used in Algeria is no news: in the Algerian capital, as a case in point, the observant eye can effortlessly recognize that in addition to administration, economy, part of mass media and higher education, French is widespreadly used in every aspect of Algiers inhabitants daily life. It is considerably used at homes, in the streets, in public as well as private domains. It even seems that the use of French is more predominant in Algiers than in other Algerian metropolises such as Oran and Constantine.

The paradoxical nature of this reality stems from the fact that French is the language of the former colonizer whose whole existence, physical or moral, in the country was the subject of an ardent resistance by the Algerian people. French symbolized the enemy's bloody colonial rule and its eradication and genocide policies. It was the tool of its linguistic and cultural domination and the emblem of its tight grip on the people and the country. However, It maintained its position in the country after independence and even expanded in terms of the number of speakers to the extent that some commentators noted that French was imposed on Algerians with iron and fire for 132 years; nevertheless, it did not gain what it gained in a short span of freedom and independence.

In the case of Algiers, some persistent question, pose themselves and requires to be considered: (1) is French currently displacing Algiers Algerian Arabic and thus ending the linguistic conflict to its favour? Is the local Arabic becoming an endangered language variety? Other pertinent questions need equally to be looked into: What factor or factors are behind the present shift to French? What are the attitudes of Algiers interlocutors towards French that it is gaining such a presiding position in their daily exchanges?

Having considered the previously asked questions,

it is possible to hypothesise that French is currently displacing both Standard Arabic and Algerian Arabic in the capital due to some socio-psychological factors having a connection with what is labelled as the linguistic inferiority principle. These socio-psychological factors are reflected in the attitudes of the members of this speech community. Therefore, it is imperative to analyze the language situation in the said speech community to discern how different elements intermingle and affect linguistic choices of the population. In addition, a survey structured questionnaire in both Standard Arabic and French is employed to elicit the attitudes of Algiers interlocutors towards the French language and to find out if the competitive situation mainly between French and Arabic has ceased to exist.

2. The sociolinguistic scene of Algeria

Algeria is a multilingual setting wherein more than Four languages and language varieties are in contact. They are Standard Arabic, Algerian Arabic, French and Berber with its different varieties: Kabyle, Chaoui, Tamachek, Mozabite and Chenoua (Benrabah, 2014, p. 45). This contact situation has resulted in a competitive situation between the aforementioned languages and language varieties: The linguistic conflict opposes Standard Arabic to French as two writing systems seeking to secure a prestigious position, and as two spoken forms seeking to reach high status (Taleb-Ibrahimi, 2006, p. 214). Moreover, conflict counters Arabic to Kabyle, the Berber variety spoken by the indigenous inhabitants of the region east of the capital comprising the provinces of Tizi Ouzou, Bejaia and Bouira. Kabyles were fierce opponents of the Arabization policy which was implemented during the early years of independence as a means for unification and national identity restoration (Benrabah, 2014, p. 45). Recently, another form of rivalry has occurred between speakers of Berber varieties (basically Kabyle and Chaoui) over the Berber variety to be opted for as the official Berber Language.

2.1 French in Algeria

The French conquest of Algeria was not an easy task; Algerians confronted their conquerors with fierce

resistance notwithstanding their inferiority in terms of artillery and military machinery, and were able to delay the total French occupation off their land. To pacify that ardent resistance, the French targeted, through deculturation and uprooting policies, the cultural and spiritual sources which nurtured and fueled the popular revolt: Islam teachings and their linguistic channel, the Arabic language. Subsequently, a drastic alteration to the cultural and linguistic reality has taken place. Benrabah (2013) puts it, “The French occupation made a profound impact on Algeria’s culture and linguistic profile. The influence was so deep that Algerian society was never the same again” (Benrabah, p. 24).

Frenchification was the chief cultural policy of French colonialism in Algeria. “Colonial officials not only effectively disbanded the formal teaching of Arab culture and language, but also set about propagating their own. French became the official language of instruction in schools, and students were taught French history, literature, and culture” (Hetman, 2018, p. 10). As a consequence, in the eyes of Algerians the French language was ambivalently regarded in the sense that conflicting attitudes towards it fluctuated between positivity and negativity; it was rejected on the basis that it was the representation of France’s manipulation and abuse; still, it was employed as tool to gather internal support for the national cause because it was seen as the emblem of the freedom, equality and fraternity principles that all humanity aspired for (Benrabah, 2007, p. 194).

After independence and against all expectations, French did not lose the predominant place it had had during French rule. On the contrary, it acquired more strength and further territory. Many scholars have depicted this unpredicted propagation: “This language has been maintained and the number of its users has increased substantially since independence” (Benrabah, 2007, p. 193). Sebaa (2013) has reported that Forty years after the political independence of the country, the use of the French language has not only been maintained, but in certain sectors such as communication, culture and information, it has regained its vitality (p. 11) .

French occupies a prominent position in education, It is taught since early years of primary schooling. It has its place in secondary schools , as a foreign language, and in higher education, especially in scientific branches. It is practised in many public schools (previously forbidden). It is still seen as the key to further study (especially abroad) and to employment. For young people, having a command of it eases emigration. French is present in the homes through television; daily newspapers publish the programmes of French television so that a significant fraction of Algerian opinion is in tune with public life in France. A good proportion of the press, both private and public, is published in French, and the economic sector operates only in French or English. The law on the generalisation of the Arabic language, adopted in December 1996, has not been followed by any application. Thus, unlike in the 1980s, there is no longer a political imperative in Algeria to exclude French or to prohibit its use. Additionally, French is present in everyday language in Algeria through its association with other spoken languages, in the context of what is known as code alternation, According to which a sentence can include an alternation of Algerian dialect, French and Berber. Furthermore, French has become a reserve for Algerian languages in the sense that French words are given a local form: *téléphonit-lu* (‘I phoned him’). It is therefore a new way of speaking that is being created in Algeria, with which French is associated, just as it is with artistic creation of authors, singers or actors, who use three languages of expression: French, Arabic and Berber (Grandguillaume, 2004, p. 118).

2.2 French in Algiers

Algiers is located in the north of Algeria on the central coast presenting itself as its capital with a surface area of 230 km² and a population of about 3 million inhabitants (Bectti, 2010, p. 154). Since 1832, the French language has been granted a predominant position in this city. During French occupation, it was the official language, the medium of instruction and a tool of cultural dominance. After independence, French became a foreign language but maintained all the privileges of a national language.

Icosium was the name of a great city on the the Roman Sea (Ben Mohamed Almili, 1986, p. 45). It came to existence some three thousand years ago. It survived the Roman rule then was re-established by Bouloughine Prince and the Beni Mezghenna tribes. After a while, the city was being targeted by the Arabs and Berbers of the Maghreb (Nowadays Morocco), on one side, and by the Spanish Christians, on the other, until the coming of the Turks who changed the stream of the North African history (Ichbouden, 2007, p. 15). Soon, the city became the center of a political authority that shined over the whole Arab Maghreb. This triggered the fears as well as the greed of the Christians who became mainly concerned with capturing the city. Under the Ottomans, Algiers became an excellent cosmopolitan city with a huge ethnic and lingual diversity which was reflected in the variety of clothing styles and in the plurality of the prevalent idioms (Ichbouden, 2007, p. 16).

Multilingualism in the city during that era was characterized by the presence of four main codes. Most of Algiers interlocutors spoke Algerian Arabic while a few of them used a Berber variety called Kabyle. Turkish was the ruling class language and Sabir, a lingua franca that mixed French, Spanish, Italian, and Arabic or Maltese, was the communication channel between Algiers merchants and their European counterparts (Chebchoub, 1984, p. 13-14).

Under French rule, French became the official language of the city; Hetman (2018) put it, "As soon as the French began their occupation of Algiers, they made French the city's official language"(p. 9). The inhabitants of Algiers at that time could be divided into two categories as far as languages distribution is concerned: (1) the illiterates who spoke Algerian Arabic or Berber (Kabyle) and (2) the elite or the bilinguals who, in addition to Algerian Arabic or Kabyle, were able to speak French due to the fact that they were educated in French schools and assimilated into the French culture (Chebchoub, 1984, p. 15).

Twenty two years after independence, Chebchoub (1984) depicted the situation of French in the capital as follows: Four varieties of French are used by the interlocutors; Standard French French which is

spoken by Algerians who had previously lived in France and a few of those who use it for prestigious puposes. Standard Algerian French is taught at schools and universities and thus used by the learned people basically in formal situations. In addition, colloquial Algerian French is spoken by the non-educated, those who did not receive their education in Standard French and the ex-emigrants in France who did not receive a proper instruction of French grammar and pronunciation. Finally, Mixed Algerian Arabic and French is a type of code mixing whereby speakers, mainly the young generation, use both Algerian Arabic and French in one or more sentences especially in informal settings (p. 9).Currently, regardless of the distribution of those varieties and the number of their users, French remains massively used.

3. Theoretical assumptions and terminology

It is of a pivotal importance to define the terms related to the topic at issue in order to expose the theoretical framework inderpinning the methodology opted for in the present study consistently. Therefore, it is essential to say, initially, that terms such as language shift, language attitudes and endangered languages represent multilingual settings related issues.

Firstly, language shift occurs whenever a speech community abstains from using its primary language for a newly acquired one, and whenever that community is the last generation using the obsolete language, it is said that language death has occurred (Mesthrie, 2001, p. 493). Language shift and its counterpart language maintenace and spread are interrelated sociolinguistic events (Benrabah, 2007, p. 195) in the sense that shift to a language necessarily means its maintenace and spread. It is agreed that language shift is not induced by a single fixed unit of factors but rather a given set of interwoven agents may be relevant to justify the occurrence of shift in a given area but might not explain its appearance in another (Benrabah, 2007, p. 196). Overall, economic circumstances, demographic motives which refer to the language number of speakers, the status of the concerned language and the institutional support provided by public establishments can be behind linguistic shift (Mesthrie, 2001, p. 494).

In addition, attitudes towards the language being the target of shift and even towards its speakers are critical indicators of the occurrence of shift or not since “attitudes hold a place of central prominence for understanding social behaviour and thought” (Garrett, 2007, p. 116).

In social psychology, attitudes are defined as acts of feeling, thinking and behaving towards a person or an object which stem from already acquired inclinations (Garrett, 2010, p. 19). “An attitude is a somewhat coherent constellation of cognitive events and structures, within the mind of the respondent, that shape behavior of all relevant kinds” (Bainbridge, 2001, p. 7). In other terms, an attitude towards an object is the meaning attributed to that object along with a focus on the manner whereby a positive or negative assessment of it is made. In simpler terms attitudes, are affective, cognitive and behavioural positions taken by people towards a given topic or idea. These stances can basically be either positive or negative.

In sociolinguistics, attitudes to language are those evaluations, positive or negative, towards a given language and even towards its speakers. They are pivotal in determining language choice, shift and many more sociolinguistic events; Sebaa (2013) argued that the Psychological or socio-psychological dimension, that is to say, the collective and individual modes of perception that feed the contradictory and singular attitudes of Algerians towards the French language and culture are behind the widespread use of this language in Algeria (p. 15).

Finally, endangered languages are languages facing the threat of disappearance due to factors such as change affecting the language itself, the extinction of native speakers as well as the language being no longer transmitted to younger generations (Nelson, 2007, p. 199- 200). Some scholars employ the language number of speakers as a determinant of its potential endangered state; however, counting the number of speakers can be misleading since no fixed number has correctly served as a true indicator of a language in danger. “Thereupon, the viability of a language depends on how well it is being passed on

to children” (Nelson, 2007, p. 200). That is to say, a language in danger is a no more transferred- to-new generations language.

3.1 Previous scholarly work

Literature on the shift to French in Algiers and the role of attitudes is scarce; therefore, the present investigation has had recourse to studies on French in the Algerian context in general and in some other specific parts of the country. It is in the light of those studies that this work has evolved and developed itself.

From an emic perspective, Chebchoub (1984) conducted a research on the use of Arabic and French in the city of Algiers. Using questionnaires and the matched guise technique as well as the adjectives test, she investigated among many other topics the attitudes of Algiers bilinguals towards both Arabic and French. She noted that French enjoyed a privileged and presiding position in Algiers since it was the most favoured as a tool for education. She argued that Algiers is particularly the place wherein bilingual classes (classes bilingues) were more opted for than Arabic classes (classes arabisées). In addition, Algiers was exceptionally the Algerian province most affected by French culture, and its local Arabic dialect was the most affected by foreign languages. Further, due to the fact that religious fanaticism was often attributed to arabisation, Arabic was dismissed as a language for instruction by parents. Moreover, the naive belief that Arabic was bonded with laziness and lower mental capacities made of French a more favourable option for education according to parents and pupils. As far as attitudes to French were concerned, the latter language was considered as a lively idiom for modernity, science and technology while the mixture of Algerian Arabic and French was preferred for informal scientific and specialized discussions.

Khaoula Taleb Ibrahim (2004) on her part reported, in a descriptive study of the linguistic practices of Algiers youth, that the multilingual reality of the city led to three themes: the city as a factor of linguistic unification, the city as a place of language conflict and the city as a place of linguistic coexistence and hybridity. It was affirmed that the language used

by the youth was clearly built on hybridization, borrowing, copying, mixing and interchanging the languages used in the Algerian society. That mixing manifested itself as an outcome of the world views developed by the young people of Bab-el-Oued, a popular neighbourhood of Algiers. Many French words were used, in their original spelling, in their speech; the youth did not inflict any change in their original characteristics. The introduction of a single word or part of a sentence, or even a whole sentence, if not an entire paragraph that was inserted, is a known procedure described in all the studies that had been conducted on the practices of speakers in bilingual or multilingual societies. The phenomenon is referred to as the alternation of codes; and in the discourse of those young people, the alternation of codes was omnipresent.

Furthermore, in her broad sketch of the state of the French language in Algeria, Malika Rebai Maamri (2009) noted that the French idiom had been forced on the Algerian people during colonization which had impacted the country destructively, that is, it had not only displaced the native languages but had also dominated the Algerian subjects ideologically. French had controlled intellectual life for 132 years on the levels of education, language, instruction methods and programmes. Almost five decades after independence, Algeria was still suffering from the linguistic and identity curses resulting from colonization. The country, the researcher added, was chained by “the long and sustained spread of the French language and culture”. In addition, French knew a type of revival due to the satellite TV which made exposure to the said idiom and its culture more frequent. As far as attitudes to that language and its culture were concerned, the author stated that they were contradictory since a whole generation of Algerians were torn because of their mastery of French culture instead of mastering their own. Five decades after independence, the spoken language which became a mixture of Algerian Arabic and French words was prevalent at homes. A sharp feeling of ‘linguistic alienation’ and a vitiated language are the result of the contact with French culture.

Through a method of field interviews and participant observation, Hedid (2015) conducted an ethnographic

study about the use of French by youth in Constantine. To obtain precise and valid findings about the state of plurilinguism in the Algerian city, the researcher employed a technique labelled ‘tracking’, which consisted of tracking participants in the multiplicity of sociolinguistic settings they accessed everyday to have a thorough portrait of their linguistic behaviour. With regard to their attitudes and perceptions towards French, ethnography demonstrated that the informants estimated that the latter language held a large place in the language practices of the Algerians, and hence its presence was legitimate and justifiable by the fact that Algerians, even the most Arabic-speaking ones, could not speak without uttering at least one word in French. They even argued that French was everywhere, they have always spoken it, it was not like English. To them, French was not a foreign language but: “a piece of the Algerian dialect”) Hedid, 2015, p. 186). Although the focus of the study was on depicting the plurilinguistic behaviour of a small group, it attained some noteworthy results such as (1) French was a guarantee for socio-professional success, (2) The French language was not a language but part of the Algerian dialect (3) French was not a foreign language (4) French had a legitimate position in the Algerian speech community and could penetrate every space formal or informal (5) French was present in every linguistic behaviour of youth and (6) French was an alternative to Arabic when the latter was short of relevant terms.

Generally, all the previously covered studies have a common gap: the crucial role of attitudes in the shift to French was not the scope of their focus, and an account for the causes behind the noted shift is missing. Perhaps, the most comprehensive highly elaborate investigation of the factors leading to the spread of French in Algeria is Benrabah (2007). Benrabah’s *Language maintenance and spread: French in Algeria* is a profound well-demonstrated analysis of the causes inciting for the transfer to the French language in the country. His account is based on the functionalist theory to sociology as well as an in depth reading of the political and socio-economic events and variables in Algerian society before and after independence.

The factors leading to the maintaining of French were assembled, according to this analysis, under four main headings previously cited in Mestherie (2001). They were economic and demographic changes and urbanization, institutional support as well as language status (p. 494). Economic instability in the newly post-independent country pushed to the emigration of huge numbers of Algerians to France. Emigration as a socio-economic event led to the spread of French as those emigrants kept close ties with their native land (Benrabah, 2007, p. 197). On another level, the economic crisis of the 1990's caused the imposition of reforms on the educational system in exchange of loans by the IMF (International Monetary Fund). Under those reforms, French-Arabic bilingualism was to be restored with eminence to French as the medium of science and technology instruction. Hence, French was to receive more strength (Benrabah, 2007, p. 198).

Due to the increasing rate of population growth after independence, youth have become the major demographic feature. Obviously, their linguistic attitudes and tendencies towards French would affect the general linguistic inclination in the country and thus lead to either maintenance or shift. The hypothesis made, in this respect, was that Algerian youth attitudes were not hostile to French although they were aware it was related to French colonialism. Rather, Algerian youth were considered to regard the language of the former colonizer as part of national history and heritage. This hypothesis was proved true by the study (Benrabah, 2007, p. 200).

Further, institutional support referred to the assistance that public establishments and institutions provided to the process of language maintenance and spread either deliberately or undeterminedly. Benrabah (2007) argued that the educational system in post independent Algeria has ironically contributed to an unprecedented spread of the French language in the country. Universal education which had been implemented at the eve of independence authorized huge numbers of Algerian children to join schools; as a consequence, French spread widely especially that it was instructed as a second language. Other institutions such as the publishing industry and the media had also

their share in the process of strengthening the position of French (p. 203).

Lastly, change of the status of language contributes in modifying attitudes towards it and thus leads to either spread or shift. Within the same vein, Benrabah confirmed that the change of the status of Arabic from 'a foreign language' during colonization to 'the national and official language' at the eve of independence has eased the bitterness that Algerians had been feeling during 132 years about their language and also loosed fears. As for French, hostile attitudes towards it dropped and this allowed it to make more gains. Moreover, the linguistic behaviour of the political elite of the country (using French instead of the national language in public and private circles and favouring French schools over public schools for their children) as well as their failure in convincing the public of the economic value of the Arabic idiom had its effect upon the transference process to French and additionally caused the failure of language planning policies amongst them Arabization (2007, p. 206- 207).

All in all, on the basis of the previously mentioned factors, Benrabah measured the language attitudes of senior secondary school pupils and recommended that French maintenance and spread in Algeria should be a source of inspiration and learning for language policy makers in the country (2007, p. 107- 108). However, a paradoxical reality as far as the support of education to empowering and spreading French is not accounted for in terms of Benrabah's perspective. In more details, Benrabah argued that universal education is behind the maintenance and spread of the French idiom; nevertheless, he did not elucidate the reason why Standard Arabic did not impact Algerians daily informal exchanges as French did although the latter was instructed as a second language with limited time exposure compared to Standard Arabic which was the channel of instruction.

Henceforth, it is possible to hypothesize that some Socio-psychological factors must be at play along with the ones exposed by Benrabah. These socio-psychological motives are to be looked into through the lens of an investigation of language attitudes and

will be detailed in the findings section of the present study.

3.2 Methods and tools

Researching attitudes involves the use of three methodologies. First, surveying is based on introspection which constitutes of questioning respondents about their inner positions towards a given subject. The two remaining methodologies are the societal treatment approach and the indirect approach. Both require long time to be realized and involve a small number of subjects. The societal treatment approach, for instance, is ethnographic in nature, which implies long periods of time in the company of participants while the indirect methodology tends to be utilized particularly in studies about attitudes in connection with linguistic variation and phonological phenomena such as accents (Garrett, 2007, p. 116-117). Although “attitudes researchers are always wary of response biases”(Garrett, 2007 , p.117), surveying remains a widely used method especially in large scale studies.

Thereupon, surveying is opted for as the method of the present study for its practicality and time-saving advantages. A standardized questionnaire was, hence, constructed in the internet *Google Forms* platform, and then administered online from 17 July to 17 August 2021 via the social networking site *facebook* to subjects who inhabit Algiers since childhood. On their part, these subjects have diffused the questionnaire to other social circles of Algiers natives.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts : part one is basically concerned with demographic information such as gender, age, career, educational background and the languages learned during the different cycles of the educational process. Part two questions targeted the respondents language choice aspects and attitudes in relation to French. Question 2 of part 2 is taken from Benrabah (2007), while question 6 of the same part is adapted from Idrici (2017).

Respondents were presented with a brief overview of the study and its overall objective and were assured of anonymity and privacy preservation. The researcher received feedback from 71 participants, 4 of them did not supply answers to part 2 questions, so their

forms were deleted. The 67 remaining responses were provided by respondents who represent a variety of ages, districts, educational backgrounds and careers.

The collected data were analyzed by the researcher using the statistics provided by the *Google Forms* data base and because ‘purposeful and fruitful data collection requires a theoretical framework’(Miller and Cann, 2001, p. 769), analysis of the factors leading to the shift phenomenon in Algiers has been partially based upon the conceptual framework proposed by Benrabah(2007); that is to say, emphasis has been put upon institutional support embodied in the role of education and upon the status of language within the educational system.

4. Results and discussion

Contrary to what was expected, 40 respondents out of 67 chose to respond to the Standard Arabic language version of the questionnaire while 27 opted for the version in French. The significance of this finding can be understood in terms of the position of the chosen language. That is to say, if the majority of the informants selected to answer the questionnaire in Standard Arabic, then the latter has a more important position than French in the speech community of Algiers. However, the percentage representing the respondents who selected the French language version is still a considerable proportion of the sample group. Thus, French also has an important position within the linguistic mosaic of the city. Henceforth, the competition between Standard Arabic and French in Algiers has not ceased to exist.

The French language questionnaire version findings and discussion

In this group, males constitute 59.3% of the total number of the respondents whereas females make 40.7%. Both belong to a wide range of Algiers districts including Babeloued, Hussein Dey, 1 Mai, Babezzouar, Bouzareah, popular neighbourhoods, Chevalier, Dar Elbeida; Alger centre, Elbiar, Draria, Casbah, Benaknune, Belcourt, Alger plage, Kouba and Hydra. The diversity of neighbourhoods wherein the participants were brought up demonstrates that choosing French is not restricted to rich and prestigious districts; people from popular and less prestigious

locations opt for French too. Using French, hence, is not necessarily related to a certain social class; and since social class implies economic conditions, the use of French is determined by neither social class nor economic conditions.

Table 1

The language of instruction

cycles	Standard Arabic	French	Arabic/ French	other
Primary	20	9	/	/
middle	17	10	/	/
High school	16	11	/	/
university	1	21	4	1

55% of the respondents belong to an age category ranging from 15 to 25 years while 33.3% of them are located between 25 to 35 years. The third category stretches from 35 to 45 years and represents a percentage of 7.4% of the total number of participants in this group, whereas the last category is set for 45 years and more and makes only 3.7% of the sample group. The vast majority of the respondents are youth who were/are enrolled in the Algerian educational system under which the medium of instruction until secondary schooling is Standard Arabic; French is instructed as a foreign language with a limited time exposure. Nonetheless, French is the language chosen by these youth to respond to the survey not Standard Arabic. This maybe clarified by the fact that French is the medium of instruction at university for the majority of the respondents. Accordingly, the language of instruction during the first three cycles of education does not affect language choice but the idiom taught at university (which is the last cycle) does.

Table2

Language spoken frequently

Language spoken most frequently	Percentages
Mixture of French and Algerian Arabic	63%
Algerian Arabic	18.5%
A mixture of Berber and french	7.4%
Berber	11.1%

The responses to the question “What is the language you speak mostly at home?” demonstrate, as displayed by table 2, that the mixture of French and Algerian Arabic is the language spoken frequently by the majority of the informants, a finding that exhibits the displacement process, currently taking place, of the local Algerian Arabic by the hybrid mixed code of French and Algerian Arabic. In other terms, the local Arabic dialect is in danger of disappearance due to the change it is undergoing as a consequence of the impact of French. Given the fact that youth constitute the overwhelming majority in the city and the fact that they are using the mixed code and also the fact that they are the category most likely to transmit this code to the next generations, the total displacement of Algerian Arabic becomes only a matter of time.

Table3

Participants Perceptions of the French language

Perceptions	Percentages
Foreign language	59.3%
Part of national history and heritage	40.7%

To elicit perceptions of French, the informants were presented with two phrases (table 3) and were requested to select the phrase which fits their thoughts. The majority considered French a foreign language which contradicts with their heavy use of the latter language with the local Arabic dialect in their daily exchanges (as displayed by table 2). Noteworthy to mention, in this respect, that the margin of difference between the informants who consider French as part of our history and the ones who perceive it as part of Algeria’s history and heritage is not large. It seems the identification of a language as foreign does not interfere with using it on a daily basis and in every exchange to a significant proportion of the participants ; that is to say, French being foreign language does not correlate with its choice as an everyday communication tool.

Table 4**Attitudes towards Speakers of French**

Attitudes	N° of respondents for French	N° of respondents for Algerian Arabic	N° of respondents for Berber
Most intelligent	15	7	5
Most civilized and refined	17	6	4
Most educated	14	8	5
The richest	22	3	2

Table 4 recapitulates the responses to a multiple choice grid which was designed to extract respondents attitudes towards speakers of Algerian Arabic, French and Berber as they make the main linguistic codes used in everyday oral exchanges in the capital. The aim was chiefly to find out about the stances of the informants towards users of French and identify the preferred code if any. The grid includes 4 choices formulated as adjectives in the superlative form. As displayed by table 4, speakers of French are highly regarded by the majority of the participants, a finding that demonstrates the positive correlation between the informants attitudes and their choice of French as the code whereby they responded to the questionnaire or as an every day language that they mix with their native dialects. Accordingly, French is preferred over the native varieties: Algerian Arabic and Berber.

In this context, a question about the reasons inciting the respondents to prefer a foreign language over their native codes imposes itself. These reasons can be understood in terms of the linguistic inferiority principle. Linguistic inferiority is defined as “The principle which holds that the language of a socially subordinate group is linguistically deficient compared to the more standard variety spoken by the superordinate social group” (Wolfram & Schilling, 2016, p.). This inferiority is based on feelings of respect or underestimation of languages and their speakers. Members within a given speech community and culture categorize themselves and others

according to speech patterns (Bhat, 2017, p. 26). As such, the principle can be applied to post-colonial settings where language problems are still raised.

In Algeria, linguistic inferiority can be observed as soon as France took control of the country. From the outset, the French colonizers purported they were on a civilizing mission in the Algerian lands and had no scruples about overtly calling the Algerian people an inferior race and a bunch of savages: Jules Ferry, a French statesman declared in a speech in 1897 that “the superior races have a right because they have a duty. They have the duty to civilize the inferior races” (Maamri, 2005, p. 78) and (Hetman, 2018, p. 10). Subsequently, Algerians were subjected to a harsh deculturation policy whereby they were deprived of their languages mainly Arabic which was prohibited in administration, education and legal documents. Soon the repercussions of this uprooting project commenced to emerge on the socio-psychological sphere of the country.

In their quest to obtain the approval of their colonizers and survive in that milieu, Algerians, particularly the learned men who were the outcome of the French bilingual classes established by Napoleon III King of France, felt the urge to imitate the way of thinking, the language and the manners of the colonizer (Maamri, 2009, p. 200). Speaking French became the tool whereby they can be identified with their oppressors. An identity fracture was one grave ailment that Algerians developed due to the fact that assimilation into French culture can never be complete. Algerian subjects were always chained by the colonizers dismissive attitude towards them. Talking French aggravated their feelings of anxiety and prejudices. The linguistic inferiority suffered by the Algerian subjects implied an identity alienation (Maamri, 2009, p. 201).

After independence, Algerians have not entirely recovered from their inferiority feeling due to the previously mentioned set of factors elucidated by Benrabah (2007). The economic instability of the country overshadowed Algerians self-categorization. Algeria has not been able to attain economic flourishing and has always been identified with those post-colonial countries confronting severe

socio-economic ailments. As a consequence, the desire to be identified with the ex-colonizer persists and in addition to using the French language, it has taken further forms such as emigration to France. In fact, emigration to France to seek a better life is an admission that France is superior. Linguistic inferiority stems also from the fact that French is until now the medium of instruction in Algerian universities; positioning it as the language of science and technology deepens the alienation feeling to other Algerian languages. Due to all what has been said, Algerians have become attached to French and mixing it with their native dialects is one way of expressing that attachment.

Table 5

Language choice at home

Language	Percentages
Mixture of Algerian Arabic and French	44.4%
Algerian Arabic	29.6%
Mixture of Berber and French	7.4%
Berber	14.8%
Mixture of Algerian Arabic, Berber and French	3.7%

The hybrid form composed of Algerian Arabic and French is designated by the majority of subjects as the language spoken mostly at home (table 5). Given the fact that home is the most rudimentary informal setting where native varieties are used at entire ease, Algerian Arabic is on its way to be displaced from its most natural setting if French and Algerian dialect keeps the current pace of spreading among the new generations. To put it differently, the Algerian dialect is at the verge of disappearance owing to the fact that the majority of the respondents are youth who will naturally transfer the new code to the next generation. Consequently, Mixing Algerian Arabic and French will be the alternative code. Interestingly, French has also gained grounds in the Berber variety spot and other mixed forms have emerged.

Table 6

linguistic competence

Fluency in writing and reading	Percentages
French	51.9%
Arabic	37%
English	7.4%
Arabic and French	3.7%

When questioned about their competences in the Arabic and French languages, more than half of the participants reported that they were fluent in reading and writing French (table 6). This justifies the considerable inclination to use the French idiom in everyday speech by these interlocutors. Differently said, competence in French is directly proportional to the positive attitudes towards it (displayed in table 7). When people develop positive attitudes with regard to a language, they become motivated to learn it.

Table 7

Attitudes towards French

Attitudes	Percentages
easy	19.2%
difficult	11.5%
beautiful	23%
rich	30.80%
poor	15.5%

Finally, the informants were requested to choose the one adjective that best describes the French language. The positive adjectives rich, beautiful and easy, as displayed in table 7, marked the biggest percentages; which implies the positively internalized attitudes towards French. The latter are positively correlated with the extensive use of this language (tables 2 and 5). This correlation confirms the hypothesis set at the beginning of the present study that positive attitudes towards French are behind its widespread use in the capital.

Standard Arabic language questionnaire version findings and discussion

As far as the category of respondents who selected the Arabic version of the questionnaire is concerned,

the majority of the respondents (56.4%) are females while the minority (43.6%) are males. Similar to the respondents group who chose to answer the survey in French, the respondents of the present group have also been brought up in a vast range of districts of Algiers: Bebezzouer, Alger centre, El Biar, Les Eucalyptus, Hussein Dey, Draria, Rue Hassiba (Belcourt), Ouled Faïet, Bab Eloued, Alharrach, Elhamiz (Eddar Elbeida), Bainem (Cheraga), Eddar Elbeida, Bir Touta, Rouisseau (Al Anassir), Ain Taya, Ziralda, Almadania, Ain Benian, Cadix, Heraoua, Rouiba and Bourj Elkifene. In addition, the great majority (71%) of the informants are youth representing an age group stretching from 15 to 25. Moreover, 57% of them hold a university degree (Licence). Lastly, the informants belong to a wide array of professional backgrounds.

Table 8

The medium of instruction

cycles	Standard Arabic	French	Arabic/French	other
Primary	30	1	9	/
middle	30	1	9	/
High school	30	1	8	1
university	26	4	5	5

The medium of instruction for the vast majority of the informants is Standard Arabic throughout the primary, middle and secondary cycles. At university, however, French makes the major medium. As for the participants who indicated both Arabic and French as the channel of instruction in the three first cycles, a high probability that they have confused French as a foreign language with the notion of language as a medium of instruction exists especially that all of them have been brought up in Algiers, according to the demographic information supplied in part1 of the survey. Nevertheless, these participants may have been taught in French in some private schools in parallel with public education.

Institutional support as a factor leading to language shift can be provided by the educational sector. In the present case and even in the case of the first

category of participants, it seems that education in Algiers works solely in favour of French; that is to say, although Standard Arabic is the medium of instruction during three whole cycles for the majority of the sample group members as displayed by tables 8 and 1 , Arabic does not affect the local Arabic dialect but French does (tables 9 and 10). It is French that is extensively mixed with Algerian Arabic not Standard arabic. Therefore some other factors must be the cause behind this widespread use of French. These factors were detailed by Benrabah (2007) as mentioned in the literature review section. In addition to that, linguistic inferiority, which has been previously considered by this study, is a further factor equally inducing the spread of French.

Table 9

languages frequently spoken

Languages	Respondents by percentage
Mixture of Algerian Arabic and French	56.4%
Algerian Arabic	23.1%
Mixture of Berber and French	5.1%
Berber	2.6%
Mixture of Algerian Arabic, French and Berber	2.6%
Algerian Arabic and English	7.8%

The mixed code of Algerian Arabic and French is spoken frequently by the majority of the participants, whereas Algerian Arabic is used by a significantly smaller proportion which confirms the state of endangered language variety previously described. A tiny proportion use Berber. The other mixed forms are also narrowly used. It is worth mentioning that English has accessed the Algerian linguistic daily habits, maybe, due to the effect of internet and social networking sites.

Table 10**Languages spoken frequently at home**

Languages	Respondents percentage
Algerian Arabic	39.5%
Mixture of Algerian Arabic and French	36.8%
Berber	7.9%
Mixture of Berber and French	7.9%
Mixture of Algerian Arabic, Berber and French	5.2%
English	2.6%

Unlike the first category of informants, Algerian Arabic is the language considerably spoken at home by the respondents (table 10). The Arabic and French alternated variety comes second in order, nonetheless, the margin of difference between both proportions is insignificant. Both varieties can be described as equally proportioned. French is also blended with Berber and also with both Algerian Arabic and Berber, which embodies its profound involvement in Algiers linguistic scene. It is also worth mentioning that speaking English is a new linguistic behaviour which has been introduced to the Algerian home.

Table 11**Attitudes towards Speakers of French**

Attitudes	N° of respondents for French	N° of respondents for Algerian Arabic	N° of respondents for Berber
More intelligent	10	23	7
More civilized and refined	12	21	7
More educated	25	11	4
richer	20	11	9

Attitudes to speakers of French speakers are significantly positive as exhibited by table 11. Speaking French is regarded as an act of the most educated and the richest. Algerian Arabic speakers are

also positively viewed; they are attributed qualities such as intelligence, civilization and refinement. More remarkable still, informants attitudes correlate positively with their general language choice (table 9) and also with their language choice at home (table 10).

Table 12:**Perception of French**

Perceptions	Percentages
Foreign language	87.2%
Part of national history and heritage	12.8%

The overwhelming majority of the informants perceive French as a foreign language (table 12); which clarifies the choice of Algerian Arabic as the language spoken most frequently and the language spoken most frequently at home by an important proportion of the respondents (tables 9 and 10). However, this very result is in contradiction with the behaviour of another considerable proportion of respondents who practise the code mixing of the native Arabic dialect with French in their daily communications (see tables 9 and 10).

Table 13**Linguistic competence**

Fluency in writing and reading	Percentages
French	17.9%
Arabic	61.5%
English	15.6%
Arabic, French and English	2.6%
Arabic and French	2.6%

The majority of the participants are fluent in reading and writing Arabic. French comes second with a big margin of difference, which justifies partially the linguistic choices of the majority of the participants since mixing French with Algerian Arabic or with Berber does not require the speaker to be highly competent in the French idiom.

Table 14**Attitudes towards French**

Attitudes	Percentages
easy	23.7%
difficult	15.8%
beautiful	31.6%
rich	5.3%
poor	23.7%

As far as attitudes to French are concerned, the positively overloaded adjective *beautiful* marked the highest percentage. However, *easy* and *poor* are equally proportioned. This finding demonstrates that the attitudes of the respondents are in direct proportion with their linguistic choices, which proves the hypothesis set at the beginning of the study to be true. Moreover, the proportion of the respondents who consider French as difficult and poor is in positive correlation with the percentage of the subjects who chose Algerian Arabic as the language used most frequently and the language used at home.

5. Conclusion

The present study has investigated the positions of the interlocutors of Algiers with regard to French. The objective has been to identify the causes inducing the extensive use of the latter idiom in the most overcrowded city of Algeria and discern the state of the linguistic conflicting situation. Reviewing the literature uncovered the exhaustive analysis of Benrabah (2007) which traced the shift to French to economic and demographic causes as well as other intervening factors such as the role of public institutions and the statuses of the existing linguistic codes. A scrutiny of these motives along with an online survey of participants attitudes towards French has revealed the impact of a further factor labelled the linguistic inferiority principle. French colonialism and the economic unfavourable situation of the country after independence fuelled a general feeling of inferiority among Algerians in relation to their native languages and thus extensive choice of French was a natural consequence.

Moreover, the study employed a structured questionnaire in Standard Arabic and French to

investigate the interlocutors attitudes towards French, and it has brought to light the following results: (1) although French has gained a predominant position in Algiers speech community, it is still in competition with the other languages mainly Standard Arabic, (2) French has profoundly impacted the local Arabic dialect; that is, it has greatly altered it into a mixture of both codes. Therefore, it is transferring into a variety in danger (3) Berber, also, has not escaped this impact but in a less remarkable manner and (4) positions towards French are largely positive and they correlate positively with the extensive use of French by the respondents.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

-Annex 1

Table 01: The language of instruction

Table 02: Language frequently spoken

Table 03: Participants perceptions of French

Table 04: Attitudes towards speakers of French

Table 05: Language choice at home

Table 06: linguistic competence

Table 07: Attitudes towards French

Table 08: The medium of instruction

Table 09: Language frequently spoken

Table 10: Languages frequently spoken at home

Table 11: Attitudes towards speakers of French

Table 12: Perception of French

Table 13: Linguistic competence

Table 14: Attitudes towards French

-Annex 2

The Standard Arabic Version of the Questionnaire

مواقف العاصميين من اللغة الفرنسية

تم تحضير هذه الاستبانة على مستوى جامعة الأغواط لأغراض علمية وهي تهدف إلى دراسة مواقف سكان العاصمة من اللغة الفرنسية من أجل فهم أفضل للتعهد اللغوي في بلادنا. في هذا الإطار أشكركم مقدِّمًا على منحنا بضعة دقائق من وقتكم للإجابة على الأسئلة التالية. نضمن لكم السرية وذلك بعدم ذكر أسمائكم.

الجزء الأول

- 2-Dans quel quartier d'Alger avez-vous été élevé?
- 3-Quel est votre age?
- 15 – 25 ●25 – 35 ●35 – 45 ●Plus que 45
- 4-Quel est le plus haut niveau d'études que vous avez terminé ou le plus haut diplôme que vous avez obtenu ?
- Primaire ●Moyen ●Secondaire ●Bachelier/Bachelière ●Universitaire
●Master/magister ●Doctorat
- 5-Quelle est votre fonction?
- 6-Quelle est votre langue d'étude ?
- 2^{ème} Partie 2**
- Cochez la réponse qui vous convient en cliquant sur le cercle correspondant
- 1-Quelle langue parlez-vous le plus souvent?
- Arabe Algérois ●Français ●Bèrbère ●Mélange d'arabe algérois et de français
- Mélange de bèrbère et de français ●autre
- 2-Considérez-vous la langue française comme étant:
- langue étrangère ●une partie de notre histoire et héritage
- 3- Lorsque vous entendez une personne parlant l'arabe algérois, une autre parlant le français et une autre parlant le bèrbère, quelle personne pensez-vous être la .. ?
- Plus intelligente ●Plus civilisée et raffinée ●Plus éduquée
●plus riche
- 4-Quelle langue parlez-vous à la maison?
- Arabe algérois ●Français ●Mélange d'Arabe algérien et de français
●Bèrbère
- Mélange de bèrbère et de français ●autre
- 5-Quelle langue lisez-vous et écrivez-vous le plus couramment ?
- Arabe Standard ●Français ●autre
- 6-A votre avis, la langue française est
- Facile ●difficile ●belle ●riche ●pauvre

الجزء الثاني

- نرجو أن تختاروا الإجابة المناسبة لكم وذلك بالنقر على الدائرة المقابلة لها
- 1-ماهي اللغة التي تتحدثها في الغالب؟ ●الدارجة العاصمية ●مزيج من الدارجة العاصمية والفرنسية ●الامازيغية
- مزيج من الامازيغية والفرنسية
- 2-هل تعتبر اللغة الفرنسية
- لغة أجنبية كالانجليزية والالمانية ●جزء من تاريخنا وتراثنا
- 3-عندما تسمع شخصا يتحدث الدارجة العاصمية وشخصا اخر يتحدث الفرنسية واخر يتحدث الامازيغية من منهم تعتقد..
- أكثر حضارة ورقيا ●أعلاهم مستوى تعليميا ●أغناهم ●أذكاهم
- 4-ماهي اللغة التي تتحدثها في المنزل؟ ●الدارجة العاصمية ●الفرنسية ●مزيج بين الدارجة العاصمية والفرنسية ●الامازيغية ●مزيج من الامازيغية والفرنسية
- 5-ماهي اللغة التي تقرأ وتكتبها بطلاقة؟ ●العربية ●الفرنسية ●لغة اخرى
- 6-في رأيك هل اللغة الفرنسية ..؟ ●جميلة ●سهلة ●صعبة ●ثرية ●فقيرة

-Annex 3

The Standard Arabic Version of the Questionnaire

Les attitudes des Algérois envers la langue française

Madame, Monsieur, ce formulaire est élaboré pour des fins scientifiques au sein de l'université de Laghouat. Nous visons à étudier les attitudes des habitants d'Alger envers la langue française dans le but de mieux comprendre le phénomène du plurilinguisme dans notre pays. Dans ce cadre, je vous remercie de bien vouloir consacrer quelques minutes pour répondre au questionnaire ci-joint.

Vos réponses sont anonymes.

1^{ère} Partie:

Cochez la réponse qui vous convient en cliquant sur le cercle correspondant

1-Quel est votre sex ?

●Masculin ●Féminin

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