

## **THE COMPLEXITY OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC SITUATION IN ALGERIA: CASE STUDY OF SUPERIOR SCHOOL OF APPLIED SCIENCES- TLEMCCEN**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to examine the sociolinguistic situation in Algeria. It is known that Algeria is multilingual with different dialects spoken throughout the country. The mother tongue is Arabic (dialectal), the first foreign language is French and the second foreign language is English. Therefore, from the primary school to the baccalaureate, young Algerians study all the modules in Arabic, after getting their baccalaureate exam, and entering the superior school, they study all the modules in French in addition to English which is taught as a compulsory course starting from the first year middle school. Therefore, the sociolinguistic situation in Algeria is considered as very rich and complex.

This investigation takes place in the superior school of applied sciences-Tlemccen, where two groups of forty students participated in this research work. Two steps are followed in this research work, the first step is to collect data under questionnaires and interviews are added to this research work in order to reinforce our research and get fruitful results from the students. The second step is to analyse these data taking into consideration the linguistic background of the students from the primary school to superior school of Applied Sciences.

The results obtained demonstrate that the complexity is reflected in historical causes as for the learning of French as a second language which is due to the long period of French colonialism which lasted 132 years. Others are political as the process of Arabisation which came to the fore after independence. The impact of Arabisation has been significant in some fields such as education. However, in the university studies, as scientific, technical or medical, French remains the main medium of instruction and communication. The third language is English, it is mostly used in the formal classroom environment and there are few opportunities, other than in school, to use it for daily communicative purposes. Recently, students at the superior school show importance to learn English rather than French as a foreign language which is due to the importance English has in the world and globalisation.

**Keywords:** Algeria- Foreign languages learning- multilingualism-

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

It is known that Algeria was invaded by many countries before the arrival of the French as cited by Queffélec et al. (2002: 11 - 13) « Algeria was invaded by many countries and it was deeply influenced by their civilizations (Phoenicians, Romans, Byzantines Arabs, Turkish and French) ».

The French army landed its troupes in June 1830 in Algiers, and colonialism lasted many years from 1830 to revolution which was declared in July 1962. This period of colonialism was pertinent in the life of Algerian population since it brought many changes in many fields, more specifically in social life, the French words were introduced in Algerian dialects which is our main concern in this research work.

The impact of French colonialism affected deeply the Algerian dialects, therefore, the Algerian linguistic situation is considered as very complex which is due to many parameters such as historical, political, and sociocultural.

Many changes occurred in the Algerian education since 1962 where training was very selective during this period of post-colonialism; however, a significant change happened in the year 1963 with the creation of the ministry of education where a process of building a comprehensive and open national instruction framework was established.

## **2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ALGERIAN SOCIOLINGUISTIC SITUATION**

The complex history of Algeria gave birth to its linguistic situation, here is a brief summary concerning the different invaders of the country as brightly explained by Benrabeh

« Berbers came under the yoke of the Phoenicians who imposed their Carthaginian rule for about seven centuries, subsequently Romans for about six centuries, the Vandals and the Romanized Byzantines for about a century each. The Islamo-Arabo-Berbers dominated the region for about four centuries, the Turks for about three centuries, and the French, who brought Turkish domination to an end, for more than a century and a quarter. Spaniards occupied enclaves along the Mediterranean coast intermittently between 1505 and 1792 ». (Mohamed benrabeh, 2014: vol1, issue 1) Francis and Taylor

One of the consequences of colonialism was the birth of 'multilingualism'. Four languages were spoken: Algerian Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, Berber (Kabyle, Shawia, Mozabite, and Tamashekt) and French.

The **official languages of Algeria** are Modern Standard Arabic (literary Arabic) and Tamazight (Berber), as specified in its constitution. French, is widely used in government, culture, media (newspapers) and education (from primary school), due to Algeria's colonial history. The impact of French language was so deep that it resulted in the use of bilingualism, and the different uses of code switching, code mixing, borrowing and diglossia. As clearly explained

« The impact of the French language and its culture was so powerful that it started to reflect in many Algerians' speech and soon led to a sort of dual identity. The influence resulted in the usual linguistic phenomena that occur when two or more languages get in contact: the use of bilingualism and consequent code-switching, code mixing and borrowing pervading the mother tongue in addition to the well-established phenomenon of diglossia ». Sociolinguistic in Algeria

## **3 DESCRIPTION OF THE SUPERIOR SCHOOL OF APPLIED SCIENCES- TLEMCEM**

The superior School of sciences and techniques of Tlemcen was initiated in 2009 by the ministry of higher education and scientific research as a fulfilment programme all over the country. The objective of this institution is to provide students who get their baccalaureate exam a high-level training in scientific and technical disciplines to prepare them for entrance exam to major engineer's superior schools.

It should be mentioned that the students who enter this school come from different departments of the country. Therefore the language used for teaching is French. In the Algerian universities as well as in superior schools, the French language is considered as the language of education. The French language is introduced in the 3<sup>rd</sup> AP in the primary school; it exists in our daily life such as in our conversation, on TV and newspapers. Majority of studies at university are taught in French.

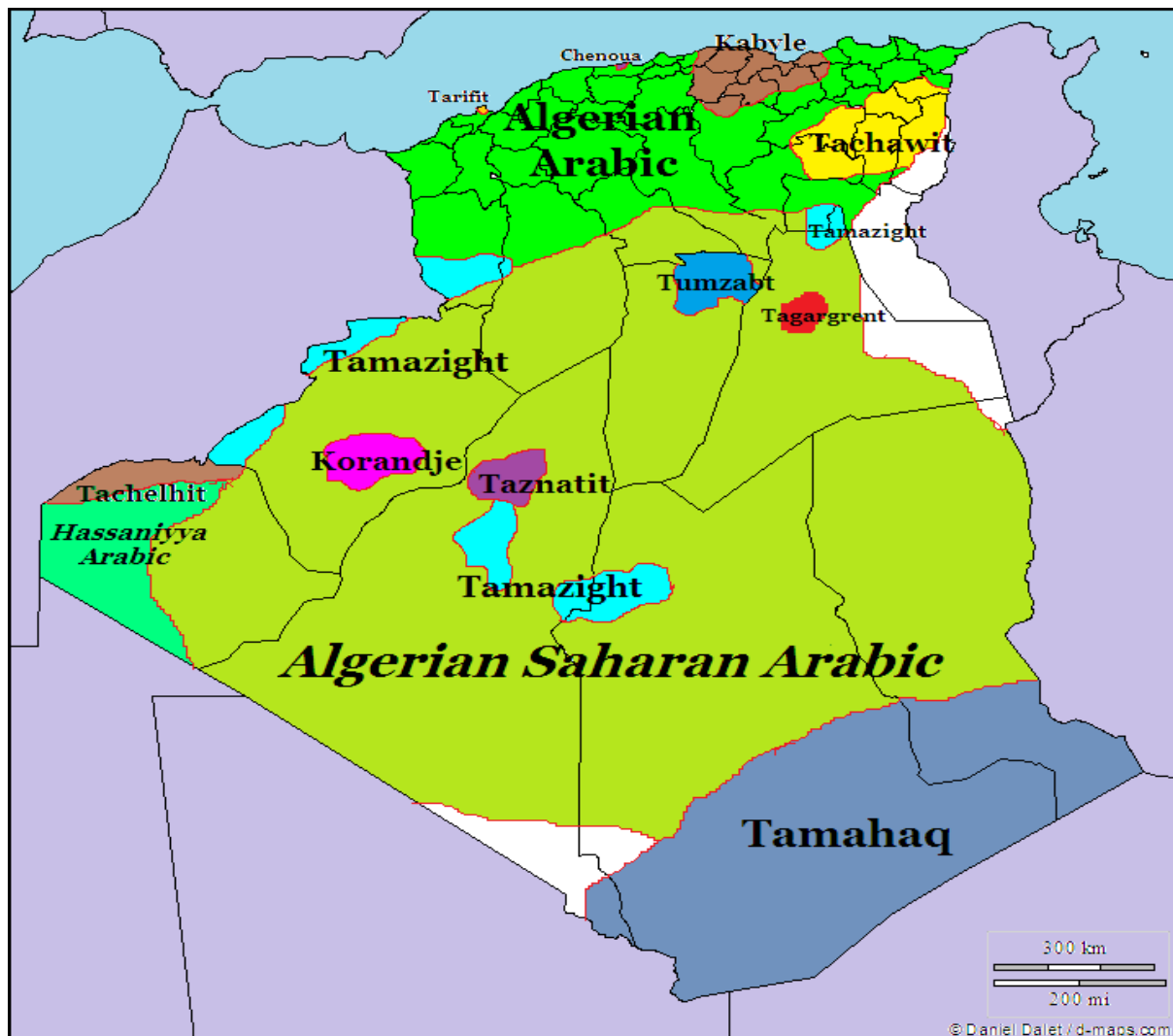
The formal languages taught at the superior school during classes are French, so all the modules are taught in French. English or ESP, English for specific purposes on the other hand, is taught only one hour per week in order to make learners more comfortable when using this language in their research work, writing articles, using the web or making research or presentations.

However, out of classes, the students prefer using their mother tongues and as the learners came from different departments of the country, there is a mixture of dialects and languages,

Therefore, students who came from Tlemcen, Algiers speak Algerian Arabic called 'Derja' derja is a mixture of Arabic and French, the Algerian dialect is full of borrowings, code switching and code mixing. Other students who came from Kabylie as Bejaia, tizi ouzou used Amazigh in their daily conversation. It is clear that

Algeria is diverse country with its different dialects, so the superior school is an adequate context where we can find different dialects and languages spoken by the students from different departments.

Here is a map of Algeria where it is shown dialects spoken in different region as Algerian Arabic, Tamazight. (google)



These different features of sociolinguistic where two linguistic common modes of interaction are used in Algerian dialects, as code switching: and code mixing. The aim of this work is to analyse the validity of code switching and code mixing among different dialects used by the Algerian students of ESSA Tlemcen, Algeria and to which extent they are influenced by the French language.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

Our research work tries to examine the sociolinguistic situation in Algeria precisely in the superior school of Applied sciences where many students from different region of the country study there. The dialects and languages there are taken into consideration in this investigation are standard Arabic, Amazigh and French.

### 4.1. Participants

Thirty two students participated in this research work first-year level. The questionnaire was addressed to the students during the English session. The questions were formulated in English but the students were free to answer either in English, French or Arabic.

### 4.2. Materials

In addition to classroom observation where the investigator could take notes of students' different uses of their mother tongues, the instrument used in this survey is a questionnaire administered to the students in

order to collect necessary information for the needs of the research work. Two steps are followed during this research:

1. To gather information
2. To analyse the results

The data are collected from students under the form of questionnaire in order to know what are their preferences for using Arabic or French in their studies and to which extent they are influenced by the French heritage in their daily speech. On the other hand, in Algeria where Arabic is considered as the language of the majority and the official language of the country, however, Berber dialect has just been recognized by the Algerian government as second national language. Therefore, students from Kabylie do not use Berber in formal context and are exposed to both Arabic and French in their studies.

## 5. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Our present research is particularly significant because it raises a crucial point in using different dialects and languages in the same context. The purpose of our study is to collect significant data, the information gathered will be analysed to determine the complexity of sociolinguistic Algerian situation. The study revealed in the following tables;

**Question 1:** Do you code switch/ mix in your daily conversation from Arabic to French and vice versa?

Possibilities	Answers
Code switch	100%
Code mix	100%

### The Use of code switching / Mixing in students' speech

This table shows the evidence that all the students without exception from different places of Algeria used code switching/mixing in their daily speech from Arabic to French and vice versa.

**Question two:** Do you prefer using Arabic/French in your studies

Possibilities	Answers
Prefer use Arabic	62%
Prefer use French	38%

### Students' preference for using Arabic/French in their studies

In this table 62% of the students prefer using Arabic in their studies, however 38% prefer keep the French language.

**Question three:** What are the most spoken dialects/languages by the students of the ESSAT?

Possibilities	Answers
Use standard Arabic (Derja)	76%
Use Tamazigh/Berber	20%
Use only French	4%

### The most spoken dialects/languages by the students

The results are evident since the majority of the students use standard Arabic with 76%, the Berber dialect takes the second position with 20%. However the classical Arabic is not used at all and French which is introduced and mixed to derja with 4%.

The study revealed that despite of fifty years of independence from the French colonialism, the majority of students' dialects are deeply influenced by the French heritage, in addition to the fact that the Algerian students consciously or unconsciously used their own dialects, Arabic or French. For instance, we can remark that the region of Kabylie such as Tizi ousou or Bejaia; often mixed Amazigh called also Berber with French and Arabic in their conversations. Furthermore, Algeria sociolinguistics profile is very complex which is due to the strong impact and long duration of the French occupation. However, it can be seen that in addition to different Algerian Arabic and Berber dialects used by the population, the French language is commonly used and those despite the intensive program of Arabisation which took place after independence.

- ✓ The majority of the students are deeply influenced by the French culture and those after more than fifty years of independence.
- ✓ All the Algerian students switch from Arabic to French or mix the two languages in their speech.
- ✓ Berber/Amazigh is spoken by students from Kabylie only in informal context. (not used at universities and high schools)
- ✓ French is commonly used and lectures are still given in French especially at universities and high schools which is the case of the Superior School despite harsh programme of Arabisation.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The results had shown that despite of the harsh programme of Arabisation which took place after independence to replace the French language; it is still used by people in their daily conversations where they switch from Arabic to French or vice versa or they mix the two languages in generally one sentence. In addition, the lectures are given only in French at universities and high schools. On what concerns students from Tizi ousou and Bejaia (Kabylie) they use their native dialect which is the Berber outside the classrooms and French is generally present in Algerian languages.

Finally, our present study revealed that Algeria is considered as a diverse country with various languages and dialects and the most known ones are Arabic, French and Berber, and these languages may coexist for a long time.

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