

## An Inquiry in the Arabised Elite Use of French Language

### بحث في مسألة استعمال النخبة المعربة للغة الفرنسية

د. مسيح الدين تسعديت<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> أستاذة محاضرة. المدرسة الوطنية العليا للعلوم السياسية

[djamilam.78@gmail.com](mailto:djamilam.78@gmail.com)

تاريخ القبول: 2018/06/18

تاريخ الاستلام: 2018/05/13

#### **Abstract:**

This paper addresses the theme of The *Arabized* Elite Use of French Language in an attempt to answer the following Questions: Why does the Algerian *Arabized* Elite use the French language? Is it a proof for Arabization process failure, which has produced *Arabized* elite striving to speak French even in daily- life discussions?

The study reveals that The French language in Algeria is a complex issue because of both the heavy colonial legacy, and the need for a national well-defined identity. In fact, linguistic Nationalism adopted by Algerian leaders since the beginnings of independence was a failure, and the unification of one nation under one language becomes a fallacy.

The failure in replacing French by Arabic is shown through the behavior of the Arabized Algerian elite that strives to show the mastery of French language, as a result of the absence of strategic planning when dealing with issues related to identity, and the ignorance of the multilingual characteristics of the Algerian society which needs a real coexistence of the different existing languages.

**Key Words:** Algerian Nationalism, Arabization process, French language, intellectual *Arabized* Elite.

**الملخص:**

تعالج الدراسة أدناه موضوع استخدام النخبة الجزائرية المعربة للغة الفرنسية في محاولة للإجابة على التساؤلات التالية: لماذا تستخدم النخبة الجزائرية المعربة اللغة الفرنسية؟ هل يمكن الحديث عن فشل مسار التعريب إذا كان نتاجه نخبة تسعى بكل ما في وسعها لتتحدث باللغة الفرنسية حتى في حديثها اليومي البسيط؟ لتوضح الدراسة أنّ مسألة اللغة الفرنسية في الجزائر مسألة جد معقدة بفعل الإرث الاستعماري من جهة، والحاجة لهوية وطنية محددة المعالم من جهة أخرى.

والواقع أن مشروع القومية اللغوية الذي تبنته القيادة الجزائرية منذ فجر الاستقلال قد باء بالفشل لأنه اتضح أنّ شعار " أمة واحدة، لغة واحدة" الذي تم الترويج له يعد من قبيل الخيال. هنا يندرج سعي النخبة المثقفة المعربة لاستخدام اللغة الفرنسية محاولة منها لتبيان تحكمها فيها، وهو دليل قاطع على غياب التخطيط الاستراتيجي لما يتعلق بمسائل الهوية الوطنية، وتجاهل الطبيعة المتعددة اللغات والألسن التي تميز المجتمع الجزائري، هذا الأخير الذي هو بحاجة إلى تعايش حقيقي بين مختلف اللغات واللهجات الموجودة.

**الكلمات الدالة:** القومية الجزائرية، مسار التعريب، اللغة الفرنسية، النخبة المثقفة المعربة.

**Introduction:**

French colonialism in Algeria has had great impacts on various sectors; it was not a simple mandatory task as it was the case in Tunisia or Morocco, but rather a political, economic and cultural domination of the powerful over the weak. The fact that pushed scholars to be interested in studying the uniqueness of Algerian case in the history of colonialism.

To achieve its ultimate aim that was the annexation of the Algerian "territory" to the French one, France worked hard to subdue the resisting indigenous people through several methods. The most brutal and disastrous remains the eradication of the existing culture using the so-called "civilizing mission" common to all European colonial powers. The French who were

fascinated by their Linguistic Nationalism brought it with them to their new colony and imposed it on the Algerian people. After more than a century under the yoke of French colonialism, the Algerian society became partially “*frenchified*”. However, the Arab language did not disappear, as the French imagined and wished, thanks to the resisting role of some nationalist and religious men.

As soon as Algerians freed themselves, the French Nationalism was replaced by the Algerian one via *Arabization*, the process that was both zealous and sloppy in terms of the lack of effective human resources. Meanwhile, the blank posts left by the French and the Europeans, when returned to their native countries, were filled with the Algerian Francophone Elite that gained its learning from French schools in the colonial era. That fact led to a francophone intelligentsia deciding over many vital issues in the country, when the latter was in need for them in the strategic posts.

After several decades these realities proved the continuity of the French Agenda in Algeria, since Algerians became divided into “*civilized French speaking group*”, and “*ordinary if not less developed people*” using Arabic as their sole means for communication. Thus the negation of “superiority, inferiority” is today directly linked to languages, the result is very apparent in many intellectual elite members’ behavior when trying to speak French even if full of mistakes, just a proof for civilization and openness of mentality as did the French language.

In the light of all this, this paper attempts to find an answer to the following Questions:

Why does the *Algerian Arabized Elite* use the French language? Can we speak of the failure of the *Arabization process* which produced an *Arabized elite* striving to speak French even in daily- life discussions?

## I- History and languages In the Pre- Colonized Algeria:

The natives of Northern Africa in general and Algeria in particular are the Berbers,<sup>1</sup> who were unsuccessful rulers of their own lands,<sup>2</sup> allowing several foreign groups to dominate the region, and shape the socio-cultural history as well as the sociolinguistic profile of Algeria. Berbers came under the yoke of the Phoenicians, then subsequently Romans, the Vandals and the Romanized Byzantines. The Islamo-Arabo- Berbers dominated the region for about four centuries, the Turks for about three centuries, and the French, for more than a century and a quarter. Spaniards occupied enclaves along the Mediterranean coast intermittently between 1505 and 1792<sup>3</sup>. One of the consequences of this “long history of mixing peoples was language contact and its by-product, “multilingualism”,<sup>4</sup> and amongst the above-mentioned conquering groups, two left a deep impact on Algeria’s linguistic profile – the Arabs and the French.

In the seventh century, the Arabs came from the east to spread Islam, defeated the Byzantines, and North Africans were gradually converted to Islam. As for Arabic language, right from the beginning it came to be strongly associated with Islam, and the Berbers admitted its superiority over their own language thanks to its link with religion, and its written forms which Berber did not possess.”<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> There is neither prehistoric archeology nor physical anthropology that could show the movement of a population coming from elsewhere; it has even been solidly established that man has been present in North Africa, in a continuous manner, for at least a million years. For further reading I advise: Salem Chaker, Berber, A “Long-Forgotten” Language of France. Translated by Laurie and Amar Chaker, [https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/france-ut/\\_files/pdf/resources/chaker\\_english.pdf](https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/france-ut/_files/pdf/resources/chaker_english.pdf), consulted on March 15th, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> - Mohamed Benrabah , “Competition between four “world” languages in Algeria”, **Journal of World Languages**, April 2014, , p.43

<sup>3</sup> - Idem.

<sup>4</sup> - Idem.

<sup>5</sup>- Ben Rabah, Op.cit, p. 44.

It is worth noting that Arabic did not displace Berber completely,<sup>6</sup> and statistics mention that in the eve of French occupation in 1830 about 50% of Algerians were still monolingual in Berber. Moreover, Algeria was the site of many languages: Ottoman Turkish, literary or classical Arabic, local Arabic colloquial, Berber variants, and on the coast even Sabir which is a ‘medieval Mediterranean pidgin’ that blended elements of Arabic, Spanish, Provençal, and other Mediterranean languages.<sup>7</sup> As far as literacy is concerned, between 40% and 50% of the population estimated at three million could read and write Arabic.<sup>8</sup>

## II- French linguistic imperialism in Algeria:

As a colonial government, France exercised social and cultural imperialism in addition to political and economic domination. This cultural imperialism included the assimilation of Algerians, along with other European colonists, to the French language, culture and educational system.

Historically, the French invasion of Algeria took place in the height of the French belief in the idea of linguistic-nationalism,<sup>9</sup> and during their political control of Algeria, they claimed to own the French language and then imposed it on Algerians, considering it a medium for the unification of the French nation<sup>10</sup> including Algeria which formally became part of France in 1848, in what was called the three departments of France.

---

<sup>6</sup> - Tassadit Yacine, Linguistic and Identity Conflicts: Berberism, Quaderns de la Mediterrània, n° 14, 2010, pp.105-112, p.109.

<sup>7</sup> -J. Sharkey Heather, “Language conflict in Algeria, From Colonialism to Post-Independence”, Journal of French Language Studies, n°24 (2), July 2014, pp. 317-318, p.23.

<sup>8</sup> - Ben Rabah, Op.cit, p. 44.

<sup>9</sup> Linguistic-nationalism can be defined as “the belief that nationality is characterized by a single language, which unifies a nation. through this belief specific languages are considered as a property of the members of specific nations, and the daily speakers and readers of a language came to feel entitled to it and to their place as equals within their imagined community, which shares the same language; Read for more details: Carina Lynn, **Language, Identity, and Literary Expression in Algeria**. Chapel Hill 2010, p 1.

<sup>10</sup> - Traces of the development of a French nation unified by the French language are observed as early as the sixteenth century in France, with The Ordinance of Villers Cotterêts in 1539, then, Cardinal Richelieu created

The table below sums up the implementation of French linguistic nationalism:

**Table n° 1: Linguistic nationalism in France and Algeria:**

Work	France	Algeria
linguistic imperialism, single linguistic policy Linguistic Nationalism: encouraged and enforced the French language	Annihilation of non-French languages and dialects and non-Parisian French dialects	Annihilation of non-French languages and dialects
Time	From the Sixteenth century to the Revolution	Throughout the colonial period ( 1838 – 1962)
Agents	French government, The middle and upper classes	the French colonists
Target	most citizens (to speak French and only French) in order	most citizens (also unwilling consumers of the lower classes)
Motivation.	access to better economic opportunities	access to better economic opportunities.
Outcome	French linguistic imperialism success	the end to French linguistic-nationalism in independent Algeria

Source: by the author.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, France implemented between 1830 and 1962, a “methodical policy of *deracination* and *deculturization*, through a policy of total *Frenchification* on millions of recalcitrant

the Académie Française in 1635. With the power of the Pope which was in decay by the mid-seventeenth century, and the rise in power of European nation-states, the French government replaced print-capitalism in Latin with print capitalism in French. By the middle of the nineteenth century, European governments began to support the idea of “official nationalisms” out of fear of exclusion or marginalization by smaller imagined communities within nations

<sup>11</sup> - A summary of what has been written in: Carina Lynn Briggs: Op.cit, pp.4-9.

Algerians”. In this context, education became the favorable means of language imperialism. Even if The idea of integration was taken care of by “Napoleon III” and reached its peak after the promulgation of the law of “Senatus Consult” in 1865,<sup>12</sup> it was during the era of the second republic, that the concept of assimilation took another direction, especially with “Jules Ferry” who suggested assimilation through school as being the best way to *Franchify* all the country, and the French Minister of Education in 1897 acknowledged the ongoing effort to conquer Algeria ‘by the School’.<sup>13</sup>

As part of their policy of assimilation and their administrative tradition of standardization, the French destroyed the existing education system in Algeria and imposed their own, in which French language was the sole medium of instruction.<sup>14</sup> The colonial authorities practiced a real genocide against people attached to their lands, civilization and language. They destroyed mosques and replaced them by churches and synagogues, closed schools and banned teaching Arabic.<sup>15</sup>

In *Le monolinguisme de l'autre*, Jacques Derrida<sup>16</sup> reveals that during French colonialism in Algeria, Algerians were not only forced to speak French but that access to every non-French language was forbidden as well. Especially in schools, Algerians were forced to speak French instead of their previous mother tongues; this included classical Arabic, the Berber language

<sup>12</sup> - Lamia Bougrioua, “The Extremist Assimilated Algerian Elite and the Algerian National Movement (1819-1945)”, *Humanity & Social Sciences Journal*, n°8 , 2013, pp. 48-55, p51.

<sup>13</sup> - Heather, Op.Cit, p.31.

<sup>14</sup> - Farid Ait Siselmi, Dawn Marley , “The role and status of the French language in North Africa”, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/93f4/9f4dc7cb0858364465e7da3eba17638fd8cb.pdf>, consulted on March 19th, 2017.pp 185- 222, p186.

<sup>15</sup> - Fella Moussaoui, French Colonial policy and Algerian Elites: Between Confrontation and Reactions (1830-- 1962), <http://2015.ische.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/keynote3-fella-m.pdf>, consulted on March, 26<sup>th</sup>.2017.

<sup>16</sup> - He was a pied-noir born in Algeria during colonialism, a writer of the French language. His book “Le monolinguisme de l'autre, ou, la prothèse d'origine (1996)”, deals with man's relationship to language via a personal relationship to the the language of the former colonizer.

and all of its dialects, and all regional vernacular Algerian Arabic dialects. Algerians were required to speak a single language, French.”<sup>17</sup>

As for the annihilation of the former Algerian educational system, Kateb Yacine<sup>18</sup> describes it as follows: “The colonialists wanted to destroy our nationalism by attempting to destroy our language. They closed schools which taught Arabic, persecuted teachers of Arabic and burnt down Arabic libraries. Thus, whoever wanted an education had to attend French schools, so much so that intellectuals cannot express themselves in Arabic.”<sup>19</sup>

In addition to French education in integrating the French language in Algeria, there was the informal contact between Algerians and the French due to their subsequent proximity to French speakers on one hand, and between rural Algerians who migrated to cities, with both Frenchmen and Algerians that spoke the French language on the other hand. The emigration of Algerians to France, reaching 100,000 in 1924, and about 300,000 by 1956,<sup>20</sup> has also contributed to the integration of the French language in Algeria via the informal contact with their friends and families in Algeria.

Tassadit yacine<sup>21</sup> says about the spread of French language in Algeria that it would be false to affirm that the use of French only corresponds to the dominant minority, as this language to some extent has been “*Algerianalised*”.<sup>22</sup> In times of colonisation in Algeria there was already a popular French transmitted orally within the cities, which gave Algeria its condition as a French-speaking country. It is the language spoken by “taxi drivers, messengers, those who work in sales offices, bar and restaurant staff, masters of works, servants, clairvoyants, and so on.”<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> - Briggs, Op.cit, p10.

<sup>18</sup> - An Algerian novelist and playwright.

<sup>19</sup> - Briggs, Op.cit, p.11.

<sup>20</sup> - Jim House, The colonial and post-colonial dimensions of Algerian migration to France, <https://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Migration/articles/house.html>, consulted on March 19th, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> - Ethnologist, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris.

<sup>22</sup> - Yacine, Op.cit, p. 107.

<sup>23</sup> - Idem.



### III- The results of French Linguistic imperialism in Algeria:

The fiction and the reality of the linguistic situation in Algeria was a “double interpretation of assimilation;”<sup>24</sup> while the outside world believed that French was being introduced throughout Algeria, the reality was that Algerians were not receiving the same education as French citizens in France and the hierarchical system<sup>25</sup> of French education in Algeria generated a Francophone Algerian Muslim elite<sup>26</sup> which represented no more than 15% of the population by the end of the colonial era, while leaving ninety percent of the population illiterate by the time of decolonization.<sup>27</sup>

That situation was in part because the majority of the Algerian population refused to send their children to French schools, through fear of being Christianized especially with the increase in the role played in education by the Jesuit missionaries.<sup>28</sup>

However, the implementation of French language in Algeria led to the dismantling of the Muslim educational system, and the marginalization of the other languages and dialects in Algeria, as well as the spread of illiteracy. At the independence, Algerians who could read Arabic were estimated at only 300,000 while 1 million could read French and 6 million spoke it.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> - Briggs, Op.cit, p.10.

<sup>25</sup> Heather, Op.cit, p.317.

<sup>26</sup> - Ait Siselmi , Marley , Op.cit, p.186.

<sup>27</sup> - Heather , Op.cit, p. 318.

<sup>28</sup> -Ait Siselmi , Marley , Op.cit, p.194.

<sup>29</sup> Benrabah, “Mohamed Benrabah , “Language maintenance and spread: French in Algeria”, International Journal of Francophone Studies, V. 10, n° 1 and 2, 2007, p.p. 93- 215, 194.

### 1-The spread of a Lingua Franca:

As previously mentioned, the nature of French colonialism in Algeria was unique since it was aiming at the annexation of the country to France. Thus, the French were looking at assimilation as the highest means, which ensures tying Algeria with France. General Peugeot, after being appointed governor in Algeria between 1841-1847, was alluding through general expressions to the possibility of integrating the Algerians into the French society, saying “after having dominated the Arabs, we have to spread our civilization and forces in the media of the Berber native population.”<sup>30</sup>

Believing in the language’s role in assimilation, French colonialists made use of spreading a lingua franca, by making it relevant to people’s lives<sup>31</sup>. France attributed economic and social advancement to the mastery of the French language, and attempted to create ideologies that justified their penetration into Algeria.

Actually, the French tried to persuade Algerians to accept French rule as beneficial, through believing in the ‘civilizing mission’ of their language. The desire was to create an elite who would think and act like them,<sup>32</sup> when linking the local existing languages to the backwardness of the Algerian past.

One must list in this respect the great tasks assigned to missionaries, who were openly telling people they teach that the colonizers came to save them from their past.<sup>33</sup>For instance, cardinal “Lavigerie” when he started Christianizing the children of Algeria said: “We have to promote this people and pardon the mistakes of the past. The first thing that we should do is to lay obstacles between them and the Koran instead of other mistakes like reviving an Arab Kingdom.”<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> - BOUGRIOUA, *op.cit*, p. 49.

<sup>31</sup> -Fiona Mc Laughlin , How a lingua franca spreads? Oxford University Press. 2017, p.1.

<sup>32</sup> - Ait Siselmi , Marley , *Op.cit*, p.185.

<sup>33</sup> - *Idem*

<sup>34</sup> - Bougrioua, *Op.cit*, p.51.

## 2- The French criticism to Local Languages:

In Fact, The colonizers, who were under the influence of nineteenth-century language attitudes, strongly believed in the superiority of their language and culture, and sharply criticized the native tongues.<sup>35</sup> The French minister of education in 1897 insisted clearly on the assertion of the French language over all other 'local idioms,' to 'replace ignorance and fanatical prejudices,' and to convince Muslims that France was superior.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, colonialists used negative terms like "dialect," "patois," and so on, to debase the languages of Algerians. In 1886, the geographer Onésime Reclus described Arabic and Berber as sharing "a passion for terrible guttural sounds which resemble vomiting."<sup>37</sup>

The same was expressed by William Marçais, in the euphoria of the centenary of Algeria's conquest, when he disqualified Literary Arabic on the grounds that it was a dominated language, not unified linguistically, unfit for the modern world."<sup>38</sup> According to him, French language would better instruct Algerian Muslims in the way of modernity, and the future elites of independent Algeria would internalize it.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, one can easily conclude that the aim was to create native elite without a history.

## 3- The Role of schools in degrading local languages:

In the same way, Schools in the colonial era played an important role in teaching schoolboys. In addition to spreading ideas such as the country and especially its important landmarks and waterways were 'discovered' by French explorers. The mental outlook here is important. This was meant to invite the Algerian to see his own people from the French point of view. Again, it of course enhanced the legitimacy of colonialism to down- grade Algerian contributions to

---

<sup>35</sup> - Peter P. Ekeh, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 17, No. 1. (Jan., 1975), pp. 91-112, p.97.

<sup>36</sup> - Heather, *Op.cit*, p.317.

<sup>37</sup> - Ben Rabah, "Competition between four "world" languages in Algeria", *Op.cit*, p. 44.

<sup>38</sup> - Idem.

<sup>39</sup> - Idem.

the building of Algeria and hence to make the colonizer a benevolent ruler who graciously filled a void and brought Algeria into light and history.<sup>40</sup> Many Western educated persons took this point of view, and came to look at Algerians to some extent through the eyes of those French educators who determined the manner and content of the teaching they received.<sup>41</sup>

After several years of colonization, it became central to the ideological promotion of the legitimacy of the colonizers, to emphasize the distinction between 'natives' who have no Western education and Western educated persons.<sup>42</sup> Hence, to become a Western educated person in the colonial era was for many an avenue for escaping "the backwardness of the natives." Thus the western values and language were used as means for dividing people into "*civilized Frenchified*" group, and "*under developed fanatic*" majority of natives.

The French linguistic imperialism became fruitful when "assimilation" attracted a group of the Algerian elite, especially those who had a French culture and who worked as part of "The Algerian youths' movement." This group started claiming some reforms in order to realize the global assimilation, which would qualify them to enjoy all the French civil and political rights and their accessories.<sup>43</sup>

However, the assimilation of the whole Algerian society was not realized, in spite of the extremist assimilated elite which believed that it will be accomplished after reaching the stage elitism. The break out of the Algerian war of liberation in 1954 made the call for integration useless.

## VI- The Algerian Monolingual Policy After the independence:

Since independence, the Algerian leaders have followed in the example of the French government and attempted to force an Algerian linguistic-nationalism<sup>44</sup> on themselves

---

<sup>40</sup> - Ekeh, Op.cit, p. 97.

<sup>41</sup> - Ibid, p.98.

<sup>42</sup> - Ibid, p 99.

<sup>43</sup> - Bougrioua, Op.cit., p. 50.

<sup>44</sup> - Heather, Op.cit., p. 317.

through a policy of *Arabization*. The Algerian government adopted a policy of *Arabization* in order to nationalize Algeria with a single language, and to replace the French language with classical Arabic as the official national language of Algeria, and to rediscover the Algerian cultural identity.

### 1- Education as a means of *Arabization*:

The institution of education became the first sector to be *Arabized* by restoring classical Arabic as the main medium of teaching in all disciplines, and reducing the use of French as much as possible, and which soon became a second language in 1964 and then a foreign language in 1976.<sup>45</sup>

**Table n° 2: Algerian *Arabization* compared to France's *Frenchification* of Algerians:**

	<i>Arabization</i>	<i>Frenchification</i>
<b>Language</b>	Modern standard Arabic as the language-of-state	French the language of the empire
<b>Aim</b>	“identity planning through language planning	The unification of the parts of the empire through Christianization
<b>Status</b>	the language-of-power spoken in many Arab and Muslim countries	the language-of-power spoken in the metropolis and its peripheries
	the language of Religion, and educated Algerian elite	the Parisian dialect of the king and his court
<b>Linguistic policy</b>	Mono-lingualism	Mono-lingualism
	erasing the French language, considered as a support to neo-	erasing the Arabic language, considered as an obstacle to the

<sup>45</sup>- Briggs, Op.cit., p.14.

	colonial tradition classical	French expansionist policy
	Refusal of the Algerian Arabic dialects Marginalisation of French and Berber	Annihilation of Classical Arabic, Algerian Arabic dialects and Berber

Source: summed up by the author.<sup>46</sup>

## 2- The process of *Arabization* :

*Arabization* gained its zenith under the rule of the second president Houari Boumedienne. In 1968, he imposed *Arabization* on the civil service, ordering bureaucrats to learn enough Arabic to work in the language within three years.<sup>47</sup> In education, *Arabization* has intensified after 1970 after getting into universities.

This *pro-Arabization, anti-French* policy continued through the 1990s by enacting two laws. the first was the law n° 91-05 of December 1990 advocated the *Arabization* of all administrative offices and schools by 5 July 1992, and higher education institutions by 5 July 2000.<sup>48</sup> The second one was the law of 17th December 1996, which set the year 2000 as the date for eradicating French in education, higher education, as far as disciplines such as medicine, science and technology are concerned, and all public administrations, institutions, enterprises and associations. The act also prohibited the use of any foreign language in the deliberations and discussions of official meetings.<sup>49</sup>

However, since his election as a president of Algeria, Abd Elaziz Bouteflika has put an end to the last mentioned law, and stressed the need to renew Franco-Algerian cultural cooperation. He said at several occasions that Algeria did not have an irreversible position towards the

<sup>46</sup> - Ibid, p.p. 13- 19.

<sup>47</sup> - Mameri, Op.cit, p.84.

<sup>48</sup> - Ibidem.

<sup>49</sup> - Idem.

French language.<sup>50</sup> As far as education is concerned, the government seems to have taken into account the various reports that blame the policy of *Arabization* for the failure of the Algerian education system to produce young people with the necessary skills for life in the modern world.<sup>51</sup>

This opinion has conducted to the reopening of the French educational institutions, *the Lycée Alexandre Dumas* in Algiers since December 2002, as well as the creation of private schools offering French education. Recently, there could be as many as 80,000 Algerian school children in these private schools. France also opened its cultural centers in: Algiers in 2000, Annaba and Oran in 2002, Constantine and Tlemcen in 2005, all meant to enabling adults to attend French classes.

### 3- The results of the Algerian mono-lingual policy:

Despite of the fact of having gained independence some fifty years ago Algeria remains an important member of the international French-speaking community. Despite of the *Arabization* process, the French language retains a strong physical presence in Algeria. In 2000; the Abassa Institute polled 1400 households and found that out of 14 million Algerians aged 16 and over, 60% of them understood and/or spoke French.<sup>52</sup>

This demonstrates the continued survival and importance of both French and Arabic in post-colonial Algeria. French language appears, together with Arabic, on street names in town centers, and directions signs both in towns and on major roads. Many shops and *cafés*, banks and other businesses have their signs written in both French and Arabic, as do hospitals, schools and local and national government buildings, as well as Doctors' prescriptions, most medicines, postage stamps, coins and bank notes.

Most administrative documents are still drawn up in French and then translated into Arabic. Passports and proper names are in both languages because many local administrators accord a

---

<sup>50</sup> - Ait Siselmi , Marley, Op.cit, p. 210.

<sup>51</sup> - Idem.

<sup>52</sup> - Benrabah, "Language Maintenance...", Op.cit , p. 146.

certain prestige to spoken Arabic but to written French.<sup>53</sup> Official documents such as bills for utilities and taxes are bilingual, as are doctors' prescriptions and most medicines, postage stamps, coins and bank notes.<sup>54</sup>

Moreover, French can be heard on radio and television, even on the official government channels, and French language publications are as common as Arabic in bookshops and newspaper kiosks. In Algeria, more than half the books published by the various private and public publishers are written in French.<sup>55</sup>

### V- French language as perceived by the Algerian Elite:

Although it has lost the status it had during the colonial era, French has risen massively in number, since education in the postcolonial age is far more widespread, and more children learn French than during the time of French colonialism twenty times more. However, the status of French in Algeria today is rather ambiguous. Whilst it may be seen by the pro *Arabized* as inappropriate for people to use French, among many educated and professional people French is almost as natural as Arabic, and many others aspire to this.<sup>56</sup> Actually, the wish to learn/ speak French has both 'instrumental' and 'integrative' motives.

#### 1-Instrumental motives:

Bilinguals consider their knowledge of French as a considerable asset, which offers them greater knowledge, wider experience, access to the Western world and to an endless supply of material which they would not otherwise be able to reach. They also believe that the new *Arabized* people are different from all the others, and stress the wide gap between them and the Arabophones who are "more conservative, narrow-minded on many issues."<sup>57</sup>

On a practical level, French is viewed as the key to social and economic success, whether inside or outside the country. There is an imagined link between speaking French and

<sup>53</sup> - Idem.

<sup>54</sup> - Ait Siselmi, Marley , Op.cit, p. 200.

<sup>55</sup> - Le Monde, 18 April 2005.

<sup>56</sup> - Ait siselmi and Dawn Marley , Op.cit, p. 201.

<sup>57</sup> - Mameri, Op.cit, p. 86.



achieving success, since people in power, in politics, the army, business, banking, public and private companies, always have a good command of French.

Historically, this can be traced in the beginning of independence when the Algerian system found itself obliged to make the State work with technocrats who were instructed in French, especially those 100,000 Algerian *cadres*,<sup>58</sup> trained in accordance with Charles De Gaulle's Plan to develop industrialization in Algeria as an economic solution to the war. In addition, the children of this first generation corresponding to notables, unqualified workers and immigrant workers constituted an active sector.<sup>59</sup>

This was previously enhanced by the colonial Legacy that generated a common opinion and a strong belief about French as the suitable language for the administration and valuable prestigious jobs. In recent years, the "President Abd elaziz Bouteflika's use of French"<sup>60</sup> when delivering official speeches and press conferences, as well as the former Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia, emphasized such an attitude.

Moreover, French is also thought by many Algerians to be the real language of thought, creation, sciences and mathematics.<sup>61</sup> Thanks to its already-existing technical vocabulary, which make of it a necessity in most secondary schools and universities. Thus, anyone engaged in scientific research, and indeed many other branches of university research, use French, in spite of the high prestige that the English language currently holds.

Consequently, speaking French is also a medium of improving one's social standing, being the key to the modern job market inside and outside the country. Many Algerian parents do believe that an education in French can open the door to studying and working abroad, and are prepared to pay for it. This can be attributed to the memories about the crisis of

---

<sup>58</sup> - Mohamed Ben Rabah, "Language and politics in Algeria", Nationalism and Ethnic Politics, Taylor & Francis Inc, 2004, pp.59- 78, p. 60.

<sup>59</sup> - Yacine, Op.cit, p. 106.

<sup>60</sup> - Since his election in May 1999, Bouteflika has addressed audiences, both national and international, in French ignoring the 1996 law which makes it a punishable offence for politicians to use any language other than Arabic in their public speeches.

<sup>61</sup> - Yacine, Op.cit, p. 108.

unemployment encountered by graduates of *Arabized* public schools at the end of the twentieth century, who struggled to find decent jobs and contributed to general public skepticism about the *Arabization* process.<sup>62</sup>

Instead, the best jobs went to the offspring of rich and well-connected Algerians who persistently managed to secure education in French, thereby presenting a classic case of what sociolinguists call 'elite closure'. A recent survey showed that Algerians do not particularly value monolingualism, as they think that "literary Arabic alone does not ensure social mobility."<sup>63</sup>

## 2-Integrative Motives:

Right from the beginning of the Independence, Many Algerians trained by the French could not acknowledge the fact "that there are alternative and equally valuable kinds of civilizations other than that of France. People still believe that "French is a modern language, whereas Arabic is not."<sup>64</sup> This belief in the superiority of French language and culture transpire in the Algerian intelligentsia's behavior as public servants and bureaucrats.<sup>65</sup> Really, the Arabic language in Algeria is not serving "as a medium of modernity, but charged with religious symbol."<sup>66</sup> This fact has emphasized the idea of the Backwardness spread in the Algerian society during the colonial period.

French language is still widely seen as a means of access to French culture (the representative of Western culture). Learning French is, therefore; seen as means of participating in a more liberal, emancipated lifestyle. The proximity of the country to Metropolitan France, the extremely high numbers of Algerian nationals living in France, and the volume of trade and business with France, all contribute to the continued impact of the French language and culture on Algerians.

---

<sup>62</sup> - Maameri, **Op.cit**, p. 85.

<sup>63</sup> - Ait siselmi , Marley, **Op.cit**, p. 203.

<sup>64</sup> - **Ibid**, p.195.

<sup>65</sup> - **Idem**.

<sup>66</sup> - Maameri, **Op.cit**, p.86.

### 3-The causes of the *ArabiZation*'s failure in Algeria:

The policy followed by independent Algeria has soon revealed its failure, and its inability to eradicate the French language, in the same way the *Frenchification* of the Algerian society could not eradicate Arabic during the colonial Era. This was a result of many factors such as:

a-The lack of qualified Arabic instructors: though the government “invested 25% of its yearly national budget on *Arabized* national public education until 1978 and then 21%.<sup>67</sup>. In fact, the postcolonial *Arabizers* were both zealous and sloppy, for example in the mid-1960s, when they asked Egypt to supply the Arabic teachers needed for their programs, and when Egypt's President Nasser informed them, in response, that Egypt could not meet their full demand, the Algerian envoy reportedly told Egypt to send teachers ‘even if they were greengrocers’.<sup>68</sup>

b- The instable programs in Education: *Arabization* of the educational system in Algeria was pursued with great haste, and with scant regard for the needs of the children affected by it. For example, any student failing the last bilingual baccalaureate in 1988 had no option but to retake it in Arabic the following year.<sup>69</sup> At this stage, not only was French no longer used as a medium of instruction in state schools, but a decree forbade Algerian nationals from enrolling in the few remaining French secondary Schools.

c- The marginalization of the elite that was mostly composed of teachers trained under the Third Republic, and later by political leaders of the national movement trained in French schools. This elite who then became a popular protest because of the errors of the system. In the same way, the Berber speakers who speak even popular or standard Arabic, are still linked to their native language and their language of culture, French. With the exception of some rare *Arabizers*, the Kabyle elite is above all French-speaking.

<sup>67</sup> - Briggs , Op.cit, p. 14.

<sup>68</sup>- Heather, Op.cit, p. 318.

<sup>69</sup> - Ait siselmi , Marley, Op.cit, p. 210.

While classical Arabic encourages the repression of spoken languages, including popular Arabic, Berbers mainly Kabyles recovered their native language by speaking French.<sup>70</sup> The latter community owes its attitudes towards French to the two dominant parties in the region views to the matter. The first is the FFS, thinking that the teaching of French had to be maintained in order to keep abreast of scientific and technological developments, but it was not to be privileged over Berber and Arabic. Whereas, the second the Rally for Culture and Democracy demands the maintenance of French as the basic language of the state alongside Arabic and Berber, since French is the language of progress.<sup>71</sup>

To put the long story short, we say that the *Arabized* elite, with the exception of very few bilingual or multilingual persons, is too much weak in French without however being competent in Arabic. School education has been conducted in Arabic for many years now, and generally speaking younger Algerians master neither the Arabic language nor French, without mentioning English. The new breed of students is what Dr Maameri calls “*trilingual illiterates*”.

### Concluding Facts:

The French language in Algeria is a complex issue because of the heavy colonial legacy that enrooted it in the Algerian society, and the need for a national well defined identity. In fact linguistic Nationalism while succeeded in France, has failed in Algeria during and after the colonial era. The study has explained this failure by the resistance of both Arab indigenous people during the first period, and the Francophones in the second.

The failure to unify one nation under one language arises mainly from the ignorance of the multilingual characteristics of the Algerian society which needs a real coexistence of the different existing languages, which instead both administrations tried to overpass when adopting a monolingual policy. The feedback is that identity planning through this kind of linguistic planning is merely impossible in Algeria, and each trial to eradicate a given

---

<sup>70</sup> -Yacine, op.cit, p. 111.

<sup>71</sup> - Maameri, Op.cit, p. 84.

language will have counter effects as many of its speakers will resist and work hard to spread it.

The *Arabized* elite striving to show its mastery of French language is a clear evidence of the disastrous linguistic policies which lack a strategic planning when dealing with issues related to identity. After more than half a century of *Arabization* people remain in doubt about its power and utility. The Arab language is not responsible of any drawbacks of the linguistic policy or bad results in education; however, it needs a clear identification of needs and aims.

## References:

### I-Books:

- BOADA, Bernard Bastardas, **Language and Identity in the Glocal Age**; Barcelona, 2012.
- CHAPIN METZ, Helene, **Algeria: a Country Study**, Library of Congress, 1994.

### II- Articles:

- AIT SISELMI, Farid, MARLEY Dawn, "The role and status of the French language in NorthAfrica", pp185-222, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/93f4/9f4dc7cb0858364465e7da3eba17638fd8cb.pdf>, consulted on March 19th, 2017.
- BENRABAH , Mohamed, "Competition between four "world" languages in Algeria", **Journal of World Languages**, n°1, April 2014. pp 38- 59.
- BENRABAH , Mohamed , "Language and politics in Algeria", **Nationalism and Ethnic Politics**, Taylor & Francis Inc, 2004, pp.59- 78.
- BENRABAH , Mohamed , "Language maintenance and spread: French in Algeria", **International Journal of Francophone Studies**, V. 10, n° 1 and 2, 2007, pp. 93- 215.

- BOUGRIOUA, Lamia, "Elite and the Algerian National Movement (1819-1945)", **Humanity & Social Sciences Journal**, n°8, 2013. pp. 48-55.
- CHAKER, Salem, "Berber a "Long-Forgotten" Language of France". Translated by Laurie and Amar Chaker, [https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/france-ut/\\_files/pdf/resources/chaker\\_english.pdf](https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/france-ut/_files/pdf/resources/chaker_english.pdf), consulted on March 15th, 2017.
- EKEH, Peter P., "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement", **Comparative Studies in Society and History**, Vol. 17, N°1. January 1975, pp. 91-112.
- HEATHER, J. Sharkey, "Language conflict in Algeria, From Colonialism to Post-Independence", **Journal of French Language Studies**, n°24 (2), July 2014, pp. 317-318.
- HOUSE, Jim, "The colonial and post-colonial dimensions of Algerian migration to France", <https://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Migration/articles/house.html>, consulted on March 19th, 2017.
- LAUGHLIN, Fiona Mc, "**How a lingua franca spreads?**", **Tracing Language Movement in Africa**, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 1- 19.
- MAAMRI REBAI, Malika, "The Syndrome of the French Language in Algeria", **International Journal of Arts and Sciences**, n° 3, 2009, pp. 77 – 89.
- MINASYAN, Armenui, "Language Policy, National Identity And Politics", **European Scientific Journal**, February 2014, pp.272-277.
- MOUSSAOUI, Fella, "French Colonial policy and Algerian Elites: Between Confrontation and Reactions (1830-1962)", <http://2015.ische.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/keynote3-fella-m.pdf>, consulted on March, 26<sup>th</sup>.2017.
- YACINE, Tassadit, "Linguistic and Identity Conflicts: Berberism". **Quaderns de la Mediterrània**, n° 14, 2010, pp.105-112.

#### Thesis:

- BRIGGS, Carina Lynn, **Language, Identity, and Literary Expression in Algeria**, Chapel Hill, 2010.