

ENGLISH IN THE ALGERIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS BETWEEN NECESSITY AND CONTINGENCY.

***MRS.MAROUF NAWEL
MAITRE ASSISTANT
Dr.MOULAY TAHAR UNIVERSITY OF
SAIDA,ALGERIA.***

Abstract: Modern

societies today are aware of the importance of foreign languages teaching and learning. They are urged to manage the linguistic education of their people with different needs, interests, and objectives. Nevertheless, this linguistic management is never free from the interference of some dependent factors such as: political, social or economic changes. Yet, language planning cannot be understood apart from its social context or the history which produced that context. Therefore such changes bring with them new trends and new approaches that may be seen as mere reactions against old ones, and do not necessarily attain the societies' total consent. The latter is considered as a condition of a successful language planning. Algeria from 1993 to 2000 is an example of such innovations, the ministry of education imposed the teaching of English as a foreign language in primary schools as another competing foreign language with French. This Reform that aimed to counteract the drawbacks and weaknesses of the old approach to the English language teaching, is nevertheless considered as a failure due to many reasons. The following paper attempts to shed light on the following points:

1-The Algerian linguistic situation and its impact on teaching foreign languages notably English.

2-The reforms introduced in the educational system vis à vis Foreign languages mainly French and English.

3-The reasons that led to the withdrawal of the reform of teaching English in the Algerian primary schools.

Key Words:Language in education policy,linguistic situation ,English in Elementary schools.

عنوان المقال: اللغة الإنجليزية في المدرسة الابتدائية الجزائرية بين الضرورة و اعتبارية التخطيط

ملخص:

تعترف اليوم المجتمعات المتطورة بالدور الهام الذي تلعبه عملية تعليم، وتعلم اللغات الأجنبية، فتجد هذه المجتمعات عاكفة على تحديد احتياجات شعوبها، وأهدافهم، واهتماماتهم بهذه اللغات، غير أن السياسات المتخذة بهذا الصدد لم تكن يوما بمنأى عن بعض العوامل السياسية، والاقتصادية، والاجتماعية. لذلك فإن التخطيط اللغوي هو نتاج لسياق اجتماعي، وتاريخي لا يمكن الخروج عنه. ويستلزم هذا الوعي بضرورة اللغات الأجنبية تغييرات جذرية، متمثلة في طرق وإصلاحات جديدة، كردة فعل على أخرى قديمة، وحتى وإن لم تلاقي قبول من كافة شرائح المجتمع، علما أن هذا الأخير يعتبر شرطا أساسيا من أجل نجاح أي تخطيط لغوي. هذا بالضبط ما حدث بالجزائر، فالإصلاح الذي مس التعليم الابتدائي بين الفترة الممتدة بين 1994-2000 و الذي يقضي بتعليم اللغة الانجليزية في الطور الابتدائي إلى جانب اللغة الفرنسية عرف فشلا سنوات قليلة بعد إقراره. من هذا المنطلق يحاول الباحث في هذه الورقة استنباط الأسباب الحقيقية وراء هذا الفشل.

Introduction:

The changing world today affects all the aspects of life like education. As time passes people's needs and aspirations do not remain the same, as socio-economic and political order changes bringing with them new challenges. Foreign languages teaching reforms as one of the most important signs of the development of a given country vary from time to time and from a country to another. Algeria as well as many other countries witnessed considerable changes concerning foreign languages teaching and learning. The most remarkable one was that of 1993, when the dominance of French as the sole foreign language was taught from primary to secondary school came to an end. And the decision of introducing English in the Algerian elementary school was suddenly taken as the extension of this language was widening everywhere, as the language of communication, trade, and so on.

Few years later, this reform was interrupted. Six years after its implementation it knew a silent withdrawal. The objectives of this project were ambiguous the fact that makes the reasons of its withdrawal unclear. No evaluation of the project was offered, nor enough explications were given. Consequently, the ill-consideration of the steps that should be followed when deciding for a language planning are thought to be the direct reasons for its failure. .

1.The Algerian Linguistic Situation

In present day languages in Algeria are: Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Algerian Arabic(AA), Tamazight, and French. Each of which enjoys a considerable importance.

1.1 Arabic:Since its independence in 1962,Algeria reallocate Arabic as the national and official language for all Algerians .Arabic maintained this position until April 2002 when the authorities made Tamazight the second language to the country .In many countries the mother tongue that is to say the language of daily communication is chosen as the national language. What is controversial in Algeria is that Arabic is not the language of daily communication for all the Algerians ,thus it is not the mother tongue, as they speak dialects and/or Berber .According to Benrabah, the word Arabic carries three meanings. Classical Arabic (EL Fusha)the language of the Koran. It is characterized by a

complex grammatical structure, spoken specially by religious men. The second meaning is MSA which generated from Classical Arabic(CA) .MSA is the language of media education and administration not only in Algeria but in the 22 Arab countries,asin Egypt ,Syria and Iraq. In contrast to Classical Arabic, MSA meets the needs of the modern life.

1.2.2.Algerian Arabic: The third meaning of the word Arabic,a language (or variety of language)which is typically Algerian. Algerian in terms of the mixture of more than a language. It is the colloquial language known as «darija» (dialect) a simplified version of Classical Arabic. Moreover Algerian Arabic is considered as L1 of the Algerians since it is spoken by 80%-85% of the population. Algerians adopt this language as their L1 because of its simple structure at various levels mainly the phonological and syntactic levels. A definition of Algerian Arabic was given by the ex-ministerial delegate to the universities.Rachedi in an Algerian weekly newspaper¹:

[What is ,in fact Algerian Arabic ?It is an Arabic that is stripped of its absolute declensions ,its useless dual case ending, its heavy constructions, its frozen expressions, its syntax from another age, its antediluvian terminology. It is a spoken, lively Arabic, which bears the mark of the creative genius of Berber, of rural and urban Algeria, which integrates foreign terms harmoniously...]

(Abid's translation).

¹ C'est quoi au juste l'algérien ?c'est l'arabe dépouillé des déclinaisons désuètes, de son duel inutile, de ses constructions lourdes de ses expressions figées de sa syntaxe d'autre âge, de ses vocables antédiluviens. c'est un arabe parlé, vivant, qui porte la marque de génie inventif berbère ,de l'Algérie profonde, de l'Algérie citadine, qui intègre harmonieusement les vocables étrangers(L'Hebdo libéré ;08/28-09/03,1991 :18-19 in Abid ,2006 :27-28)

Though calls to make Algerian Arabic the language of instruction as being the language of daily communication, MSA could maintain its status so far. This vernacular (Algerian Arabic) is divided into four major Algerian Arabic varieties:

1- Western Algerian Arabic used in an area which extends from the Moroccan border to Tenes.

2- Central Algerian Arabic spoken in the central zone which extends to Bejaia and include Algiers (the capital of Algeria) and its surroundings.

3- Eastern Algerian Arabic spoken in the high plateaus around Sétif, Constantine, Annaba, and extends to the Tunisian borders.

4- Saharan Algerian Arabic spoken by around 100.000 inhabitants in the Sahara desert (Taleb Ibrahim, K.1995:31)

Algerian Arabic is full of borrowed words from the languages that Algerians came into contact during their history. Words from Latin, Spanish, Turkish and many other languages exist to the present day. Yet French linguistic traces remain the heuristic characteristic of Algerian Arabic, as a result of 132 years of colonization of land and mind.

1.2-Tamazight: Spoken by nearly 25% of the Algerian population. Tamazight-the Berber language-is composed of many dialects. In Algeria four major ones are spoken. First, 'Kabyle' known also locally by Takbaylit is spoken by Kabylis (El Aissati, 1993:92) . Second, 'Tamashek' is the language of the Touaregs of the Algerian Sahara (near the Niger border), whereas the Mozabites in Ghardaia and the Chaouias speak 'Mzab' and 'Shawia' respectively. Other Tamazight speaking- communities exist in isolated places all over the country such as: Chnoua, Tarifit, Tachelhit, Tagargrent.

(Ethnologue, 2004; in Benrabah, 2007:49). The question of Berber has been raised during the colonization era .The French exploited the distinction between Arabs and Berbers to create separatism in the Algerian community. However, the history of the Algerian revolution has shown that Berberism was not a serious

cause for dissent (Quand, 1972, in Kashani-Sabet, 1996:p.264-265).In fact many Berbers participated side by side with the Arabs in the war of independence. However, just after the decolonization of the country Berbers called for their language rights as the native language of Algerians. The 1990s were remarkable for both Kabylis and their language Tamazight.

Therefore, on 28th May 1995, the High Commission for Amazigh Affairs (known by its French initials: HCA) was created by decree under the patronage of the President of the Republic. This commission guarantees the Berbers' right to teach and learn their language at school. Through this decision and its allocation as a national language, its status is still ambiguous. The problem of this language is that it is composed of many dialects. A fact that makes its unification under one conventional language quite difficult. Moreover, the only spoken form of Tamazight makes its teaching arduous. In 1996, the word Amazighism was introduced as an element of the Algerian identity "*the fundamental constituent parts of Algerians identity [...] are Islam, Arabism and Amazighism* " (Algerian Constitution). This official recognition encouraged Berbers to ask for introducing Tamazight into the educational system. By the year 2002, Article 3 of the constitution was modified to include Tamazight as the second national language of the state of Algeria and the national centre for Tamazight Language planning was created by decree.

Though these decisions that were taken by the Algerian government, Tamazight is still limited in the Tamazgha. Its graphisation is considered as a barrier for its promotion, since no decisive choice has been taken about whether the Roman or the Arabic system would be preferable for the writing of Tamazight. Certainly a language has to possess a written and spoken form to be considered as a recognized language.

1.3French: The French language in Algeria has a unique history. Its uniqueness is due to the long years of colonization that overpasses ten decades. This language witnessed different developments depending on the changing ideologies and circumstances of the Algerians and their country.

Today, French is a foreign Language in Algeria. Its status remains controversial, though it has been politically considered as a

foreign language. Yet it is a part of the Algerian linguistic repertoire. Miliani describes French language to the Algerians as follows: *“This heritage is a characteristic of the country not chosen freely but an integral part of the identity of Algerians”* (Miliani, 2000:16)

During the years of colonization and few years later French was the language of instruction, of administration, of media beside the language of daily communication. But, as early as the 1963, the country launched the policy of Arabization .. By this policy decision makers in Algeria tried to restore the country’s constituents of identity .Arabization aimed essentially to promote Arabic and spread it all over the country.

On the other hand, by Arabizing the country the Algerian authority tended to eradicate the French language as well as any colonial heritage. Nevertheless, the task of eradication has been hard, since the majority of Algerians and mainly the elites use French in their daily communication. Even those who do not master it perfectly have recourse to code switching. Moreover, there are some expressions that cannot be understood but in the French language as they belong to French repertoire (Abid, 2004:35). As the word “Déjà”: already which could not be understood but in French, and there exist many other words in this context.

2/Educational Policies and Language Instruction in Algeria:

Immediately after independence, Algerian leaders decided to restore the country’s identity through assimilation. Assimilation aims to make all the members of the Algerian community alike, sharing the same behaviours, the same thoughts and receiving the same education through a sole language that is Standard Arabic. Language seems to be the most prevalent pattern for the process of assimilation. As well as many other new decolonized countries , Algeria put emphasis on education as the most important sector that guarantees socialization and order ,that the dominant group in power aims to set up. To get rid of the colonizer’s language and educational system, the Algerian authorities launched a language policy that is considered as the most important one in the history of Algeria.

To grant Standard Arabic an official status as the official language of the Algerians, Arabization was launched on October 1962. The first President of the Democratic and Popular Republic

of Algeria Ahmad Ben Bella announced that Arabic would be taught in French elementary schools. Nevertheless, the first transitional period from colonialism to independence witnessed many difficulties, and this policy faced serious obstacles as the discontent of French speakers.

The years 1962-1965 were marked by uncertainty of implementation, because of the lack of teachers who mastered Arabic language. Yet, the government decided to introduce Arabic in the curriculum seven hours a week in 1962 and ten hours a week in 1964. The shortage of teachers was compensated by the hiring of one thousand teachers from Egypt and Syria, even if they were not competent in Arabic and did not receive any training in language teaching (Benrabah, 2004:66). The real step of Arabization began with the military coup of 1965. Houari Boumedien assumed the control of the government and like his predecessor regarded Arabic reinforcement as a fundamental goal. Therefore, systematic Arabization² as it was considered by Benrabah began.

Ahmad Taleb Ibrahimi³, Minister of Education from 1965-1970 started introducing Arabization to the school system. His recognition of the necessity of Arabic as one of the essential ways for the restoration of the Algerian personality did not contrast with his recognition of the benefits of the French cultural tradition. He therefore explained:

“It is not our intention to destroy the acquired colonial knowledge but to reconvert it. It does not occur to us to deny the contribution of the French culture that has taught us the method and the Discourse on methods”

(Taleb Ibrahimi.A, 1973:12)

² Or Arabization at all cost, since this policy did not take into account the existence of Berber that enjoyed and still enjoys a considerable position in Algeria. Besides French language wide spread among Algerians (a first language for some and a second language for others).

³ The son of Shaykh Bachir Ibrahimi who had assumed the leadership of the association of Ulama After Ben Badiss's death. This very man was considered intelligent and learned and a magnificent product of Bilingualism.

The first period was characterized by bilingualism and Arabic was taught in parallel with French. It is not until 1974 that the whole primary educational level had been totally Arabized with the teaching of French as a (foreign language) subject beginning in the third year (Gorden, 1978:153 in Benrabah, 2004:89) .In the same year most humanities classes at the secondary school were Arabized .However Arabization at the University level remained an obstacle,since the language of instruction is Arabic for twelve years ,then pupils are faced with a new language of instruction which is French .This situation led to the weaknesses in the Algerian Educational System.

In September 1976 the educational structure was to be changed instead of the one inherited from the colonial period. The government introduced the “Ecole Fondamentale”: Fundamental School ⁴(see appendix **p152**) that consisted of six years of elementary schooling and three years of middle school using Arabic as the language of instruction. This reform had been effectively implemented in 1978 and put an end to French –Arabic duality in education (Taleb Ibrahimi, K., 1995:135).After twenty years of the creation of the Fundamental School , both Algerian authorities and a large part of the population have felt the need for new educational reforms ,starting from president Boudiaf to Bouteflika to countless scholars and specialists in educational issues the Algerian educational system doomed to failure. Consequently, the government of President Bouteflika set to reform the educational system.

A commission for the reform was appointed in 13 may 2000,known with its initials in French CNRSE⁵.In September 2003, the government started the implementation of the recommendations made by this commission. The fundamental schooling is nowadays replaced by the old French structure comprising three stages:

⁴ Fundamental in the sense that it gives knowledge and skills which are an essential condition for attaining a higher standard of living. In fundamental school the pupil had to study six years in primary level .

⁵ Commission nationale de la réforme du système éducatif

1- Primary school: lasts five years instead of six, at the end of which the pupils obtain a primary education certificate.

2- Middle school: consists of four years at the end of which a certificate of middle education is awarded. The later allows the pupil to join secondary schools.

3- Secondary school: lasts for three years .Pupils at this level have a choice between scientific or literary fields.

At the university level the old system⁶ is replaced by the LMD system .That year (2010), all Algerian Universities had to follow this system though difficulties were faced by both teachers and students because of the ill-consideration of many factors affecting the new university restructuration,including syllabus design.Algerian educational policies reflect the country's changing ideologies .From the French educational system to the Foundation school to the present system, education in Algeria is still posing questions of quality and inadequacy. Though the educational system is criticized, Algeria succeeded to reduce the rate of illiteracy from 90% in 1960 to 40% in 1990. Compulsory and free education for all the Algerians regardless their social class and linguistic group are available. Another important achievement is the Algerianity of the teaching personnel, i.e. the overwhelming majority of the teachers are the product of the pure Algerian school.

2.1 French in the Educational System:

Since 1962, the date of Algeria's independence,the French language instruction has known different changes. From a language of instruction during colonization and in the aftermaths of independence to a foreign language taught in Grade 3 at primary school (instead of Grade 1) and then in Grade 4 in Fundamental Schools ,French remained a feature closely associated to the history of the country.Nowadays, French enjoys a privileged position as it has penetrated the Algerian cultural, economic and social lives. Historical reasons are to be regarded the most important contributing factors to the present situation. In this respect President

⁶Algerian students have to study four years in University to obtain a Licence degree .Further studies require the success in entrance examinations.

Houari Boumediene declared : *[A foreign language that benefits from a particular position because of objective historical considerations.]*⁷ (MyTranslation)

Therefore, any attempt to eradicate French from the Algerian scene of life has failed. As a deeply rooted language and omnipresent in the streets, administrations, hospitals and many other places, it is no doubt an uneasy task to suppress it: *If it is easy to refuse a second/foreign language, it is difficult however, if not impossible to suppress a language that one has already known.*² (mine Translation)

The Arabization policy that was launched after independence did not serve as a panacea to French widespread in Algeria. The immediate and non-conscious implementation have complicated the situation .Consequently, weak and non-competent learners were the product of the Algerian educational system that favoured Fundamental schooling with all the teaching done in Arabic.The issue of languages in Algeria has been always a taboo. It was not until the 2000's that the Algerians could overcome this taboo. Monolingualism in Arabic or Arabic –French bilingualism were issues of both the Algerian government and the society. Arabo-Islamists who supported the policy of Arabization opposed to Francophones who represented a considerable number of population in addition to the elite. The latter that represent decision makers who were probably the most effecting population on languages educational policies.

In May 2000, President Bouteflika appointed a national commission in charge of the reform of the Algerian educational system. After a year of study the CNRSE (as it is known with its

⁷ “Une langue étrangère qui bénéficie d’une situation particulière du fait des considérations historiques objectives.” (Cited in Morsly, 1984, in Taleb Ibrahimi, 1995 :39)

²“S’il est facile de refuser une langue seconde/étrangère, il est difficile, sinon impossible de réprimer une langue que l’on déjà sait.” (Djité, 1992 :88 in Quitout, 2006 :129)

initials in French) made a number of recommendations. In September 2003 the government started the first steps of implementation (Benrabah, 2007:94). As far as French is concerned, the commission recommended that it should be introduced as the first mandatory foreign language in Grade 2 (for 6-7 years olds) of the primary cycle instead of starting it in Grade 4 (four 8-9 year olds) as it was the case since the late 1970's. In fact, these recommendations were effectively implemented in 2004-2005. A year after French instruction was delayed to Grade 3 because of many difficulties faced by both teachers and pupils. At secondary level, scientific disciplines are taught in French instead of Arabic. For the University level, the teaching of scientific fields is in French. While many attempts to Arabize University failed at the very beginning.

2.2 Other Languages in the Educational System:

Compared to other languages as Spanish or German, French has always held a strong non-official status in the Algerian linguistic situation because of historical and political factors that have been already mentioned in this study. Nevertheless, the post-independence policy of Arabization changed this status and the exceptional status of French is no more prevailing as it was during post-independence when it was used everywhere in administration, education and media. Despite the drawbacks and weaknesses of Arabization policy, it succeeded to yield Algerians attitudes towards French in favour of Arabic (Modern Standard Arabic). However, now things are changing, especially in this modern world, where globalization imposes English as a globe language, a password to international exchanges. Algeria as well as other countries that sought openness and successful relations with other nations becomes aware of the importance of English.

Consequently, the late reforms, i.e those of 2004 removed the teaching of French from the second year of middle school to the first year and gave it the status of a second language. Furthermore, public demand for learning English is increasing. That root cause encourages private schools where English language and culture are taught throughout the country.

On the other hand, foreign languages included languages as German, Spanish, and Italian but thus do not enjoy the same status

French and English in Algeria. They are taught in secondary school. Pupils can choose one of these minority languages in their second year. At university level, departments offer License (equivalent of Bachelor in the Anglophone educational systems) Degrees for beginners in these minority languages. Recently, the Algerian society has faced a new challenge. French and Tamazight (as a national language) are facing the threats of invasion of English. The only solution to this conflict is to give Algerians the opportunity of choice between these three competing languages. The new national curriculum had to be supplemented with Tamazight, French and English at different levels.

2.3 English in the Educational System:

A. Reasons for Learning English:

The English language is still enjoying a great importance not just as an international language but as a world language. It is spoken now by 508 million native speakers; it was said that *“The sun regularly sets on the Union Jack these days but never on the English Language...it has replaced French in the world of diplomacy and German in the field of science”* (Newsweek, November.15, 1982).

One cannot consider himself as part of this globalizing world unless he masters two things: English and computing. In this sense Burchfield stated that: *“Any literate, educated person on the face of the globe is deprived, if he does not know English.”*

B. English in the Algerian Educational System:

The status and the teaching of English in the Algerian educational system knew several changes. This was according to the Algerian social, political, and economic changes and challenges during different periods. English as a subject has had a different status in the period before and after independence.

During French colonization, English was taught as a first foreign language, sharing this status with Arabic or more exactly Algerian Arabic, and introduced in the first grade of the Intermediate Cycle. Once pupils reached university (if they reached it), they would have spent eight years studying English.

During the first years of the Independence, English was still taught as a first foreign language, but no longer in the first but the third year of the Intermediate Cycle. At the end of the Secondary Cycle, pupils would have studied English for five years (two years in the Intermediate Cycle and three years in the secondary cycle), as it was still the case until the New Reform in 2004. But the huge difference is that English is no longer regarded as the first foreign language but the second. This has been the case except for the period where English was introduced in the Primary Cycle, replacing French.

With the New Reform, nothing is being said on the place of English as a first foreign language, French in fact regains its original position, as the privileged first foreign language. Nowadays, English is taught from Grade One in the Intermediate Cycle. By the time they reach the final grade of the Secondary Cycle, pupils will have studied English for seven years, similarly to the pre and pre post-Independence pupils. More clarifications are shown in the table below:

	-1962-	1962-1975	1975-1993	1993-2004
English FL1	Intermediate cycle(4 years)+secondary cycle(3 years)			
English FL2		Intermediate cycle (2 years)+secondary cycle (3 years)	Intermediate cycle(2 years) + secondary cycle(3 years)	Intermediate cycle (2 years) + secondary cycle (3 years)
Total	7 years	5 years	5 years	5 years

Status of English in the Algerian Curriculum (Adapted from Lakhal – Benmati.K,2006)

The table above displays the status of English in the Algerian curriculum from the years of colonization till now. It shows the changing policies and that result in changing the language educational policies as well.

Consequently, one can distinguish three major periods:

C. The Status of English until 1990's:

Since independence, French had the lion's share in the Algerian national curriculum. It was privileged as the sole foreign language to be taught at all the levels for-above all- historical reasons. At the meantime, other languages such as English, Italian, German, Spanish, and Russian had also their shares-though insignificant-in the Algerian schools. From 1962to 1985, French was the obligatory language to be learnt since the primary levels, whereas, English together with other foreign languages had been granted the status of a second language.

In 1985, English was selected as the compulsory foreign language and was introduced in the second year of middle schools (8th year in the foundation school).But Spanish, German and other foreign languages remained optional as a third language.

The objective of this reform was purely instrumental. According to the declaration of the National Ministry of Education

“The ultimate aim of the teaching of English is to help the pupil to acquire a new language and not to accumulate knowledge of another culture which has no real use in the contexts of our needs today.”

(I.P.N;85/86;p10)

This reform started to limit the wide extension of French in Algeria. Giving English a stronger position, the Algerian pupil would be able to

discover a new foreign language with a new culture and new notions far away from French dominance.

1.6.2. Status of English after 1990s:

A few years later, and after an unsuccessful attempt to advance the teaching of English to the first year in middle schools, English became a foreign language in elementary schools (FLES) in Algeria. The introduction of this competing language to French became a purely socio-political problem that renewed the old conflicts between two main groups:

Supporters of Arabization policy and hence wanted to eradicate French whatever the means. And those who favoured French language dominance as being deeply rooted in Algerians minds and souls. On the one hand, the first group was for the teaching of English as being the language of the globe. They argued that the Algerian pupils as well as pupils of other countries that were conscious of the emergence of English should learn the language the most demanded. They saw English as the language of the future whereas French belonged to the past. Yet, the second group was extremely against this reform. They were in favour of keeping teaching French in elementary schools. They argued that a child who had the habit of using French in his daily life would be able to learn it easily at school. They went further, when they identified Classical Arabic as the foreign language instead of French. For them a language which is extremely different from the L1 of the child (Algerian Arabic) could complicate his/her learning process.

Moreover, the learning of English at the age of 9/10 is not reasonable because that implies adequate materials and efforts that were absent in the Algerian schools. Since this language had nowhere to be used, but classrooms.

Both groups' arguments seem to be reasonable but the real problem was the plan itself, and the ill-considerations of some parameters. The latter if truly considered could lead to better educational consequences. It is worth mentioning another group that was in the middle of the two groups mentioned above. That group was against the change itself. Those were traditionalists. They considered any change a threat for them and their children'

future. They thought that this reform might create disorganization into the educational system and left many victims whose future would be ambiguous.

D. English Instruction and the New Reform:

In 1996, Algerian authorities decided to make new reforms in the content of the 1976 ordinance .A Higher Council for Education was appointed, charged with the reorganization and reorientation of the Algerian educational system .The National Commission in charge of the reform(CNRSE) was assigned to work on the revision of the programs. This Commission, often referred to as Benzaghoul Reform, under the name of the person at its head ,made some amendments concerning the entire curriculum from elementary to secondary level. This change was a reaction of increasing negative reports made by scholars and specialists in the field of education as well as the French linguist Grandguillaume. They all criticized the deterioration of the Algerian system of education. The Ministry of Education stated that such modifications were unavoidable and necessary because of the deep political, social, economic and cultural changes that modified the philosophy of the Algerian society creating much discomfort. In order to be functional, the educational system had to adapt new objectives so as to prepare the coming generations and enable them to take part in this new globalizing world.

“The Algerian renovated school, first landmark in learning the Culture of democracy and the best guarantor of social cohesion and national unity, ensures the formation of a citizen with incontestable marks, faithful to their principles and values but also capable of understanding the world around them »

(Extract from the speech by President Bouteflika when launching the CNRSE-May 2001)

For the teaching of languages the Commission undertook considerable changes too. French started to be taught from the second grade in elementary school that from 2003. One year later, i.e. 2004, its teaching was delayed to the third grade. For the teaching of English, it knew an advance of one year, i.e. from the 7th grade in intermediate school.

3/Reasons of the Failure of English in the Algerian Primary Schools:

It can be argued that there are three major patterns regarding the causes of the failure of English in the Algerian elementary schools.

1-**the sociolinguistic situation** in Algeria and hence the attitudes of Algerians towards the learning of the two prevailing foreign languages, i.e. French and English. Algerians are deeply attached to the French language as a result of more than 100 years of colonization .Yet, after decolonization of the country, neither the elite nor policy makers nor the population get rid of this language which is deeply rooted in the society. Consequently, when English was introduced as a second choice with French, only 15% of the population chose English,. Nevertheless, some Wilaya such as Tizi-ouzzou and Bedjaya never chose it.

It is not surprising for them to give privilege to the language they already know. Algerians find that French is more important to the country for national and international communication. It is a fundamental link language between people of different ethnic/linguistic backgrounds in some parts of Algeria (sometimes before MSA and AA).

2- that **the rationale behind the** introduction of this experiment was not for pedagogical purposes. But there were other considerations taken by policy makers. In fact, the timing of this project implementation explains this reality. The 90s in Algeria was a sensitive period. Nationalism was at its highest zeals. This ideology perpetuates the slogan: the one nation one language.

Islamists tried to eradicate some elements of the Algerian identity such as: Amazighity and the existence of the French language. Supporters of the Arabization Policy were against the teaching of French. Therefore, they tried every means to get rid of this language in expense to another competing language that was English. This language enjoyed acceptance within the Algerian population as being a neutral one publically demanded. The process of Arabization, besides the implementation of EFL as a choice or instead of French was to put an end to the hegemony of the colonial

language. Yet, as Miliani (2000) declared *“language planning cannot proceed by elimination or rejection.”* (Miliani 2000:15)

According to Miliani, language planning was then political and a matter of individual decisions rather than obeying to educational objectives and criteria. He also believes that the introduction of English as a first language was not actually successful in terms of choice, which reflected the gap between the educational decisions and the expectations of the people who were not informed about this project. Indeed, in 1995-1996, there were 3197 pupils who registered in classes of English as a first language, and 834 in 1997-1998. Three years after the decision, in 1996, the number of registered pupils choosing English was much lower than that of pupils opting for French: 60,000 registered over four years against 2 million pupils respectively (Miliani 2000:23). This experience witnessed an end and French gained its initial place as the first foreign language at elementary schools.

Thus, it is acknowledged that French cannot be excluded easily from the elementary curriculum. Besides, this language has always been present in the child's daily life before going to school. He acquires some-though limited-knowledge of this language. Though respondents admire English and their attitudes towards this language are positive. In particular, respondents have great interest in English due to the international stature of the language in the world. English is also significant for its weight in international business, trade, commerce, and for access to knowledge science and technology. Algerians consider it as the first language that should be studied in earlier grades, but top-down decisions taken by policy-makers impose the reality of the role of French as being the only foreign language that pupils should learn and master.

Therefore, there is a need to develop a systematic language policy that aims at fostering positive attitudes towards the English language. This could be done concomitantly with initiatives to enhance the prestige of this language, especially in the area of corpus planning

and prestige planning. Initiatives should be encouraged in local contexts, i.e. micro language planning could solve the problems of languages in Algeria according to the people's needs and international constraints. Hence, it is legitimate to ask whether

population accept the French language as the only privileged foreign language in the country even though its prestige is diminishing if compared with English.

3-The inappropriateness of planning was an important reason that led to the failure of English in elementary schools.. There was neither information about the project, nor clarifications concerning the pupils' study career in coming years. In a country where French is used in public spheres such as: banks, post offices, workplaces, these learners cannot fill-in a formulaire in French. The problem is dramatic and learners feel deception in regard to this situation. On the other hand, their proficiency in English language is low as well. The majority of them stopped learning English as FL1 at different levels. Consequently, they master neither English as their FL1, nor French as FL2.

Conclusion:The above mentioned problems reflect the unsoundness planning of the project. Unlike other countries that adopted the same experiment, Algerian policy makers did not take language-in-education policy patterns such as community policy, resources policy, and many other elements into consideration while implementing a new language-in-education project.

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