

PLURILINGUALISM AND THE STATUS OF FRENCH IN THE ALGERIAN PROFILE

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Abstract

Today Algeria is known for its sociolinguistic diversity because there are many languages used by the Algerian speakers in their daily life. However, this diversity is still neglected by the Algerian authorities since they consider Arabic as the only official and national language of the country. In reality, the Algerians use classical Arabic, French, Algerian Arabic and Berber in different contexts and for different purposes. The contact between these languages triggers various phenomena such as code switching, bilingualism, diglossia and borrowing. This paper will provide a brief discussion of the history of Algeria with the successive invaders who ruled the country at different periods of time. It will also shed some light on the linguistic profile of Algeria showing the diversity of languages with a special focus on the French language which enjoys a prestigious place in the Algerian society. We will also have a look at the Arabisation policy undertaken by the Algerian authorities since the independence of the country. Finally the paper will then discuss the status of French after the independence and the domains in which it still retains a good place. To sum this abstract, we can say that the objective of this work will be to provide a general vision of the Algerian multilingualism within a sociolinguistic paradigm.

Keywords: Algeria, language planning, Arabisation, Multilingualism, Plurilingualism, Code Switching, and diglossia.

الملخص

تعرف الجزائر اليوم بتعدد اللغوي وذلك بسبب استعمال المواطن للمجموعة من اللغات في حياته اليومية. ولكن هذا التعدد اللغوي لا زال غير معترف به من طرف السلطات الجزائرية حيث تعتبر اللغة العربية هي اللغة الرسمية و الوطنية الوحيدة في حين ان الجزائريين يستعملون اللغة العربية الفصحى الفرنسية، اللغة العربية الدارجة و الامازيغية حيث تستعمل هذه اللغات لعدة اغراض و في عدة مواضع. التقاء هذه اللغات ادى الى توليد مجموعة من الظواهر اللغوي على رأسها الازدواجية اللغوية ، والمزج اللغوي .

في هذه الدراسة القصيرة سنتطرق الى تاريخ الجزائر مع ذكر كل المستعمرين الذين مروا في مراحل مختلفة من التاريخ كما اننا سنلقي بعض الضوء على التعدد اللغوي في الجزائر مع التأكيد على اللغة الفرنسية التي تمتلك مكانة خاصة في المجتمع الجزائري . زيادة على ذلك سنخوض في بعض سياسات التعريب التي اتبعتها السلطات الجزائرية منذ استقلال البلاد . وفي الاخير ، يمكننا القول ان الهدف الاساسي من هذا البحث المتواضع هو اعطاء نظرة عامة عن التعدد اللغوي في الجزائر بمنظور اللسانيات الاجتماعية .

الكلمات المفتاحية : تاريخ الجزائر ، سياسة التعريب ، الازدواجية اللغوية والمزج اللغوي

1. Introduction

The Algerian society represents one of the complex multilingual societies in the world, like many other countries which faced a linguistic problem after its independence. This problem consisted on whether to preserve the language of the French colonisers beside the national language (bilingualism: French-Arabic) or to reintroduce the Arabic language of as the only language of state and society (Arabisation: Arabic). However, the Algerian authorities preferred a rapid language policy: Arabisation. The latter was aimed to create a monolingual

nation by seeking to restore the role and place of Arabic. The decision makers wanted firstly to establish their identity through the language and join the Arab Muslim world, and secondly to modernize through industrialization and transfer of Western technology.

As a result, the Arabisation policy split the country into two opposing groups, the first one in favour of monolingualism since they wanted to elbow out the colonisers' language and restore Arabic which is the language of Islam, the second group preferred bilingualism because they believed in modernization and the to access economic development.

The Algerian authorities did not admit the linguistic diversity of the country and preferred monolingualism. It was only in the 1996 Constitution that they recognised the Algerian identity as having 'Arabic', 'Islamic' and 'Amazigh' components. Details about the above mentioned events will appear in the paper.

2. Historical background

North Africa which is constituted by present day Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Libya was called Minor Africa because of its separation from the east and the south of the continent by the huge desert. This part of the continent was originally inhabited by the Berbers who are considered to be the indigenous people in North Africa; the latter were made of different tribes.

A long time ago, North Africans witnessed several successive invasions but they succeeded to preserve their cultural heritage, their language and their power. The name "Berber" given to the North African people by the Romans came from Latin "barbarian" meaning 'an alien land or people'

As stated above, North Africa including Algeria has been the centre of interest for many invaders who came either from the north or the east but never from the south. Those invaders were the Phoenicians (later known as the Carthaginians), the Romans, and the Vandals who destroyed the Roman Empire, the Byzantines and finally the Arabs.

To study the history of Algeria, one has to go back to Classical Antiquity. First with the kingdom of Numidia which was situated on the eastern part of modern Algeria, bordered by Mauritania to the west, Tunisia to the east, the Sahara Desert to the south and the Mediterranean Sea to the north. Two major tribes lived in Numidia; the Massylii in the east and the Masaesyli in the west. The former under the rule of King Gala allied with Carthage, the latter ruled by Syphax allied with Rome. However, during the Second Punic War, King Massinissa of the eastern Massylii turned to be the ally of Rome, and Syphax switched and backed Carthage. After the Roman victory in the war against the Carthaginians in 201BC,

Massinissa became the King of all Numidia. It is during his rule that Numidia became very prosperous and culturally developed.

The Phoenicians were traders who debarked on the North African coasts around 1000 B.C; they founded the city of Carthage in 822 (present day Tunisia). They built some important trading post in Hippo (modern Annaba), Rusicade (modern Skikda), Algiers and Tangier. They had no interest in Africa as a resource and left the interior of the territory for the Berbers who managed to keep their cultural heritage and language intact from any influence. The Phoenicians used **Punic** which is a Hamito-Semitic language linked to Hebrew and Arabic

Carthage and Rome were the greatest powers at that time; they lived in a continuous struggle to dominate each other. The war between those rivals witnessed three phases which were given the name of Punic Wars.

During the First Punic War (264-241 B.C), the Romans defeated the Carthaginians and took control over Sicily in Italy. In the Second Punic War (218-202 B.C) the Carthaginians lost Spain, and Carthage was reduced to become a small and weak country. Finally, during the Third Punic War (149-146 B.C), the Romans began a siege over Carthage that lasted three years, reducing the number of its inhabitants from 250,000 to 50,000 inhabitants in 146 B.C. Those 50,000 survivors became slaves and Carthage was destroyed and burnt.

During the Phoenician rule, the wealthy merchants possessed big areas of land which were cultivated by their slaves, but the rest of the land belonged to the native inhabitants of North Africa. However, when the Romans established themselves on the African ground, large areas were taken as state property and grants of land were made for the citizens and ex-soldiers, taxes were imposed on the peasants who cultivated their small lands. Later on, those peasants were dislodged from their best lands, and they were obliged either to leave the Roman territory to live in the mountains or to remain where they were born to work for their masters as labourers. As a consequence to that inequality, the population was divided into two classes; the first class included those who benefited a lot from the Roman rule like landlords, merchants, soldiers and artisans. The second class was made of peasants, slaves and labourers, they benefited very little from the Roman rule. Those people used **Punic or Berber** as their language and lived in poor villages outside the city.

Berbers organised themselves into small bands and started to attack and pillage the plains because the Romans imposed heavy taxes on them. This led to the risk to depopulate

the towns. The Roman Empire weakened by its internal problems became an easy target for its enemies.

The Vandals, who belonged to Germanic tribes and succeeded to bring the Roman rule to its end, came originally from the Baltic. In 411, they settled in Northern Spain, but few years later they were pushed southward by the Visigoths who were more powerful than them. In 429, the Vandals crossed the Straits of Gibraltar with 80,000 persons. They did not face any resistance from the local population which allowed them to continue their advance. King Genseric reached the richest Roman provinces pillaging and burning them.

In 435, Rome accepted Genseric's conquest and established him on the lands he had conquered. The Vandals were conscious that the Romans could not stop their advance, moved forward and conquered Carthage in 439 without any resistance.

In 455 Genseric invaded Italy, reached and captured Rome plundering and looting treasures, especially the Sacred Vessels of Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem which Titus had stolen four centuries ago. Genseric distributed lands to his soldiers and kept the lion's share for himself. During this period, Berbers represented a real threat to the Vandals' rule since they became more organised, and raided on the plains and towns.

The Vandal rule of North Africa did not last long because they were defeated by the Byzantines. In 533, ordered by his Emperor Justinian, General Belisarius sailed from Constantinople to conquer North Africa; he succeeded to enter Carthage unopposed. The Vandals have all disappeared after their collapse. North Africa turned to be a province of Byzantium under the rule of the Emperor of the East. The latter followed the same policy of his predecessors by imposing heavy taxes on the local population.

During the Byzantine rule, the Nomad tribesmen became more powerful and they increased their attacks on the town and cities. Justinian's rule did not last more than a century because of his bad policy based on the imposition of heavy taxes on the poor citizens and his persecution to the Arians. This strategy showed its weaknesses and soon brought the Byzantines rule to its end. The Arabs were the new conquerors of North Africa.

2.1. The Arab Conquest:

As stated above, the Byzantines rule of North Africa was marked by various problems such as corruption, incompetence and military weakness which made of them an easy target for their enemies, especially the Arabs during the Muslim conquest.

The Arab invasion of North Africa started from Egypt in 639, followed by Libya in 642 AD. In Alexandria the army faced hard defences which kept them fourteen months outside the city. By the end of this period, a treaty was signed between the Arabs and the Greeks who were given one year to leave the city peacefully. The Arabs continued their conquest by capturing Cyrenaica in 642 and Tripoli a year later.

In 670, a huge army led by Okba Ibn Nafi founded a garrison town at Kairawen which allowed them to defeat the Byzantines and capture Carthage in 698. The Islamisation and Arabisation of North Africa including Algeria were not easy tasks because the local inhabitants (i.e. the Berbers) resisted and revolted against the new invaders. By 711, the Umayyad forces ruled all of North Africa. In 739, the Kharijites were opposed to the rule of Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, the fourth caliph; they were joined by many Berbers who helped them in their struggle against the Umayyads.

In 750, the Muslim rule became under the Abbasids who took the caliphate to Baghdad and appointed Ibrahim Ibn Al Aghlab as governor in Al Kairawen. Between 761 and 909, the Rustomids under their leader Abderrahmene Ibn Rostom controlled most of the central Maghreb from Tihert. Other famous Berber dynasties have emerged in North Africa among which we mention the Fatimid Dynasty (909-1171), the Almoravid Dynasty (1062-1147) and the Almohad Dynasty (1147-1248).

2.2. The Spanish presence in Algeria:

After the collapse of all the Berber dynasties which have reigned over North Africa for many centuries, the Barbary Coast became the target of the two greatest powers of that time; Spain in the west and Turkey in the east.

The decisive war between Islam and Christianity was marked by the fall of Granada under the Spanish rule in 1492. Spain conquered many parts of the North African coast beginning with Melila (1496), Mers El Kebir (1505), Oran (1509), Bougie and Tripoli (1510), Algiers, Cherchel and Tenes. The Spaniards did not seek to extend their rule deep on the North African territory and remained on the coasts where they built fortified outposts.

The Spaniards left Algiers definitively in 1529, Bougie in 1554, but they remained in Mers El Kebir and Oran until 1708. In 1732, with their victory in the battle of Ain-el-Turk, the Spaniards re-conquered Mers El Kebir and Oran. The latter were sold by King Charles IV of Spain to the Bey of Algiers in 1792.

2.3. The Turkish presence in Algeria:

During the sixteenth century, the Turkish brothers Aruj and Kheir Eddine (known as Barbarossa) or red beard, were practising piracy along the North African coasts. In 1516, the King of Algiers demanded help from the Turkish brothers. Aruj conquered Algiers and sought the protection of the Ottoman Empire.

After the death of Aruj during his invasion of Tlemcen in 1518, Kheir Eddine succeeded him as military leader. The latter was given the title of Beylerbey (provincial governor) by the Ottoman sultan. For more than 300 years, Algeria was considered as an Ottoman province with Algiers as its capital. **Turkish** became the official language of the country. Algeria's modern boundaries were established by the Ottomans, who made of it the capital of privateering. Piracy was the main source of income for all the North African states and the Europeans were obliged to pay tributes to prevent attacks on their ships. During the seventeenth century, the Ottoman piracy increased in the Mediterranean Sea which led to the war with the USA known as the First (1801-1805) and Second Barbary Wars (1815).

The Ottoman rule of North Africa, especially Algeria lasted more than three centuries. It was brought to an end by the French occupation of Algeria in 1830; then Tunisia became a French protectorate in 1881, followed by Morocco in 1912. Italy took Libya from the Turks in 1912.

2.4. The French invasion of Algeria:

The reason behind the French invasion of Algeria was what most historians called "the fan stroke event". This incident happened in 1827, when the Turkish ruler of Algiers Dey Hussein, demanded from the French consul Pierre Duval to pay the French debts taken as food supplies during the Napoleonic wars. On 29th April, 1827, Duval refused to give satisfactory answers to the Dey who stroke the French consul with his fan.

Charles X considered this event as a slight to his consul, and decided to blockade the city of Algiers for three years. On 14th June, 1830, more than 37000 soldiers with 500 ships landed in Sidi Ferruch to invade Algeria. The French troops were faced by furious resistance from the Algerian inhabitants led by Emir Abdelkader, Cheikh El Mokrani, Cheikh Bouamama, Lala Fatma N'Soumer and others. In 1848, the French conquest of Algeria was complete when the last Touareg tribes were conquered. Algeria became an integral part of France with representatives at the French National Assembly. It is assumed that more than

50.000 French people immigrated to Algeria between 1825 and 1848, and thousands of European settlers came from Spain, Italy and Malta. The latter were largely peasants, farmers and workers who came to farm the Algerian fertile lands.

The French authorities followed a very harsh policy with the inhabitants of Algeria by confiscating lands from their owners, and impoverishing the population. They intended to eradicate the Algerian identity using all tools and methods; one way of doing this was to establish French as the language of the country in all domains. In addition, they destroyed some of the koranic schools and severely controlled the rest. They limited the teaching of Classical Arabic in an attempt to avoid awakening the national consciousness which would lead the Algerians to ask for their rights and expel the invaders.

As a result of that policy of repression, the social situation of Algerians degraded, literacy plummeted and much of the population was uprooted since their lands were taken from them by the French colonists.

Algerian nationalism started after World War I when a group of educated people founded the FLN (National Front of Liberation), and the National Algerian Movement.

On May 08th, 1945, the Algerians went out in the streets to ask for their national claims to the French army after being allied with them during the Second World War. The latter faced the crowd of people with their arms murdering more than 45000 civilians in Setif, Guelma and Kherrata. After that massacre, the Algerians drew the conclusion that all what was taken by force could only be recuperated by force, so they began to organise themselves for the war which would give them their independence.

On November 01st, 1954, the Algerian War of independence was launched by the National Liberation Front. It was very violent and cruel from both sides because the Algerians were determined to get their freedom and the French colonisers did not want to lose their best colony in Africa. The war lasted 08 long years in which the Algerian citizens witnessed all kinds of harsh treatments and massacres from the outsiders. However, all what they suffered from, provided them with solidarity and unity to defend their land and expel the colonisers.

After long negotiations with France, the FLN signed a cease-fire on March 18th, 1962 at Evian, and agreed to make a referendum to decide about their future. The referendum resulted in the declaration of the Algerian independence on July 03rd, 1962, but the Algerian nationalists decided to make it on July 05th representing the same date when the French troops occupied Algeria.

2.5. The Post Colonial Era:

After being colonised for 132 years, Algeria got its independence on July 5th, 1962. It was very urgent to take the necessary measures to regain its Arab- Muslim identity.

Like all the newly independent countries, Algeria's sociolinguistic situation was very complicated since the authorities were obliged to choose among the languages present in the country one language which would represent all the Algerians. This choice was not an easy task.

Under the first government led by President Ahmed Ben Bella, Arabic was chosen to be the sole national and official language of Algeria because it was the language of the Holy Quran and Islam. On October 05th, 1962, Ben Bella asserted that "Arabic will regain its rank".¹

On June 19th, 1965, President Ben Bella was overthrown by his defence minister colonel Houari Boumedienne. The latter followed the same policy as his predecessor; he initiated the process of Arabisation because he wanted Algeria to join the Arab world.

In 1968, President Boumedienne declared that:

"Without the recuperation of this essential and important element which is the national language, our efforts will remain useless, our personality incomplete and our entity a body without soul" ²

The Arabisation process was spread in all domains of life starting from education to administration and moving to different sectors. Arabic was intended to replace French which dominated the Algerian linguistic environment for more than 130 years of colonisation.

President Boumediennationalised oil and natural gas companies in Algeria in 1971, this was very beneficial to the country during the 1973 oil crisis which resulted in higher export earnings.

After the death of President Houari Boumedienne on December 27th, 1978, Colonel Chadli Bendjedid succeeded him at the head of the republic. During his rule, education was extended nation wide raising the literacy rate from less than 10% to more than 60%. This period was also marked by the Berbers' protests in 1980 against the making of the Arabic language as the only official and national language of the country. In 1986, the Algerian economy suffered a lot when the world oil prices collapsed, and plunged the country into deeper recession. The 1988, riots in Algiers, Oran, Annaba and other cities, led by thousands

of young men and women, obliged the ruling regime to make a series of constitutional reforms in 1989. These reforms allowed opposition parties and guaranteed workers the right to go on strike.

2.6. Algeria during the 1990s

During this period Algeria was marked by political, social and economic instability which led to an armed confrontation between the Algerian government on the one side, and on the other side, the Islamic armed groups. This was described by the foreign press as a civil war in which more than 100,000 Algerians have been killed from both sides from 1992 to 2002. Many reconciliation attempts have been tried, but with no success. Violence and terrorism increased during the 1990s by Islamic armed groups (GIA and GSPC).

Some important events also took place during this period. Arabic was re-confirmed in the Constitution of 1996 as the “only” national and official language, and that it had to be generalised and used in all state sectors by July 1998. The Law also stated that it was strictly forbidden to use any foreign language in official deliberations, debates and meetings. This law did not please the Berber language proponents, who claimed that the law was passed at the expense of minority languages, namely Berber, and therefore viewed the Arabisation policy as undemocratic and unjust.

2.7. The National Reconciliation period (2000 – present)

Abdelaziz Bouteflika became the president of the republic after winning the presidential elections held in April 1999. All the other candidates have withdrawn before the vote claiming electoral fraud. During his first mandate, president Bouteflika took the responsibility to bring back peace to Algerians, and granted amnesty to the armed wing of the FIS party after a referendum approved by the majority of the population in 2000. Since then, violence has decreased but some terrorists continued to attack civilians and government buildings.

The issue of the Tamazight language and identity increased in significance especially after the extensive Kabyle protests in 2001. The latter claimed the recognition of the Tamazight language as a national and official language. The government had responded with concessions including the naming of Tamazight as a national language and teaching it in schools.

In April 2004, Bouteflika was re-elected president for the second mandate after winning the presidential elections. His ex- Prime Minister Ali Benflis accused the government of

massive fraud in the elections. For his second term at presidency, president Bouteflika promised the Algerians that he would solve the problem of the Berber region after the death of a youth by the gendarmerie national and free women from restrictive family codes. During this period, the Algerian economy has improved but problems such as unemployment, housing and bureaucracy were persistent. A year later, in October 2005, the Algerians voted for the national reconciliation which granted amnesty to all Islamists and military officials who were involved in the country's bloody civil war.

To sum up this historical background about Algeria, we can say that all the successive invaders who ruled the country during different periods of time have all participated in a way or another in the sociolinguistic diversity of Algeria in its present day.

3. Preview of the linguistic situation of Algeria:

Because of its complex history, with the many invaders who settled on its territory, Algeria's linguistic environment is characterised by its linguistic diversity. Today we witness presence of four languages namely: Classical Arabic (CA), Algerian Arabic (AA), Berber (B) and French (F). We shall shed some light on each one of them alone.

3.1. Classical Arabic

Just after the independence of the country in 1962, the Algerian authorities especially the Nationalists wanted to regain the Arab and Muslim identity which was possible only through the establishment of Arabic as the sole national and official language of the country. Arabic was aimed to replace French which was the official language during the colonisation period. The Algerian Nationalists have launched various Arabisation campaigns in all domains starting from education to administration, media and economics. However, this process (i.e. the Arabisation) split the Algerians into two opposing camps; the first one was in favour of this process since its members wanted to get rid of any kind of the colonial heritage, at the same time they aimed at restoring the Algerian national personality. The second group included those who were against the Arabisation process because they thought that the choice of Arabic means a backward step, and that this language was not suitable for the development of the country for it was not equipped to communicate modern knowledge.

Historically speaking, we can say that the Arabisation process in the Maghreb started a long time ago with the introduction of Islam and the Arabic language during the seventh

century. These two elements which were brought by the Muslim armies made several changes in the social, economic and linguistic character of the North African inhabitants.

Another important remark concerning Classical Arabic is that, despite the prestigious place it occupies in the hearts and minds of all the Arabs since it is the language of the Holy Quran, it lacks vitality and no one in the Arab world is brought up speaking Standard Arabic as a mother tongue: an Arab child's mother tongue will be the regional or social variety of Arabic of its home region, while Standard Arabic, if it is mastered at all, is learnt formally at school or at home as a part of the child's education.

To sum up, we can say that the most important aim of the Arabisation campaigns since independence was to elbow out the French language which has pervaded all domains in the Algerian society.

3.2. French:

The presence of the French language in Algeria was due to the colonisation era which lasted more than 130 years. During that period, the invaders imposed their language on the indigenous inhabitants of Algeria by making French the official language of the country and giving Arabic the status of a foreign language. Although French is considered as a foreign language and no official status is given to it in Algeria today, it remains widely used in many sectors including education, administration, media and economy.

When talking about the presence of the French language in Algeria, we ought to say that the French settlers intended to assimilate the Algerians by bringing them to their culture and language. They made a lot of changes in the educational and social levels. The first step they did was to control the educational system in Algeria by closing some of the Quranic schools which were widespread before the French arrival in the country. Moreover, they imposed French as the only language of instruction and made it the official language of the country. Accordingly, the Arabic language lost its status and prestige. The aim behind that severe policy undertaken by the French colonisers was to spread illiteracy among the indigenous inhabitants of Algeria and thus they would never ask for their rights.

Despite the Arabisation process which was launched since the independence of Algeria, the French language continues to play an important role in the Algerian society in various domains, and it is still regarded as the language of modernity and development.

3.3. Algerian Arabic:

Algerian Arabic is a vernacular form derived from classical Arabic; it represents the mother tongue of the majority of the Algerians who use it in their daily life interactions. It is also called “Daridja”, the latter is a melting pot of various languages which have existed on the Algerian soil through different periods of its history. After the Arab invasion of North Africa, other successive invaders followed them such as the Spaniards, the Turks and finally the French. Algerian Arabic inherited a lot from the vocabulary and the syntax of the invading languages. From a lexical point of view, some Turkish influence words still exist in A.A such as: maadnous (parsley), braniya (aubergine), tobsi (plate), etc. Spanish words include words like fichta (feast), spedrina (baskets), bogado (lawyer), essekouila (primary school). When it comes to the French language, we notice that it has the largest lexical influence; indeed, many French words are adapted to the Algerian Arabic: forchita (fork: ‘fourchette’), miziriya (misery: ‘misère’), etc. Today this language is pervaded by the French language from which it has taken large amounts of borrowed words and expressions. In addition, the Algerians (Moroccans and Tunisians as well) tend to switch between A.A and French in their daily conversations depending on many non linguistic parameters such as interlocutor, topic, setting and situation.

Another remark concerning the Algerian colloquial Arabic is that it has no written form and no status because it was and it is still neglected by the Algerian authorities. Yet some linguists like Benrabah (1999) see Algerian Arabic as the best instrument for achieving modernity and reaching an authentic Algerian identity. Benrabah proposes to use this language as a teaching medium to make pupils feel more comfortable with its use.

3.4. Berber:

The Berber tribes were the ancient indigenous inhabitants of all North Africa. Despite the successive waves of invaders including the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Vandals, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Turks, the Spaniards, and finally the French, the Berbers have succeeded to preserve their Hemitic language, their culture and their traditions. The Berber languages (also called Tamazight) are found in many countries in Africa such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Libya, Egypt, Niger, Nigeria, Mali and Burkina Faso.³

The majority of Berber speakers are found in Morocco, they are dispatched in three different areas; in the Rif where the dialect Tarifit is used, in the centre Tamazight is used and Tachelhit in the south.

The second country in which Berber languages are found is Algeria. The majority of the Berber speakers are found in Kabylia, centred on prefectures of Tizi Ouzou and Bejaia, but also found in Bouira, Boumerdes, Borj Bouarréridj and Sétif, they use Kabyle variety. The Chaouia dialect (also called Tachawit or simply Chawi) is used in the Aures, Chenoua is found in Tipaza, Beni Snous dialect is used in Tlemcen, the Mzab variety is used in the Mzab valley, and finally Tamahaq or Tamachaq is used among the Touareg of the Hoggar.

In the other countries, the Berber speakers are found in very small numbers such as in Tunisia, Mauritania, Egypt and Libya. The latter represent minority groups in these countries because of the process of Arabisation that started with the invasion of the Arabs at the beginning of the seventh century A.D.

Ancient Berbers used Tifinagh as a writing system for their language, but that system was limited in use because of the presence of other foreign alphabets such as Punic, Latin and later Arabic. Recent researches have discovered some Tifinagh inscriptions in Libya and in the Algerian Sahara.

During the 1980s, many efforts were made for the elaboration, standardisation and codification of Berber in Algeria. One may cite Salem Chaker and Mouloud Mammeri who tried to develop a standardised grammar for Tamazight.

Before its recognition as a national language by the Algerian authorities on May 08th 2002, the question of the Berber identity and language has raised many problems during the 1980's and 1990's. However, the new status gained after four decades of independence did not please the Berberophone speakers as they sought equality between Arabic and their language which was not officialised.

Nowadays, Moroccan Berbers use the Arabic script to transcribe the different Berber varieties. However, in Algeria, it is the Latin alphabet which has been chosen by the Berbers to show their opposition and resistance to the Arabisation process led by the Algerian authorities.

3.5. English:

The presence of the English language in Algeria is due to its world wide status as a global lingua franca. It has become the language of the world because it represents the scientific and technological developments. Few years ago, the Algerian authorities designed and enforced new educational programmes to promote English and limit and reduce the impact of French. Today, English is taught from the first year of the middle school. However, only a small number of Algerians speak English, especially the younger generations.

4. Bilingualism in Algeria:

If we want to talk about bilingualism in Algeria, we have to go back to the history of our country because it provides us with all the necessary answers which we may ask about the different languages present on its territory. Berber and Arabic were the only languages used until 1830 when the French colonised the country introducing their culture and with it their language. The intruders did their best to implement their language in Algeria, so they controlled the teaching of Arabic and imposed French as the official language of the country and the sole medium of instruction. As a result, some of the Algerian inhabitants were obliged to learn French, while the majority was deprived from any instruction.

Today Algerian bilingualism can take three different forms namely: CA/ F bilingualism, AA/ F and B/ F bilingualism. In such situations, the varieties are in parallel distribution which means that they are used for the same purposes. We notice that French is part of these three forms.

As far as the Algerian bilingualism is concerned, we find that there are dominant bilinguals, those speakers who learned only French during the colonisation era, are dominant bilinguals because their mastery of the French language is better than the other languages. In contrast to the generations who are born after the independence their dominance is on Classical Arabic. Only few persons who learned French and classical Arabic at the same time have equal competence in both languages and they are called balanced bilinguals.

Moreover, we can also find another type of bilingualism which is represented by active and passive bilinguals, because there are some Algerian speakers who have the ability to understand spoken or written forms of both languages but cannot read or write them. On the contrary, other individuals have the ability in both receptive and productive skills which allow them to use the four skills listening and speaking, reading and writing.

The last remark concerning the Algerian bilingualism is that it is a successive bilingualism because the majority of the Algerians acquire the second language beyond the age of three years except for children of mixed marriages.

All in all, we can say that the Algerian bilingualism is a special case for it takes different forms and it is practiced at different degrees of proficiency.

5. Diglossia:

This phenomenon emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, records show that the term diglossia was first used by Krumbacher (1902)⁴ to describe the Greek situation. Then it

was used by William Marçais in 1930 to whom this notion was acknowledged under the name of “diglossie”. This notion was introduced to the English language literature by a very influential figure in the history of linguistics who was Charles Ferguson in 1959. His definition of diglossia is as follows:

“DIGLOSSIA is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any section of the community for ordinary conversation.”

Ferguson has chosen four cases of societies to study and called the languages used in these societies the defining languages. He studied French and Haitian Creole in Haiti, the literary variety (Katharévusa) and the vernacular (Dhimotiki) in Greece, Classical and colloquial Arabic in the Middle East, and High German and Swiss German in Switzerland. In the four societies studied there were two genetically related varieties separated by their functions.

Ferguson based his study on Arabic diglossia, in which he claims that there are two forms in use, the first form is Classical Arabic representing the high variety (H) and the second one is the vernacular low (L). The H variety is reserved for use in formal situations like university lectures, sermons in mosques, political speeches and personal letters. On the contrary, the vernacular is used in informal situations between friends and family members, in giving instructions to servants, and in comedy. Contrary to the L variety which acquired at home and remains the language of every day use, the H variety is acquired at school, and it is more prestigious because it carries with it a large body of literature, and is never used in ordinary situation.

Ferguson’s formulation of diglossia was criticised from different angles. He claims that diglossia is a stable situation, but it is not always the case because the low variety can replace high variety, the best example is what happened in Europe when Latin was the high variety and the Romance languages like French, Spanish and Italian which were considered as the vernaculars. However, during the Renaissance these vernaculars became languages and Latin moved backward until it disappeared.

Another remark concerning the Arabic diglossia is that through time a new form of language appeared which was given the name of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). This new form is used as the high variety, in addition it is different in the form and function from the low variety.

Ferguson described diglossia in terms of separation between the high and low varieties, but in reality another new form was born because of the contact between speakers of a low level of education with the high variety. This new form is known as “al-lugha al-wusta” (the middle language), which means that it is neither H nor L but it fulfills functions of both.

Kloss (1966 :138)⁵ proposes a new terminology. He uses “in-diglossia” to describe situations where the two varieties are genetically related, and “out-diglossia” to design situations where the two forms are unrelated.

As far as Algeria is concerned, there are four forms in use; Classical Arabic, Algerian Arabic, Berber and French. Classical Arabic being the high variety because it is the official language of the country and the language of the Holy Quran, Algerian Arabic and Berber represent the low varieties because they are the forms of daily use in informal situations. French is also considered as a high variety in Algeria since it is also used for formal purposes (i.e. in administrations and public services) the same as Classical Arabic. There are two kinds of diglossia, the first one is known under the name of intra-lingual diglossia in which the two forms are genetically related such as Classical Arabic and Algerian Arabic, and the other kind is called inter-lingual diglossia where the two forms descend from different languages such as Algerian Arabic and French. The distinction between the high and low varieties has not been related just to vocabulary and grammar, but it has been also used for a number of other characteristics that separate these two forms such as function, prestige, literary heritage, acquisition, standardisation and stability.

In the case of Algeria there is a new tendency to use Algerian Arabic in the written form, for instance in newspaper caricatures, plays and literary prose, and sometimes in personal letters.

6. Language policies of Algeria

Just after the independence, the Algerian government undertook a language reform which had as an aim to re-implement Classical Arabic in the education and the public administration. This policy can be summarised in one word: ‘Arabisation’, a policy of monolingualism in favour of Classical Arabic as the only official language and no other measures were taken to

protect and develop the other existing languages. By this process the Algerian authorities intended to elbow out the French which was imposed by the colonisers and replace it by the Arabic language which is the language of Islam and the Arab identity.

In 1993, President Chadli Bendjedid made an attempt to substitute French by English; English was introduced into the primary schools as a strong concurrent language to French. According to Grandguillaume (2001), no real linguistic objective was intended by this operation since the decision makers' aim was the suppression of French than the promotion of English.

Because the question of the Berber identity and language has raised many problems during the 1980's and 1990's, the Algerian authorities declared Berber as a national language on May 08th, 2002. However, the new status gained after four decades of independence did not please the Berberophone speakers as they sought equality between Arabic and their language which was not officialised.

In March 2000, the CNRSE (National Commission on Reforming the Education), was created, which had the aim to diagnose the components of the educational system, vocational training and modernise the whole education sector.

To conclude, we can say that the Arabisation policy is not all negative because its major goal was to make the Arabic language a true instrument of thought and work to accomplish the requirements of time and overcome the prejudice of language literature and poetry.

7. The current role and status of French

Despite of the successive Arabisation campaigns led by the Algerian authorities since the independence of the country, the French language is still omnipresent in the daily life of Algerians, French is found, next to Arabic, on street names, and on directions signs both in towns and on major roads. Many cafes and shops, banks and other businesses have their signs written in both French and Arabic, the same is true for hospitals, schools and local and government buildings. French is also found in a great number of official documents such as bills for utilities and taxes, doctors' prescriptions and most medicines, postage stamps, coins and bank notes. In addition, there are several radio and television channels broadcasting in French. The latter is taught from the second year of primary school. French is regarded as a salient device to pursue higher education, especially abroad, or to get a good job. Despite half a century of Arabisation, the French language retains a strong physical presence in the region.

8. Conclusion

This brief work has shed a bird's eye on the history of Algeria starting from Classical Antiquity until the Arabs arrival in the region, focussing on the different invaders who ruled the region. It has also scrutinised the progression of the sociolinguistic landscape of the Algerian society with its languages namely: Classical Arabic, Algerian Arabic, Berber and French. The latter (i.e. French), in spite of being the last language introduced, it has had a widespread and far-reaching impact even after more than half a century after the independence.

Although, the French language is not recognised in any of the three countries of the Maghreb, it does enjoy a privileged status and is far from being just a foreign language.

The main conclusion to be dropped from this study is that the Algerian authorities still neglect the sociolinguistic diversity of the country, and that the Arabisation process did not bring the desired results for the decision makers and French retains an important linguistic influence in many significant domains.

To sum up this brief conclusion, we can say that the Algerian authorities are strongly invited to reconsider their decisions by admitting the sociolinguistic diversity of the Algerian society and making efforts to promote the vernaculars.

Notes

1. “ l'Arabe va retrouver sa place”
2. “...Sans la récupération de cet élément essentiel et important qu'est la langue nationale, nos efforts resteront vains, notre personnalité incomplète et notre entité un corps sans âme.
3. For more details see encyclopaedia of Islam (2009: 100)
4. See Beatens. Beardsmore (1986:29)
5. Cited in Schiffman, H, F (1998:143)

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