

Investigating Language Diversity And Language Evolution In Algeria: The Case Of Biskra Region

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The most important cases of language contact in Africa are those which came about as the result of European colonization. Long before the European colonial expansion, the North of the continent witnessed Roman, Ottoman, and Arab movements of settlement and immigration which led to varying linguistic compromise for the purposes of trade, barter and exchange. All of these occasions contributed to the creation of new communities in which the colonial languages came closer to the indigenous languages of the colonized. In extreme cases such as the Big Maghreb, contact led to the emergence of Creoles and indigenized languages. The best example of these is Algerian Arabic (AA) which is a blend of Berber, Roman, Arabic, Turkish and European vocabulary with unchanging grammatical rules of Classical Arabic. Our enquiry in this study is to uncover the reality of what we practically speak in Algeria as language (s), especially in the region of Biskra, and the position of the latter among the other languages in the country. We then intend to justify the community's linguistic needs and aspirations in terms of history, religion, politics, and the present rush to globalization. The results revealed that Algerian Arabic is the major means of communication and unity in Algeria though there are many language backgrounds. They also revealed that Arabic and Tamazight could preserve their status despite the influence of several other languages such as Roman, Spanish, Ottoman and French. The participants justified their choice of English by their legitimate need for more opportunities and openness to the world.

Keywords: language contact, European colonization, settlement and immigration, linguistic compromise, indigenized languages, Algerian Arabic (AA), the community's linguistic needs and aspirations

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Introduction

Biskra is a county in the south east of Algeria with a total population of approximately 600.000 and with vast natural resources, relying mainly on trade and agricultural products. It was in this context that the university where the researchers work, Mohamed Kheider University, was set up in the 1980s by the ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. The faculty of letters and foreign languages continues, as it has often done, to place languages at the heart of its curriculum. The researchers joined the staff of English department in 2005 and 2007 respectively and began to develop particular interests in the area of language development, language and literature, language teaching and language assessment. These interests have led to much discussion about the needs of students of English at university and about the types of curricular, teaching and learning methods, as well as teaching materials that should be used.

For these reasons, the researchers decided to carry out this study with special focus on the use of Arabic, varieties of the Berber language family (eg: Tamazight and Chawi), French and English from the perspectives of the learners of English in the context of Biskra region.

The overall aim of the study and the research questions

The overall aim of this study was to investigate the status and interaction of languages in Algeria in general and in the region of Biskra in particular. The specific aim of the study, however, was to confirm or refute the idea that language diversity in Algeria is the main source of language evolution. From the overall and the specific aims of the study, a number of research questions emerged:

01. Which language or languages do we actually speak in the country, and how do they interact?
02. What, if any, are the distinctive linguistic features between the learners of English at Biskra University with regard to their original language backgrounds?
03. What are some learner's beliefs about their own learning context and what strategies and resources do they use in their learning of English?
04. How can the present linguistic

01. context of a sample of a region be beneficial and meet the needs and interests of the majority of the Algerian learners of English?
02. What can we, as teachers, learn from the linguistic diversity in our context and apply to the design of teaching materials for our learners of English?

Literature Review

Education in Algeria: An overview

Prior to independence, education in Algeria was primarily designed to satisfy and meet the needs of the French settlers, and aimed at implementing the European cultural pattern. On the ground, the colonial academic education was completely exclusive and geared toward the training of the French colonial elite. At that time, official statistics estimated that only one-third of the school age Muslim children were enrolled in schools in the primary level. At the secondary and university levels, only 30% and 10% of students were enrolled respectively. French language was used as the only means of instruction, and Arabic, the language of the majority of the local inhabitants in the country, when taught, was relegated, and often offered to the locals as an optional foreign language. The taught curricular and their relevant teaching materials were totally biased, and sustained the colonial civilizational and cultural ideas. Vermeren (2009) summarizes the tenets of the framework of the colonial education system in Algeria before its independence and notes that:

Education was not a preoccupation of French colonization (in Algeria). Algeria's colonial history shows that, as we can read in the classical French history historiography about this period, there was no global approach to education. Academic education was reversed for the European students and students, and there was no public conception of education of and for the locals...In the view of the settlers, the locals had only to be educated to respect some rules, to understand a few of French words, to comply with sanitary laws, and to learn some technical skills (147).

A short time after the independence in 1962, the Algerian government inherited the remnants of an educational system focused on European content and conducted in a foreign language and by foreign teachers. Clark (2006) remarks that in the early 1960`s French was the language of the instruction

At the primary and the secondary levels and continued to be used in the post-secondary institutions. Their professors were mostly French, and the curricular and the teaching methods and models were French, too.

As mentioned earlier, during the post- independence era, the Algerian educational system was in complete disarray and enrolments in schools at all levels totaled only 85.000. The result was that the rate of illiteracy reached 90% among the Algerian population and this was the main reason of bad consequences (Berrabah, 1999). This situation was made more complex because of the critical environment where the operation of teaching took part. Classes were formed hastily and just through improvisation. A few schools were available and many of them were vacated homes of former French residents. Teachers were recruited without any targeted or specialized training. Unfortunately, this is a pretty bad description of an education system that proved inadequate to the challenges and aspirations of the newly-born nation.

For a country to succeed it requires an education system with high standard, which transmits and develops knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, and values from one generation to another, promotes respect for and engagement with learning, broadens horizons, and develops high expectations(Hopkins, 2006). To ensure all these targets, the Algerian government has since the mid -1960's, with the creation of the Ministry of Education, taken the opportunity to set out standards across an entire process of changes that sought to realize the aspirations of the society, and hence make the challenges of the country possible. Therefore, to move from the evidently underperforming French colonial education system that continued to prevail after the independence, the authorities put into place a set of measures. In this sense, the general approach was to advocate new policies, strategies, and programmes to drive school improvement. Indeed, this fairly crude approach to raising standards rested on a number of decisions like indigenizing, arabizing, and putting more emphasis on scientific and technical orientations to suit the urgent industrial and managerial demands of the developing country. In their specific manifestations, the new post-independent reforms were meant to enhance the role of the school as an agent of social change and realize the national objectives as improving literacy,

Providing free education for all citizens, making primary school enrolments compulsory for all the Algerian children, replacing the inherited colonial curricular with other ones with a more national-based contents, and increasing the number of the Algerian instructors. Berrabah (ibid, p. 11) synthesizes the outcomes of this new policy and states that:

During the decade (1965- 1975), the schooling rate raised surprisingly in quantity. In primary level, the number of enrolled students doubled from 1,200,000 to 2,750,000; from 100,000 to 450,000 in secondary schools and from 7000 to 50,000 at university level. The educational system witnessed the 'Arabization' of the first years of the primary school and the remaining years were still receiving instruction in the French language. It was the beginning of a gradual process encouraging 'Arabization' and the advent of a policy being in a charge of eliminating the bilingual classes from the primary and secondary schools.

In the course of these changes, in the 1970`s, the educational reform of 1976 came to mark the end of a phase that was characterized by the legacies of the French language with a growing Arabic in importance to a new phase that corresponded to the socialist central planning, called the national transition (Benrabah, 2007, p. 225). As a matter of fact, the reform of 1976 reorganized the primary and middle education into a nine-year basic education programme (Enseignement fondamental) for all children between the age of 6 and 16. This level of education led to the certificate of basic education (Brevet d`Enseignement Fondamental, or BEF). The successive grades of basic education were referred to as 1st to 9th AF. This reform extended the period of compulsory education from six years to ten years while the legislation of the time (the ordinance N: 76-35of April 16, 1976 stipulated that education at every level is provided free to all). Therefore, at the secondary level, students followed one of the three tracks-general, technical, or vocational. At this level, education lasted for three years and was organized into three core curricula in the first grade and split into three branches of education as from the 2nd grade: general, specialized (technology) and technical/ vocational education. Each branch included several streams. General secondary education and specialized education led to the Baccaulauréate of secondary education, whereas technical/ vocational secondary education led

To the technical Baccaauréate (Baccaauréat de technicien) (Grandguillaume, 2004). Besides, the reform of 1976 mandated that education is exclusive and is the main concern of the state. The result was that all private and denominational schools were abolished. For the authorities, the educational system is expected to care equality of access conditions without limitation other than individual faculties and the needs of society.

As a consequence to the reform of 1976, further in the 1980`s, officials claimed that a gigantic step was realized. They indicated that about four million students were enrolled in the mid-year basic education track at a time when 1% of all six years-old students were attending school. They added that the number of the Algerian teachers remarkably increased to attain 95% from the total number of the teachers that made-up the staff of the primary and the middle school levels. Such a number justifies the policy of the "Algerinization" of the education system adopted by political deciders during the 1970`s. The other policy of the 'Arabization' reached its optimum with this reform. Again, the deciders considered this second process as a major success to the education system, and a national gain to the whole society. Due to the 'Arabization' process, French was relegated to be taught merely as a foreign language and no longer got profit from the higher status it has had since the independence, introduced only in the third year. This process was culminated with the 'Arabization' of the Baccaauréate examination in the school year 1989-1990.

Though the reform of 1976 managed to achieve impressive gains, it proved notoriously to be fickle, the fact that serious shortcomings could be easily identified, mainly at two levels: the level of performance and the level of the system's overall architecture, organizational structures and operation. To this particular point, Grandguillaume (ibid: 12) refers to Benyaou (2002) to explain the reasons of this fiasco. The latter states that With regard to the performance of education system, although the major efforts have been made, the Algerian education system has a long way to meet the society's legitimate demands. Success rates are too low. Individual performance is also inadequate; the drop-out is very high. The state can no longer continue to earmark nearly one quarter of public expenditure on the education system without being highly demanding concerning its performance and its contribution to the country.

Apart from the political achievements of the reform of 1976 discussed earlier, it is very clear that Benyaou's words have come to uncover the reality on the ground and to figure out the dissatisfaction of a great majority of the public opinion on the failure of the adopted policy to realize the set out objectives and hence make true the aspirations of the society to have a qualitative and an efficient education for its children. New educational reforms were then needed to remedy the situation and make it possible to meet the demands and challenges of the 21st century.

In response to the raised claims, the Algerian government has acknowledged the need of reforms; and, in this respect, it has engaged itself in a novel process of revising the previous educational stages. A national reform commission of the educational system (CNRSE in French) was created in May 13th, 2000 by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. In its essence, this commission was invited to evaluate scientifically the educational system to obtain qualified, objective, and exhaustive diagnostic of all the constituent elements of this system, and to study, according to this evolution, the possibility of revising the whole educational system. In practical terms, the commission was in charge of suggesting a project that clearly defines the constituent components of a new educational policy.

In mid-March 2001, the commission advocated its report and recommended the principles that govern the Algerian educational system which were defined in the constitution, and explicated in the ordinance76-35. The new reform should take into consideration a set of parameters that are essential as constituent elements of the national development that education can contribute to provide qualified student generations. In this context, some of these parameters suggest that in:

- the advent of political pluralism, the educational system has to develop an ability for young generations to perceive the concept of democracy and all its values and attitudes that must be put in the service of society to adapt itself to modernity.
- a new national environment characterized by the abandonment of planned economy and the centralized management methods and the advent of the market economy with its socio-economical pressures, the educational system is meant to prepare the future citizen to live in this environment and to adapt itself to it.

- in the age of globalization, the educational system is expected to prepare suitably the individuals and the society for a pitiless competition in the 21st century when the prosperity of the nation depends on the integrated quantity and quality of the scientific knowledge and technological expertise , and
- the rapid development of scientific and technological knowledge in addition to the modern information and communication era, the impact of this development on the evolution of profession calls the educational system to base its programmes and pedagogical methods on the development of the analysis capacities, reasoning, proving, and synthesis that allow adaptation with this evolution of profession.

Indeed, the general recommendations, proposed by the National Commission, have provided a rich platform to educational practitioners to work out a set of practical measures to revise school cycles, curricular and programmes, and textbooks, and to promoting teachers as a means of enhancing the teaching-learning process. Moreover, within these recommendations, it was also stated that the government has set itself the task of legalizing private classes that existed in total vacuum and anarchy. And following the CNRSE suggestions, it was asked that French be introduced as the first mandatory foreign language in grade two (for 6-7 years old) of the primary cycle instead of starting it in grade four (for 8-9 years old) as had been the case in the previous reform of 1976. The commission added that it is more beneficial for students to study the scientific disciplines in secondary schools in French instead of Arabic (Sebti, 2001).

Since 2003, a big part of these recommendations has been implemented. Thus, the Ministry of National Education has initiated the re-make-up of all the curricular and the redesigning of new programmes. Also, textbooks have completely been innovated and this occurred for all the levels in the different cycles. A reconsideration of the teacher's general level and background has been revised through the process of continuous formation that teachers have to carry on in programmed in-training-services. And in order to overcome the problem of vacant posts that were occupied only by partial-time teachers for a long period of time, the authorities decided to recruit a big number

Of new teachers to meet the demands for teaching. As a consequence to these measures, Tamazight has been introduced to be taught as a subject in middle schools nationally. A year later, French was finally taught as the first mandatory foreign language in grade two of the primary cycle with three hours, and English as second mandatory foreign language. However, the introduction of French as the medium of instruction for scientific disciplines in secondary education was not approved. In August 2003, Article 06 of ruling N: 03-08(see Appendix1.3) legalized private schools and eliminated the chaos in this era of the educational sector that prevailed for a long time. Thus, it is within this context of change that the recent reforms of 2001 is taking part. Crucially, these reforms are attempting to regain identity, ensure personality growth of the young generation and lay the ground to access to modern technology. These objectives are expected to satisfy the requirements of the present time. Nonetheless, for many educational specialists in Algeria it is too early for these reforms to be observably evaluated and empirically verified because there is a need for some time to do that.

The Status of English and other languages in Algeria

The situation of English language in Algeria is characterized by a set of features ranging from the linguistic reality of the society to the multilingual nature of the context where a number of languages come to interplay. One of these features is that English has always been affected by the ferocious competition between Arabic, the national, official language of the country, and French, the inherited language from the colonial era, which is common in the daily communication and practice of the great majority of Algerians. On this situation, Grandguillaume, (2004, p. 04) says that:

With regard (to language policy) in Algeria, there are two trends: a trend toward 'Arabization' and a trend toward bilingualism. The trend towards 'Arabization' (and hence monolingualism) aims to place Arabic stamp on Algeria, and to instill a non-western identity. The trend towards bilingualism does not reject Arabic but remains attached to the idea of maintaining the French language, since not only is the country administered in French at the present, but French also gives Algeria access to modernization.

Arising out of this sensitive reality, it was very intricate for English to establish its status as an international language, and hence failed to gain more consideration within the Algerian society. The result of this situation was that this foreign language was completely marginalized compared with French.

The other feature is that since the country's independence in 1962, the subject of the language has been a huge political, social, and ideological issue in Algeria. This situation was maintained by the political decision makers towards the mother languages that are spoken in the Algerian society. That is, the Algerian authorities neither rejected, nor did they recognize those languages. Benrabah (2007, p. 229) sustains this reality, and notes that:

When Algeria gained its independence in July 1962, it was linguistically a pluralistic country. This was the result of its heritage including influences from Berbers, Phoenician, and Roman, Vandal, Byzantine, Moor, Arabic, Spanish, Ottoman and French. Its inhabitants spoke Algerian Arabic and Berbère or Tamazight in several local varieties and French. The government's policy overlooked the country's linguistic diversity, denied any status to the language spoken in Algeria.

Thus, the above idea again justifies that the Algerian authorities viewed the matter of the linguistic pluralism with suspicious, if not outright hostility. They remained resolutely opposed to any sort of competing languages. This negative attitude could easily explain the rejection of the policy of adopting an efficient linguistic strategy that aims at promoting the practice and use of foreign languages such as English.

A third feature that significantly affected the situation of the foreign languages in general, and English in particular is that the country has been engaged in a process of establishing the national language, Arabic, as a medium of instruction and as a tool to regain identity, ensure personality growth of the young generations and so forth. Benrabah, (2003, p. 11) converges with these particular objectives of the process of 'Arabization'. He states that:

In an indeterminable fight for the search of authenticity and identity, a linguistic policy was set-the policy of 'Arabization'. It was purposely carried out for a more practical social interaction and daily

Communication. The Ministry of Education intervened in the field of 'Arabization' process in a positive spirit leading to direct redefinition of a linguistic planning. The fields of interference of the government could be obvious at three levels: 1- in the teaching methods, 2- in the institution of the language, and 3- in the technical spheres in which the language is structured (linguistic layout).

However, though the process of 'Arabization' was intended to accelerate the democratization of schooling and provide facilities and capital to promote the national education system, it failed to yield a high status to foreign language, including English. Hence, French was postponed until grade four as the first mandatory foreign language, and English as the second mandatory foreign language in grade eight. Other foreign languages like Spanish, Italian, Russian, and German were simply dropped to be learnt as optional languages in middle schools.

Contrary to the reality of the terrain and to what has been illustrated so far, other features have come to support the assumption that lays more consideration of English in the Algerian society, and therefore, a strong drive to learn it. One of these features is that English language can stand as an efficient means of international communication. In this perspective, Hayane, (1989, p.45) posits that:

Above all, it had been common that English language has actually gained a very especial and prominent place and status among the Algerians. It is certainly a very prestigious language among students in schools, which is enjoyed because it makes them listen to music and talk to foreigners. It is the language that one can use wherever s/he goes.

In addition, to this, the use of English language in various domains like technology and computing is very useful. Cook (2003, p. 25) points out that:

In the recent years the growth of English has been further accelerated by a startling expansion in the quantity and speed of international communication, the rise of international operation, linked to expanding U.S power and influence, ensures and ever increasing use of English in business, films, songs, television programmes, and advertisement in English are heard and seen in many countries when it is not the first nor ever a second language.

An additional feature to what has been stated before is the pressures of globalization. Indeed, the philosophical underpinning of this phenomenon has led to a growing international literature on the subject of the English language in both academic and business fields. This is sustained by the belief that language would act as a bridge in international affairs and cooperation. Hsieh, (2010, p. 20) consolidates this argument and states that:

A main characteristic of contemporary global society is interrelation between numerous communities. This is reflected especially in the inter-reliance of global economics from which the concept of globalization has developed. In a world where distances of all sorts are much reduced and sometimes eliminated by transportation and communication technology, globalization is becoming relevant to any aspect of human behaviour. In our discussion of the impact of globalization on (English) language education policy, a typical and widely accepted perspective is recognized.

Therefore, the common view of a large portion of Algerians has completely evolved to pay a great importance to the status of English as foreign language. In its essence, this positive attitude has turned to be more pragmatically than ideologically oriented. In its practical manifestation, a growing voice of parents insists on the strong need to incorporate English language at early stages of learning.

Research Methodology

Data Collection Methods

The Questionnaire (s)

Two questionnaires were used as the main data collection method in this study. Researchers administer questionnaires because they help them to collect data in a short period of time. They also help them to deal with considerable numbers of respondents in different situations. Nevertheless, questionnaires may yield unreliable and invalid data if they are ill-constructed (Dornyei, 2003, pp. 9-10). Based on these considerations, we endeavoured to eliminate or, rather, lessen any possible bias by means of designing simple, clear, and well-ordered items (Bradburn, N. M. , S. Sudman, & B. Wansink, 2004, pp.3-6).

Classroom Observation (s)

The recurrent observations made by the researchers (Dr. MEHIRI and Dr. HOADJLI), being the teachers of Linguistics and Methodology for the target level, were considered to be a firm basis for taking notes on the process of how students use English, Arabic, and sometimes French to ask and answer questions in the classroom. These observations provided accurate data since the researchers took them in different situations and occasions though they were not as systematic as this type of study might require. Moreover, there were no clear dates when the researchers started and ended up the classroom observation task, but a period of few months before the questionnaires were administered.

Population and Sample

Third year students of English at Biskra University (Academic year: 2016/2017) in Algeria constituted our target population. Our choice of this study population is due mainly to the easy access to this level; Dr. Ramdane MEHIRI is teaching the whole level (1 through 10) Methodology and shares with Dr. Ahmed Chaouki HOADJLI the teaching of Linguistics for the same level at the moment.

The sampling chosen is "Convenience Sampling". In convenience sampling (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2005, pp. 102-103), researchers choose the nearest individuals or those who are available at the time as respondents. That is, the respondents just happen to be the people researchers can get hold of (Coolican, 1994, p. 41). In the present study, one hundred (100) students from sections one and two represent our sample. These students were randomly selected, or rather invited to participate, so as to guarantee, not the probability criterion, but homogeneity of the sample.

The Pilot Study

Almost all research projects are characterized by carrying out some pilot work to anticipate the problems which may result from the implementation of methods (Blaxter et al., 2006, p. 137). In this study, we distributed 12 copies of the first draft of each questionnaire to students from the third year (Section two/groups: 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10) in February, 2017. These students were told, in advance, about the anonymity of their names and the significance of their participation in the study.

The answers of the questions

Were on the whole satisfactory, except for a few items such as 4 and 5 in Questionnaire 1, and items 2 and 7 in Questionnaire 2 which implied that some students needed clearer instructions. These problems and others were remedied without delay.

Result

Questionnaire 1 Data Analysis

Table 1: Students' feeling when they speak Classical

1. I do not mind if people laugh when I speak Classical Arabic.	A	B	C	D	I get embarrassed if people laugh when I speak Classical Arabic.
45	2	1	1		8
					7
					0

Table 1 indicates that 45 students feel comfortable even if people laugh when they speak Classical Arabic. 28 of them say that they are somewhat comfortable when they speak Classical Arabic. 17 students feel a little shy when they speak Classical Arabic; and 10 feel embarrassed if people laugh when I speak Classical Arabic.

Table 2: Students' time of speaking Classical Arabic

2. I speak Classical Arabic only in class.	A	B	C	D	I speak Classical Arabic only when I am asked to do.
24	2	2	3		0
					0
					6

Table 2 shows that 44 students speak Classical Arabic only in class (not outside of it), and that 56 students prefer to use other languages to Arabic inside and outside their classes and speak it only when they have to.

Table 3: Students' place of speaking Demotic Arabic

3. I speak Demotic Arabic everywhere.	A	B	C	D	I speak Demotic Arabic to facilitate communication.
46	2	1	1		1
					7
					6

From the table above, it is clear that the majority of students (67) speak Demotic Arabic everywhere, i.e. in class and outside of it. On the hand, 33 say that they speak Demotic Arabic to facilitate communication.

Table 4: Students' place of using their mother tongue

4. I like to use my mother tongue at home and outside.	A	B	C	D	I must use my mother tongue when I meet people of the same region.
60	1	9	1		3
					1
					8

From the table above, it is clear that the majority of students (73) use their mother tongue at home and outside, and only 26 students use their mother tongue when they meet people of the same region.

Table 5: Students' reasons and feeling of using code-switching

5. When I make code-switching, I do not get upset to continue because I need my speech.	A	B	C	D	When I make code-switching, I get upset and feel that I have failed.
45	3	1	7		8
					0

The number 38 indicates that a good number of students do not get upset when they switch from one language to another because they need to continue their speech, and only 17 students get upset and feel that they have failed.

Table 6: Students' choices when making code-switching

6. When I make code-switching, I choose to use French other than my mother tongue.	A	B	C	D	When I make code-switching, I choose to use English other than my mother tongue.
27	1	2	3		7
					5
					1

From table 6, it is clear that the number of students who use French other than their mother tongue when they switch from one language to another (44) is lower than the number of students who use English other than their mother tongue (56).

Table 7: Students' feeling when interacting with other people

7. I enjoy interacting with people of different language background.	A	B	C	D	I enjoy interacting with people of the same language background.
64	2	7	9		0

Table7 demonstrates that the great majority of students (84) enjoy interacting with people of different language background. However, only 16 students enjoy interacting with people of the same language background

Questionnaire 2 Data Analysis

Table 1: Language and identity

1. Language facilitates communication and helps to form social identity.	Yes	No	Not Really	No idea
97	00	3	00	

The great majority (97) of the participants are aware that language facilitates their communication and helps them to form their identities. Only 3 students are indifferent vis-a-vis this belief.

Table 2: Language as a mean of friction

2. Language is sometimes the source of refusal and friction between minorities.	Yes	No	Not Really	No idea
30	6	4	15	9

In answering question 2, 30 students indicated that they agree on the idea that Language is sometimes the source of refusal and friction between minorities; 49 students are somewhat against this idea; 6 students opted for (No) and 15 for (No idea).

Table 3: Arabic in the Algerian constitution

3. The Algerian Constitution stipulates that Arabic is the official language.	Yes	No	Not Really	No idea
89	3	6	2	

The table above shows clearly that most of the students (89) know that Arabic is the official language in the country. 6 students neither accept nor refuse this fact/reality. 3 students show refusal of it and 2 students have no idea.

Table4: Algerian Arabic and its use

4. The indigenized (mixture) variety of Arabic is used by almost all Algerians.	Yes	No	Not Really	No idea
70	5	2	5	20

70 students emphasize the fact that Algerian Arabic (AA) is used by almost all Algerians. 5 students do not agree on this idea; 5 students have no idea; and 20 students are in-between; i.e. they do not join any of the other three groups.

Table 5: Compromise between the indigenous languages in Algeria

5. Compromise has always existed between the indigenous languages in Algeria.	Yes	No	Not Really	No idea
10	1	2	4	7

(47) have no idea about compromise between languages in the country. 27 students stick to the idea that there has been some friction or conflict. On the other hand, 10 students are in support of the statement, and 16 against it.

Table 6: Arabic and French in Algeria

6. Arabic and French have always been considered to be aliens in Algeria.	Yes	No	Not Really	No idea
14	45	2	13	8

From the table above, we may notice that a considerable number of students (45) see that there has been no conflict or struggle between Arabic and French. Another important number (28) may be added to this view; these students neither confirm nor reject the existence of that clash. Whereas, 14 students show total agreement and 13 students say they have no idea.

Table 7: French and English in Africa

7. Many sociolinguists see that French and English have become African languages.	Yes	No	Not Really	No idea
31	2	2	42	5

In response to the above question, 31 students seem to be aware of the status and the role of French and English in many African countries. 25 students might have not understood the question well, or they value their mother tongues, be it Arabic or a variety of the Berber language family in Algeria. 42 students opted for (Not really) and only 2 students for (No idea).

Table 8: Chinese and other languages in Algeria

8. Chinese and other languages are getting more ground in Algeria today.	Yes	No	Not Really	No idea
50	9	2	17	4

As for question 8, the majority of students (50) find that languages such as Chinese, Spanish and Turkish are being studied and used in Algeria today for many different reasons. 9 students refuse to confess this fact; 17 have no idea; and 24 seem to be unaware of the current linguistic changes in the country.

Findings

Findings from the literature review

01. Prior to independence, French language was dominant, Arabic, the language of the majority of the local inhabitants in the country,

01. was relegated, and Berber was totally neglected. (p.4)
02. As a major result of the reform of 1976 and due to the 'Arabization' process, French was relegated and started to be taught as a foreign language, losing the higher status it had before and after the independence. (p.7)
03. As a consequence of the new reform (2003), Tamazight has been introduced to be taught as a subject in middle schools on a national scale. In 2004, French started to be taught as the first mandatory foreign language in grade two of the primary cycle, and English as second mandatory foreign language. (p. 10)
04. The situation of English language in Algeria is characterized by a set of features. One of these features is that English has always been affected by the ferocious competition between Arabic, the national, official language of the country, and French, the inherited language from the colonial era, which is common in the daily communication and practice of the great majority of Algerians. (p. 11)
05. Though the process of 'Arabization' was intended to accelerate the democratization of schooling and ..., it failed to yield a high status to foreign language, including English. Hence, French was postponed until grade four as the first mandatory foreign language, and English as the second mandatory foreign language in grade eight. Other foreign languages like Spanish, Italian, Russian, and German were simply dropped to be learnt as optional languages in middle schools. (p. 12)
06. The new common view of a large portion of Algerians has paid a great importance to the status of English as foreign language. In its essence, this positive attitude has turned to be more pragmatically than ideologically oriented. In its practical manifestation, a growing voice of parents insists on the strong need to incorporate English at early stages of learning. (p. 13)

FINDINGS FROM THE STUDY

01. The majority of students (67 %) speak Demotic Arabic (Darija) everywhere, i.e. in class and outside of it. Whereas, (33 %) say that they speak Demotic Arabic to facilitate communication.

01. The number of students who use French other than their mother tongue when they switch to another language (44 %) is lower than the number of students who use English other than their mother tongue (56 %).
02. The great majority of students (84 %) enjoy interacting with people of different language background. However, only (16 %) of the students enjoy interacting with people of the same language background.
03. The great majority (97 %) of the participants are aware that language facilitates their communication and helps them to form their identities. Only (3 %) students are indifferent towards this idea.
04. A considerable number of students (73) see that there has been no conflict or struggle between Arabic and French. 14 students show total agreement and 13 students say they have no idea
05. (50 %) of the students find that languages such as Chinese, Spanish and Turkish are being studied and used in Algeria for many different reasons. The other (50 %) of students seem to have no idea, or are unaware of the current linguistic changes in the country.

Conclusion

This study helped us to gain a fresh insight into the current linguistic situation in the region of Biskra, Algeria. During the French colonization, Arabic and Tamazight were relegated because the French wanted to deprive the people of their identity and culture. However, after independence, the situation changed. The process of Arabization (1976) was meant to unite the people both politically and linguistically; it was fostered to open the door for all Algerians to learn and to acquire knowledge; French was kept because the authorities thought it would give Algeria an easy access to modernization. Moreover, the new reform (2003) restored the status of Tamazight, the language of the original inhabitants, introducing it to be taught as a subject in middle schools, and at other levels today, all over the country. The new reform (2003) also paved the way for more interest in English and other languages such as Spanish, Italian, Russian, and German. The teaching of these languages in general and English in particular has been stimulated by the new trend of Globalization.

The majority of students who participated in the present study emphasized the fact that Algerian Arabic is and has been an appropriate means of communication and unity in Algeria though there are many language backgrounds. They also indicated that Arabic and Tamazight could preserve their status despite the influence of several other languages such as Roman, Spanish, Ottoman and French. They indicated that, as a new generation, they are open to people of different language background; that there is no conflict or friction between the indigenous languages; that they are aware that language eases communication and forms their identities; and that their choice of English is justified by their legitimate need for more opportunities and openness to the world.

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