The Arabic Language between the Decision of Generalization Algeria as a Model - and the Reality of Usage

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Abstract :

As much as it is believed that the Arabic language is an obstacle to all development and creativity, as much as it is a flexible language capable of adapting to the various technological and scientific developments of the age, and preserving all cultural heritage, and as much as it is a force for strengthening and unifying the various Arab societies, especially with what these societies in general and Algerian society in particular are witnessing of a cultural and linguistic invasion that has led to a set of linguistic phenomena that necessitated the adoption of a set of decisions by which the country's highest authorities seek to protect the Arabic language and preserve the Arab-Islamic identity, and strive to achieve sustainable linguistic development.

***Key Words*:** Language policy, Algeria, linguistic phenomena, diglossia, bilingualism

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Introduction:

Language constitutes the beating heart of every nation. The Arabic language, like other languages, is regarded in most Arab countries as a fundamental pillar of Arab-Islamic identity. It must not be forgotten that Arabic has always asserted its existence, both in the past and today, despite the difficulties faced by its societies, which have at times affected its use.

Algeria, among these countries, experienced a colonial period that lasted for more than a century, placing it in a position of dependence on France for many years, due to the policy of domination imposed by colonization, which also seized its institutions.

Since its proclamation as an independent State, Algeria has endeavored to rebuild itself by reaffirming the foundations of its Arab-Islamic identity. Within this framework, Arabic has occupied a central place and was designated as a priority in the process of building the Algerian State, as the official language. Thus, a linguistic policy was adopted, aiming at a linguistic reform adapted to the realities of Algerian society at the time, the repercussions of which persist to this day. This was reflected in a series of deliberate decisions (Arabization, generalization) intended to restore to the Arabic language its original status and legitimacy.

Yet one question remains: to what extent has the policy of Arabization and generalization truly succeeded in imposing the Arabic language? Has generalization indeed been effectively implemented?

It is from this perspective that the present study is situated, with the aim of providing elements of response to this problematic, by analyzing the situation of the Arabic language in Algeria between the decisions taken and their implementation.

1. The Arabic Language and Political Decision-Making in Algeria

The Arabic language constitutes one of the principal symbols of national sovereignty, distinguishing each State from others, and remains a fundamental marker of Arab-Islamic identity. As one of the most widespread languages in the world, Arabic has endured numerous trials, marked by both negative and positive effects. These influences can be explained by several factors: wars, economic and cultural exchanges, mixed marriages, and others. Such elements have placed the Arabic language in confrontation with other foreign languages, prompting some States to adopt various linguistic policies to preserve, revitalize, or promote this language in order to adapt it to technological developments, particularly in the digital age.

Preserving the Arabic language is thus a major objective pursued by several Arab countries, particularly in the face of contemporary challenges. Algeria distinguishes itself by its efforts to revalorize and develop this language in various domains (administration, education, justice, media, daily life), both officially and unofficially. This became evident as early as the first years of independence, with a project aimed at restoring Arabic to its original function prior to colonization: the Arabization project.

In reality, this project can be perceived as an undertaking to purge Arabic of foreign elements that had invaded and weakened it, rather than a mere "Arabization" in the sense of subjecting foreign words to the rules of Arabic. Fundamentally, Algerian society is already Arabic-speaking. This process could therefore be designated by other terms such as "filtering linguistic intrusions" or "eliminating linguistic hybridization."

In this perspective, Algeria adopted a series of decisions reflecting a linguistic policy oriented towards consolidating Arabic as a language of science, thought, administration, and work. The linguistic policy seeks to make Arabic a living and productive language (S. Al-Husni, 2011, p.14).

Linguistic policy, in its current understanding, refers to the set of deliberate choices relating to the relationship between language and society, and more specifically between language, nation, and public life (H. Al-Safi, 2014–2015, pp. 33–34). According to Al-Fassi al-Fihri, it represents the search for an equitable and democratic environment for the development of the language (Al-Fassi al-Fihri, 2013, p.14). It concerns the "official positions taken by governments regarding the use and promotion of a language" (Juliette Garmadi, 1990, p.209).

Language planning consists of developing a plan or a long-term strategy intended to resolve a linguistic problem or crisis, while seeking solutions either by revitalizing, modernizing, or formalizing the language. This plan is implemented after the publication of a set of official decisions that allow the effective launch of the language planning process and its realization on the ground. This stage of application follows political decisions and makes them concrete in practice. By "decision," we mean the regulatory text issued or "taken by the minister, the governor, or the president of the municipal people's council" [Amina Ziyada, 2020, p.3] concerning the process of managing or organizing a procedure in the service of the State.

Algeria, for its part, has shown constant interest in the linguistic question at different stages of its history: during the Revolution, after independence, and up to the present day. The major stages of this process can be divided into several chronological periods, which will be detailed below.

1. From 1954 to 1962

This period encompasses the Declaration of November 1, 1954, the Soummam Congress of 1956, as well as the Tripoli Program of 1962. All these texts converge towards the same objective: to restore the place of the Arabic language as a pillar of national identity, supporting political independence and affirming the official independence of the Algerian State from foreign linguistic dependence, particularly vis-à-vis French.

This was expressed in the resolution of the Soummam Congress, which stated: "The Arabic language has seen its breath stifled by colonization. It is the national language, the language of the overwhelming majority of the population, whose teaching was totally suppressed since the beginning of the occupation through the dispersion of teachers and students and the confiscation of waqf properties." (*Official Journal, no. 3, January 16, 1991, p.50*).

2. From 1964 to 1976

This phase includes several charters and conferences, the most notable of which are:

- The Algiers Charter (April 1964), issued by the National Liberation Front;
- The Charter of February 1969, which ordered the creation of a translation office for various legislative and regulatory documents.

The efforts of the Algerian State subsequently continued through other important steps, notably the expansion of the Arabization project to higher education and to most administrations and their civil servants, as early as the beginning of the 1970s. This was enshrined in Article 3 of the 1976 Constitution (*Algerian Constitution of 1976, p.4*).

3. From 1991 to the Present

This phase was marked by the law on the generalization of the use of the Arabic language, promulgated on January 16, 1991, which established the general rules governing the use of Arabic in all domains (administrative, media, commercial, etc.).

However, this law was suspended after the adoption of a legislative decree on July 4, 1992 (Ben Yahia Tahar Naous, January 26, 2014, p.3). It was reactivated only in 1996 with Law 96-30 of December 21, 1996, amended and supplemented in comparison with the previous law, and remains in force to this day.

Through this law, Algeria seeks to broaden the scope of the use of the Arabic language in the face of the challenges posed by the current linguistic situation. Indeed, Arabic tends to disappear from daily usage in certain social contexts, even though it remains the obligatory language in official situations.

Today, the Algerian citizen experiences a genuine linguistic conflict between several languages (French, English, and, to a lesser extent, Turkish or Italian). This plurality generates linguistic phenomena such as diglossia, bilingualism, and interference, visible both at the official and unofficial levels.

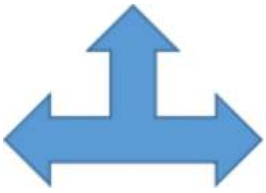
2- Forms of Linguistic Conflict and Coexistence in Algeria

The aspects of linguistic conflict in Algeria appear in three forms:

- Diglossia
- Bilingualism
- Interference

These phenomena coexist, producing a heterogeneous linguistic mixture that is reflected in the daily use of Algerians.

Diglossia



Linguistic conflict in Algeria

Languages struggle among themselves, just as humanity does. Here we refer to the conflict between the Arabic language and other languages, each striving for survival without being overshadowed by the others. The conflict in Algeria manifests itself in two forms: internal and external.

As for the external aspect, it concerns the factors imposed upon the language as an instrument of power, and what is connected to it, such as economic and technological power. The second reason is limited to the teaching of foreign languages [Ibrahim bin Ali Al-Dubayan, 2006, pp. 5–6], which generates an internal conflict between many linguistic aspects, whether at the higher official level or the lower one, such as daily dialects. Here, two linguistic aspects (duplication and dualism) emerge.

Diglossia and Bilingualism

The term *diglossia* implies the existence of a dual linguistic system, just like bilingualism, which sometimes creates confusion for certain researchers. However, there is a distinction:

- Diglossia refers to the coexistence of two linguistic levels arising from the same environment, one being prestigious and official (Classical Arabic), the other of inferior status (local dialects).
- The term bilingualism suggests the existence of duality and vice versa, which has led many researchers to conflate the two. Yet, in reality, both indicate the presence of two linguistic systems, one used officially and equally, and the other opposed, between what is official and what is less so.

Linguistic diglossia, or linguistic duality, is “the existence of two linguistic levels within the same linguistic environment.” Some see diglossia as “the existence of two different languages... or a conflict between Arabic and foreign languages” [Abdul Rahman bin Muhammad Al-Qaoud, 1997, p.11]. However, in our view, it is more accurate to state that the conflict arising between two linguistic levels within a specific environment is diglossia, which is clearly manifested in the dialectal usage of many dialects alongside Arabic, which remains the official language.

As for the conflict that arises between two different languages but at the same level, it is dual, and this is the case of Arabic being used alongside French or English in many situations. When duality and diglossia converge in the same situation, interference occurs, which Salah Belaid defined as follows: “The use by

the speaker of two or more languages in a given situation, where the social environment has a negative or positive impact on another language. This is manifested by the effect of the spoken language on Classical Arabic, and results from the multiplicity of linguistic references for the individual: the spoken language, Amazigh, and French."[Salah Belaid, 2003, p.124]

Manifestations of Linguistic Conflict in Algeria

a) Diglossia: between Standard Arabic and local dialects specific to each region.
b) Bilingualism: between Arabic and French, and more recently with English after its introduction into Algerian schools.
c) Interference: in daily interactions, where Algerians simultaneously resort to dialect and borrowings from foreign languages.

٣. Manifestations of Linguistic Interference in Algeria

The current Algerian context is characterized by great linguistic richness. While this can be seen as a positive indicator of tolerance and linguistic openness, it can also be viewed negatively, undermining the guarantee of the Arabic language's existence and the preservation of its status.

This situation constitutes a threat to Arab identity, especially if this openness to languages is not adequately exploited, and if there is no awareness of the danger of foreign languages influencing the lifestyle and culture of contemporary Algerians. Indeed, these languages (notably foreign ones) exert a direct influence on the mentality of Algerian speakers, often visible in the way we speak, dress, live, or even in our intellectual orientations. Thus, today's Algerian is Arab by language but Western by thought, which serves as a driving force and motivation for learning foreign languages in order to open up to the Western world.

The French language has infiltrated our minds and linguistic practices for a long time, a phenomenon generally attributed to colonization. Yet today, after around 63 years of political and sovereign independence, we could have dispensed with French altogether, especially given the growing awareness of the danger posed by adopting foreign languages to the detriment of the original and official language of any country. Linguistic dominance sometimes leads to the death of the official language.

Despite this, French remains omnipresent in Algeria, whether in schools, administrations, ministries, or even in the street. It imposes itself with strong presence, encouraged by Algerians themselves. Indeed, Algerians can scarcely complete a sentence without resorting to a French word, not to mention the massive use of dialects, both in official and unofficial contexts, which confines the use of Arabic almost exclusively to writing.

With the emergence of English on the linguistic scene, Arabic finds itself caught in a whirlwind: between the necessity of preserving it as a mother tongue and pillar of Arab-Islamic identity, and the imperative of embracing technological development, which requires learning and using a foreign language, particularly English, now indispensable in Algerian schools due to its status as a global language.

Discomfort in the Use of Arabic

At times, the use of Arabic embarrasses the Algerian speaker: the one who speaks it draws attention not because of eloquence, but because of mockery, some even assigning him derisive nicknames. This stems from the depreciating view of Arabic, often reduced to a language of poetry, deemed archaic, incapable of responding to modern needs and contemporary developments.

Yet today, we observe on certain communication platforms a renewed interest in Arabic among some groups, encouraged by ministerial decisions promoting Arabization and the generalization of its use in certain sectors (Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Culture, Air Algérie). Algerians are fully aware of the importance of Arabic and remain deeply attached to its defense when necessary. However, concrete usage compels them to resort to other languages simultaneously.

This mentality, prevalent in Algerian society, can be explained by several reasons:

- Colonization and its aftermath: although some Arab countries have achieved political independence and regained full sovereignty, political crises between these countries and their former colonizers continue to hinder development at all levels (economic, social, linguistic). This is the case with Algerian-French relations, often tense, with France still perceiving itself as superior and seeking to create various problems.
- Arabic considered a secondary language compared to others, notably in education. Emphasis is placed on teaching foreign languages, regarded as languages of science, which penalizes students, particularly in higher education. Today in Algeria, a child as young as four begins to learn foreign languages in various institutions (nurseries, kindergartens, associations, private lessons…), under the pretext of preparing them for schooling. Parents may indeed prepare their children, but they are criticized for not raising awareness of the importance of all languages, particularly Arabic.
- Lack of investment in Arabic in technological and digital fields: despite the existence of numerous brilliant Arab figures in these sectors, they often choose foreign languages over Arabic. This may be explained by the lack of support from Arab countries or by insufficient resources in their societies, forcing them into exile, where Western countries provide all the necessary social and scientific conditions, thereby reinforcing and developing their languages and imposing them as global languages. In addition, there is a lack of digital programs promoting the use of Arabic in educational applications.
- Instruction in foreign languages, especially at university: today, some academic disciplines in Algeria are taught entirely in foreign languages, such as medicine. Moreover, English has become compulsory for all students, regardless of their field of specialization, following the decision to impose English in Algerian universities starting in 2025 [Circular of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, March 26, 2025].

- Dominance of foreign languages, especially in the scientific field: this weakens the efforts of Arabs in general and Algerians in particular. Instead of innovating and creating, they are content with translating what the West produces, becoming mere consumers of foreign knowledge.

Despite all this, it remains possible to restore Arabic to its full place. This can only be achieved through the unity of the Arab world, by imposing Arabic as a unified language in all international forums and embracing its use with pride, without submission to others. At the national level, however, the issue of local dialects persists, an unavoidable reality in Algeria as in other parts of the Arab world, constituting an obstacle to the development of Arabic. Indeed, Algerians resort to dialects at the expense of Arabic, which they consider more economical and simpler for conveying their message. This is a challenge that must imperatively be overcome today.

4. Some Linguistic Facts in Algeria

Linguistic conflict is a construct, a nationalist sentiment, an expression of belonging and loyalty to one language against another. It involves inciting contempt for a language, encouraging its weakening, and fueling hatred towards it [Ahmed Afifi, n.d., p.6]. This concept particularly applies to Algerian society, notably through its nationalist sentiment and identity attachment to the Arabic language, as well as to certain local dialectal variants, despite the many external pressures seeking to destabilize Algerian social cohesion. Once this cohesion is weakened, the linguistic balance is inevitably disturbed.

We must not forget that Algeria long experienced controversy around the Amazigh question, until it was officially recognized starting in 2016, in accordance with Article 4 of the Algerian Constitution [Algerian Constitution, 2016, p.6], and remains in force today. Since then, the Amazigh language has appeared in numerous situations, notably in the naming of various public institutions, where Arabic is placed first, immediately followed by Amazigh, and sometimes also by French.

The conflict facing Arabic in Algeria is not limited to Amazigh or French, but also encompasses local dialects upon which Algerians rely in their daily communication.

Among the linguistic facts experienced by Algerians is the automatic use of certain borrowed terms from foreign languages, which we have become accustomed to using, even though equivalents exist in Arabic. For instance: *radio, modem, téléphone, téléviseur, ingénieur, chimie, démocratie, climatiseur, ballon…* while Arabic offers: *idha'a* (إذاعة), *hatif* (هاتف), *mubarrid/mukayyif* (مبرد/مكيف), *kura* (كرة), etc. This phenomenon illustrates what is called in Arabic *al-dakhīl* (borrowing) and *al-mu'arrab* (adaptation).

Table: Examples of Interference between Arabic and Local Dialects in Algeria

Linguistic Level	**Overlapping Zones**		**Comment**
	Arabic Dialectal	**Classical Arabic**	
Phonetic	: *Nachrbou, nathamlou, nat hadthou*	*Nachrabu, natahammalu, natahadathu*	Difference in pronunciation where the hamza is not pronounced; the speaker simply elongates the sound /n/ in dialect and extends /l/. In dialect, there is often an extension of sounds, especially at the end.
	Kalam / Kal	*Qalam / Qala*	Pronunciation of the letter *qaf* as *kaf* in certain regions of Algeria (e.g., Jijel).
	Aqouat, qiraa, Qada	*Aghouat, Ghiraa, Ghada*	Pronunciation of the letter *ghain* as *qaf* in certain regions (e.g., Laghouat), sometimes altering meaning (*qadda / ghada*).
Morphological	*Yqoulou, Yaqraou*	*Yaqoulouna, Yaqraouna*	Deletion of the letter *nun*: certain sounds are deleted in dialect, making words deviate from classical morphological forms.
	Win	*Ayna*	The hamza has been replaced with *waw*.
Semantic	*Ala, Qada, Yahdar*	*Alaa, Youhdir*	Example: *Yahdar* (to speak) vs *Youhdir* (to spoil). Deletion of hamza from *Alaa* → becomes *Ala* (preposition).
	Ma alabalich, Houma	*La Aalamou, Houm*	Replacement of words with others, or addition/removal of letters.
Grammatical	*Sallit, Khrajt, Fraht*	*Sallaytou, Kharajtou, Farihtou*	Word endings in dialect are quiescent. In Classical Arabic, two quiescent letters cannot meet.
	Hlamt	*Haloumtou*	Beginning with sukoon in colloquial Arabic.
	Ma A'ndich,	*Laysa i'ndi, Lam*	In dialect, negation is constructed

	Ma klitech	*A'koul*	with *ma* and ends with *ch*, while Classical Arabic distinguishes between operators and non-operators.

This table illustrates certain examples of interference between Arabic and local dialects in Algeria, particularly in the eastern regions. Variations caused by dialectal shifts are noticeable. This conveys an unfavorable image of Arabic, whose traits and usage rules are altered in many situations.

As for certain manifestations of interference between Arabic and other languages, numerous examples can be found. For instance:

- French terms are "Arabized" in pronunciation, e.g., *cartable* used as the equivalent of the Arabic word محفظة (*muhfaḍa*), and thus treated as feminine.
- Another interference occurs when Algerians use the word *machine* to designate any mobile machine, by lexical association.
- Sometimes Arabic is written in Latin script, very common in everyday conversations on social networks (notably Facebook), where letter combinations replace Arabic, e.g.:
  - HMD CV for « الحمد لله » (*al-ḥamdu lillāh*).
  - 2R1 for « شكرا » (*shukran*).
  - Ani jaye for « أنا آتي » (*ana atī*).

Many such scenes characterize today's linguistic landscape in Algerian society, reflecting the conflict faced by Arabic despite occasional decisions and efforts, which often remain unimplemented.

Indeed, despite all decisions taken in this regard, French continues to dominate many aspects of life in Algeria (administration, ministries, education, etc.), alongside local dialects prevailing in everyday use. It is as if Arabic were used only when imposed (e.g., drafting a written request, filing an appeal, etc.).

Political decision-making exists in Algeria, but its actual implementation is lacking, as there remains a conviction of the necessity of using foreign languages to assert presence, or dialects considered "inferior" to Arabic because they require less effort and cost to convey a message. It is precisely this mentality that must be changed in order to advance and revalorize the Arabic language.

5. Main Obstacles to Generalization in Algeria

- The inadequacy of the Arabic language in meeting popular needs, which drives people to resort to local dialectal usages.
- The absence of a unified language of instruction and the increased use of foreign languages to the detriment of Arabic, particularly in higher education.
- The ongoing competition among dialects and their attempt to rise to the status of official languages, such as Amazigh which has obtained this status.

However, it is more accurately a matter of "Amazigh varieties" rather than a single Amazigh language, which raises the issue of standardizing written norms, an obstacle to linguistic development.

- The reduction of the Arabic language to a mere tool of communication between the people and the authorities, rather than a language of everyday communication.
- The failure of certain governmental institutions to respect the use of Arabic in official events, even though it is the official language of Algeria (for example, in certain press conferences held by walis or ministers). This reflects a disregard for laws and decisions, which remain a dead letter.
- The great cultural diversity in Algeria, reflected in the multiplicity of dialects and linguistic practices.

6. Main Solutions and Recommendations

- Imposing financial sanctions on those who fail to respect decisions relating to education, particularly the institutions constituting the framework of the State, which must serve as a model for the people.
- Adopting a linguistic planning adapted to the Algerian mentality, which restores vitality to the Arabic language.
- Establishing monitoring committees within various administrations to act as a link between the State and the population, and imposing sanctions on those who use French in official contexts (for example, the reception of documents written in a language other than Arabic).
- Intensifying efforts to integrate the Arabic language into the field of artificial intelligence, and providing all resources enabling researchers to innovate, while motivating them with adequate financial rewards in order to limit emigration towards the West in search of better conditions.
- Changing the demeaning perception of the Arabic language and promoting it as a commercial and economic language: "for language is a tool of production, exchange, development, industry, currency, capital, and resource. The issue of linguistic markets and their scarcity, as well as economic evaluation, has become a necessity for any linguistic policy" [Fassi Fihri, 2013, p. 8]. Commercial and economic exchanges are in fact an entryway to contact with other languages, and imposing Arabic in the economic market constitutes a lever of development and a means of ensuring linguistic hegemony, which planners and decision-makers must aim for. The quality of marketing implies the quality of linguistic investment.
- Redoubling efforts to generalize the use of the Arabic language and ensuring its development by making it a scientific language employed in all sectors.
- Embedding the principles and correct rules of the Arabic language in the minds of the new generations, encouraging them to preserve and use it, with

the adoption of a clear linguistic planning. Indeed, all activities relating to rules, orthography, grammatical or lexicographical preparation are intended to guide writers and speakers within a linguistically heterogeneous community [Robert L. Cooper, 2006, p. 68].

7. Conclusion

The Arabization project experienced, in its beginnings after independence, considerable success in purifying the Algerian language from the domination of French, which had long marked a period of decline. It was followed by the process of generalization, still in effect today, through which Algeria seeks to promote Arabic and to make it an international language, capable of overcoming all difficulties across various fields. This ambition is supported by the linguistic policy adopted in Algeria. However, this policy cannot succeed without the adherence of the Algerian people and a profound change in their perception of the Arabic language.

The linguistic situation in Algeria is characterized by great diversity (Arabic, French, English, local dialects). This plurality generates linguistic phenomena that seriously threaten the presence of Arabic in Algerian society, a language now used almost exclusively out of necessity. Today, many citizens prefer to use foreign languages to the detriment of their mother tongue, in order to boast or display social superiority. This phenomenon is found, for instance, among certain translation students, who mock Arabic speakers and look down on them as if they were not on their level, thereby opposing themselves to students of Arabic literature. Such social behaviors illustrate the persistent lack of respect for generalization decisions, which remain a dead letter.

The generalization of the use of Arabic, regardless of its degree of evolution or expansion, cannot attain the expected success without a change in mentality and a revalorization of this language. It is essential to raise awareness in society of its true value and its capacity to adapt to contemporary developments.

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