

The Influence of Social Class on the Morpho-Phonological Adaptation of French Loanwords in Algerian Spoken Arabic

تأثير الطبقة الاجتماعية على التكيف المورفوفونولوجي للألفاظ الفرنسية المستعارة في العربية الجزائرية المحكية

L'influence de la classe sociale sur l'adaptation morpho-phonologique des emprunts français dans l'arabe algérien parlé

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ملخص:

تبحث هذه الدراسة في كيفية تأثير الطبقة الاجتماعية على هذه التعديلات في مركز غليزان. باستخدام تصميم منهجي مختلط يغلب عليه الطابع النوعي، تم جمع البيانات من 150 مشاركاً تم اختيارهم عمداً من خلال مقابلات شبه منظمة وتسجيلات صوتية للكلمات الفرنسية المستخلصة من مهام سرد غير منظمة. أظهرت النتائج أن الطبقة الاجتماعية تؤثر بشكل ملحوظ على أنماط التكيف. حافظ المشاركون من الطبقة العليا المتوسطة بشكل عام على النطق الفرنسي الأصلي، مع بعض التعديلات القليلة، مما يعكس تأثيرهم المهني والتعليمي. أظهر المشاركون من الطبقة الوسطى ميلاً واضحاً لتكييف الكلمات الفرنسية، بينما حافظ عدد قليل منهم على النطق الأصلي نظراً لاعتبارهم الفرنسية شكلاً من رأس المال اللغوي. أما المشاركون من الطبقة الدنيا، فقد قاموا بتكييف الكلمات بشكل كامل، مما يعزز الهوية الجزائرية المشتركة. تختتم الدراسة بمجموعة من التوصيات المقترحة استناداً إلى نتائج هذا البحث

الكلمات المفتاحية: العربية الجزائرية المحكية؛ الألفاظ الدخيلة الفرنسية؛ الافتراض المعجمي؛ التكيف الصرفي-الصوتي؛ الطبقة الاجتماعية

Abstract:

The present study examines the role of social class in the morpho-phonological adaptation of French loanwords in Algerian Spoken Arabic. Employing a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods design, data were collected from 150 purposively selected participants from the centre of Relizane through semi-structured interviews and audio recordings of French loanwords elicited from unstructured storytelling tasks. The findings demonstrate that social class had a notable influence on loanword adaptation patterns. Upper-middle-class speakers generally preserved the original French pronunciation, with only few adaptations, to reflect their professional and educational influence. Middle-class speakers showed a notable tendency to adapt French loanwords, while only a few preserved them as a form of linguistic capital. Lower-class speakers, however, consistently adapted the loanwords, further reinforcing a shared Algerian identity. The study concludes with a set of recommendations proposed based on the findings of this study.

Keywords : Algerian Spoken Arabic; French loanwords; lexical borrowing; morpho-phonological adaptation; social class

Résumé :

Cette étude examine l'influence de la classe sociale sur l'adaptation des mots français dans le centre de Relizane. En utilisant une méthodologie mixte à dominance qualitative, les données ont été recueillies auprès de 150 participants sélectionnés intentionnellement via des entretiens semi-structurés et des enregistrements audio issus de tâches de narration non structurées. Les résultats montrent que la classe sociale façonne significativement les schémas d'adaptation. Les participants de la classe moyenne supérieure ont préservé la prononciation française originale, reflétant leur influence professionnelle et éducative. La majorité de la classe moyenne a adapté les mots, quelques-uns les ont conservés comme capital linguistique. Les participants de la classe inférieure ont systématiquement adapté les mots, renforçant

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l'identité algérienne partagée. L'étude se conclut par des recommandations basées sur ces résultats.

Mots clés : arabe algérien parlé ; emprunts lexicaux français ; emprunt lexical ; adaptation morpho-phonologique ; classe sociale

Introduction:

The linguistic contact between France and Algeria, which stemmed for more than 130 years of colonisation, has led to the widespread borrowing of French words, attesting the entrenched presence of French language across nearly all regions of the country (Bouhana et al., 2014). As H. Boumediene, a former president of Algeria, stated “French is a foreign language which benefits from a special situation because of objective historical considerations” (Morsy, 1984). The prolonged contact has led to the integration of French loanwords into Algerian Spoken Arabic (hereafter ASA), embedding them into people's daily speech and communicative practices (Kheder, 2012). Importantly, these loanwords were not only adopted but systematically nativized to align with the morpho-phonological patterns of Algerian Dialectal Arabic (Sid, 2009).

Language has long been recognised as a notable marker of social identity, with linguistic features such as pronunciation and lexical choice often signalling a speaker's social position within a particular speech community. In sociolinguistic research, language variation systematically correlates with social class because patterns of linguistic behaviour emerge from the social structures in which speakers are embedded (e.g., Labov, 1966; Trudgill, 1974). Upon this premise, and within the Algerian context, it is reasonable to hypothesise that speakers from different social groups often exhibit different linguistic variables, highlighting the role of language in reflecting one's social identity and standing. While previous studies have investigated the morpho-phonological adaptation of French loanwords into ASA (Negadi Mohamed, 2015; Boulesnam, 2014), little attention has been devoted to highlight how social class and the morpho-phonological adaptation of French loanwords in ASA intersect. To address this gap, the study examines the role of social class in influencing the morpho-phonological adaptation of borrowed French words in ASA. Adopting a qualitative-dominant mixed method approach, unstructured storytelling tasks were conducted to capture the morpho-phonological adaptation of French loanwords, complemented by a semi-structured interview to probe the underlying motivations for such adaptations. The rationale for employing a qualitative-dominant mixed method approach rests in the study's central objective, which is to examine the social reasoning underlying class-based patterns of French loanwords' adaptation. The qualitative strand is thus positioned as the primary analytical component. The quantitative approach, however, was chosen to situate the participants within the analysis and to provide a statistical basis that complements the qualitative interpretation. Building on the above, the following research questions are raised:

- What patterns of morpho-phonological adaptation of French loanwords are observed among speakers of different social classes in Algerian Spoken Arabic?
- How does social class influence the morpho-phonological adaptation of French borrowed words in Algerian Spoken Arabic?

1. Literature Review

1.1 Borrowing as a Social and Cultural Practice

Lexical borrowing entails the incorporation of words or word-like units from one language (L1) into discourse of the other language (L2), the recipient language. Notably, this process conforms to the phonological and morphological patterns of the host language while adhering to its syntactic rules (Poplack & Sankoff, 2009). Accordingly, borrowing can be defined as

The introduction of single words or short, frozen, idiomatic phrases from one variety (i.e., language), into the other. The borrowed items are fully integrated into the grammatical system of the borrowing language and they are treated as if they are part of the lexicon of that language and share the morphological and phonological systems of that language. Code-switching by contrast relies on the meaningful juxtaposition of what speakers must process as strings formed according to the internal syntactic rules of two distinct systems (Gumperz, 1982, p. 66).

Research on lexical borrowing has primarily revolved around four central concerns. First, scholars have sought to define the phenomenon itself, with debates surrounding the adequacy of the term “borrowing” and its alternatives such as “copying” (Jones, 2002) or “matter replication” (Matras, 2009). Second, notable attention has been given to distinguishing lexical borrowing from code-switching, highlighting that borrowing involves the adaptation of elements from one language to satisfy the morpho-phonological and syntactic rules of another. Code-switching, however, entails the juxtaposition of sentence fragments, each of which remains morphologically, syntactically, and lexically belonging to one language (Sankoff & Mineville, 1986; Grosjean, 1982; Muysken, 2000). Third, research has focused on identifying which types of lexical materials are most susceptible to borrowing (Field, 2002), highlighting the high degree of borrowability of nouns compared to other lexical elements. They are followed by other lexical categories, such as adjectives, verbs, and adverbs. In contrast, bound morpheme, including inflections, case endings, and function words are less likely to be borrowed, as they are integrated into the language’s grammatical system. Syntactic rules, however, are more resistant to change, since they form the structural foundation of the language. Notably, the borrowability hierarchy highlights that the more bound and grammatical an element is, the less susceptible it becomes to borrowing. The fourth concern highlights the mechanisms by which loanwords are adapted to conform to the morpho-phonological structure of the recipient language. (Poplack, 2017). Crucially, the degree of permeability that allows foreign lexical items to be transferred from one language to another is evidenced by the fact that “borrowed items make up the overwhelming majority of other-language material” (Poplack, 2018, p. 1). That is to say, incorporated linguistic materials are lexical rather than structural, since they are systematically adapted to the grammatical, morpho-phonological, and syntactic systems of the host language.

Transcending its linguistic utility, borrowing reflects the socio-cultural lenses that shape the relationship between the donor language and the recipient language (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988; Labov, 1963). As Hoffer (2005) states “one of the most easily observable results of intercultural contact and communication is the set of loanwords that is imported into the vocabulary of each language involved” (p. 53). Hence, the concept of borrowing carries symbolic meanings influenced by historical events, sociocultural factors, and communicative practicality. Beyond filling lexical gaps, it also serves as a marker of social mobility, shared identity, and cultural belonging (Evans, 2025). For instance, within the Algerian context, the integration of French loanwords into Algerian Spoken Arabic dialects (hereafter ASA) extends beyond linguistic necessity, as it notably encapsulates the historical events that continue to resonate within social and cultural practices

(Heggoy, 1984; AlQbailat et al., 2025). From a semantic lens, borrowed words often undergo shifts in meaning to align with contextual and sociocultural nuances of the recipient language (Hassan, 2023). A notable example is the French word “poubelle”. While in the donor language the term refers to the receptacle used for discarding waste, its integration into ASA has altered its referential scope. In the recipient variety, “poubelle” refers to the waste itself rather than the container that holds it, highlighting how borrowed words are used and resemanticized in accordance with the contextual and cultural practices of the speech community. As Zhan (2023) observes “when a language borrows words and morphemes from another language, it often leads to semantic change. This is because words and morphemes from different languages often have different meanings, connotations, and cultural association” (p. 278). Thus, borrowing serves not only as a mechanism of filling lexical gaps but also as a social practice, reflecting the relationship between language, society, and culture.

1.2 The Morpho-Phonological Adaptation of French Loanwords in ASA

In Algeria, the sociolinguistic outcomes of the prolonged contact between French and the native population have led to notable linguistic influences, particularly visible in the integration of French lexical items into ASA. This process reflects “intimate borrowing”, as it stems from direct language and social contact between the two countries (Bloomfield, 1933). As a result, French borrowings have long permeated ASA and everyday language (Benrabeh, 2017). These borrowings, mainly nouns and verbs, generally appear in two forms: integral loanwords, which are incorporated with little to no modification, and hybrid borrowings, which are morpho-phonologically nativized to conform to the structural constraints of ASA (Benbadgi & Negadi, 2020).

Haugen (1969) outlines the phonological adaptation as a multi-stage process that occurs when words are borrowed from one language to another. The first stage involves a bilingual speaker introducing the borrowed word in a form that closely resembles the pronunciation of source language (hereafter SL). Without direct exposure to the model produced by native speakers of the SL, “monolinguals can only rely on the pronunciation of bilinguals whose level of “bilinguality” may vary, hence the possibility of an accent. Next, monolingual speakers of the recipient language (hereafter RL) modify the non-native sound patterns to conform to the phonological rules of their native ones, thereby leading to different renditions of the same word. Through repeated use within the speech community, the borrowed word becomes an established loan employed by monolinguals, though its pronunciation may vary due to geographical boundaries.

The phonological adaptation of borrowed words into ASA system occurs in different processes. A primary process is consonant substitution, which involves replacing consonants of the SL with those of the RL when the former do not exist in the latter, prompting speakers to select the closest available alternative to maintain articulatory ease and communicative intelligibility. For instance, /p/ is a phoneme in many languages; however, it is only an allophone of /b/ in ASA. Hence, it is substituted with /b/ as in /buli:s/ for /pølis/ (police) (Chouaou & Boukhatem, 2015). In addition to consonant substitution, vowel alternation plays a significant role. Since the French vowel inventory is richer than that of ASA, vowels absent in the latter are systematically replaced by their closest counterparts. A case in point is the French vowel /y/, which is rendered as /i/ in ASA, as in /biru/ for “bureau” (desk). Importantly, French nasalised vowels are often lessened to vowels in ASA. For example, the French word “banque” (bank) is adapted as /ba:nka/, with the nasal /ã/ replaced by the vowel /a/. Moreover, another mechanism of phonological adaptation is syllabic omission, which is

used to facilitate pronunciation in accordance with ASA phonotactic constraints, as illustrated by /lastik/ for the French word “elastique” (elastic) (Slimani, 2016).

Morphologically, French nouns, adjectives, and verbs undergo systematic adaptations to conform to ASA patterns and root structures (Benbadji & Negadi, 2022). This is notably evident in the inflection of nouns and adjectives for gender and number (Zidana, 2018). Gender marking requires that nouns and adjective assume either masculine or feminine forms (Mushait et al., 2020) For instance, the word “professeur” (professor) is morphologically adapted as /pro:fa/, for feminine, and /pro:f/ for masculine. With regards to number marking, there are two plural inflections; sound plural, which encompasses both masculine and feminine, and broken plural. The former is realised by adding a suffix to the noun in ASA without modifying its internal pattern, while the latter involves changes to the internal structure of the noun, such as /twa:bal/ from “tables”. The feminine sound plural is marked with /at/ such as /tilifuna:t/ from “telephones” (phones). The masculine sound plural, however, is marked by the suffix /in/ as in /muʕalim/ (teacher) becoming /muʕalimi:n/ (teachers). However, the masculine sound pattern is less frequent among borrowed French words because it is predominantly associated with Standard Arabic and native AA words. Extending the morphological adaptation to verbs, French borrowed verbs are likewise adapted to conform to ASA tense and conjugation patterns (Pfaff, 1979; Alouache, 2019). Exemplifying from the French verb “participer”, to participate, it is adapted as /partisipi:t/ in the past tense, /npartisipi/ in the present tense, and /yadi npartisipi/ in the future tense, notably demonstrating a full integration into ASA verbal system. Nevertheless, and as previously noted, pronunciation patterns of borrowed items are not uniform; rather, they exhibit geographical variation, with western and eastern varieties often showing distinct realisations.

1.3 Social Class and Language Variation

Social class and language variation are interconnected aspects of sociolinguistic inquiry, as speech patterns often reflect social classification within a given speech community (Labov, 1966; Bourdieu, 1991). Several studies have demonstrated the potential role of language not merely as a means of communication but as a symbolic resource highlighting individuals’ identity and social positioning (Myers-Scotton, 1993; Gee, 2014). Hudson (2000) states that “One person can draw conclusions about another person’s character and abilities simply on the basis of how that person speaks, regardless of the content of what they say” (p.206). Hudson’s (2000) analysis suggests that individuals’ speech patterns reflect their educational level, intelligence, and social status irrespective of what is being said, further noting that such evaluations may notably lead to social prejudice against speakers of socially stigmatized varieties. That is to say, upper-class speakers are often perceived as prestigious and superior to those of middle- and lower-class speakers, a phenomenon in sociolinguistics that is worth discussing and analysing. In line with Hudson’s analysis, Labov’s (1972) seminal study of New York City department stores provides compelling evidence of how social class influences linguistic behaviour. He found that salespeople adjusted their pronunciation of the postvocalic /r/ depending on the social classification of their customers. In high-end stores, salespeople produced the /r/ more frequently, reflecting a notable tendency to prestige and upward mobility. In middle-ranked stores, /r/ production was intermediate, as salespeople adjusted their speech in ways that balanced between prestige norms and more vernacular forms to meet the store’s mixed clientele. However, in lower-ranked stores, the /r/ was least frequently realized to align with working-class clientele. Therefore, social class is an indispensable sociolinguistic variable. Before Labov’s contribution, studies on language variation were mostly centred around historical linguistics, geography, and dialectology, notably overlooking the role of social class in language variation (Wenker, 1881; Bloomfield, 1933). Labov’s work thus established a systematic framework for

analysing social class as a sociolinguistic factor, prompting studies to examine how social classification and stratification influence individuals' linguistic behaviours within a given speech community (Zhang & Liang, 2024; Mather, 2012; Basile, 2019).

Within the Algerian context, although the interconnection between social class and language variation has not been extensively examined, studies have nonetheless highlighted their sociolinguistic interrelation. Dendane (2007), for instance, demonstrates how speakers belonging to different social strata exhibit distinct linguistic patterns. Individuals from socially higher classes, who are often characterised by an enhanced educational level and occupational prestige, are more inclined to preserve the standard form of the French word. Lower-class speakers, however, tend to adapt the word to conform to ASA phonological and morphological patterns. Indeed, this process is not incidental, as it reflects the Algerian local identity, which Trudgill (2000) defines as “covert prestige”. Similarly, Ammour and Belmekki (2022) demonstrate that well-educated people use more standard and prestigious language compared to less-educated people, who often rely on non-standard dialects. According to Bourdieu's linguistic capital (1991), language serves as a reflection of individuals' position in society, functioning as a symbolic form of power that permits them to achieve social mobility and prestige within a speech community. Hence, it is worth mentioning that speakers' educational and occupational levels are of significant value, as they play a decisive role in influencing linguistic behaviour and class (Lainiyah & Musfiroh, 2020).

2. Research Methods

The study employed a qualitative-dominant mixed method approach designed not only to examine the morpho-phonological adaptations of French loanwords in ASA but also to provide a context-sensitive understanding of the underlying factors influencing such adaptations. The qualitative dominance of this approach stems from the study's primary aim to investigate how linguistic variation elucidates the social meanings of class-based patterns embedded in language use. However, and although qualitative inquiry constitutes the core of the research design, a supplementary quantitative component was incorporated to enhance the analytical precision of the study. Specifically, it examined participants' attitudes towards the status of French in the Algerian society and on French loanword integration into ASA system. In addition, a statistical analysis was conducted to determine how many individuals used each loanword during the storytelling task to support the qualitative interpretations with empirically grounded tendencies.

2.1 Participants

The study sample consisted of 139 participants from the centre of Relizane, representing diverse educational and occupational levels. This heterogeneity was essential for examining the role of social class in influencing the morpho-phonological adaptation of French loanwords in ASA. A purposive sampling strategy was therefore employed. Essentially, the selection was motivated by two considerations: accessibility to participants within the research site and the need to capture sociolinguistic. This is to ensure that the findings are representative of the different social classes and their influence on French loanwords adaptation. Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study before being interviewed between March and May 2025, and they subsequently provided their informed consent to participate. Hence, ethical considerations were maintained to ensure participant confidentiality and voluntarily participation.

2.2 Data Collection Instruments

To answer the research questions, two data instruments were employed. First, unstructured storytelling tasks were audio-recorded to capture the morpho-phonological adaptations of French loanwords as they occur in natural contexts. Complementing this, a semi-structured interview was

conducted to investigate the underlying motivations for their borrowing practices. Its use is particularly relevant for this study due to its effectiveness in gathering self-reported data on participants' perceptions and borrowing behaviours. Hence, both depth and contextual sensitivity were ensured across their responses (Spradley, 1979).

2.3 Data Analysis

The data collected were systematically analysed to identify patterns relevant to the objectives of the study. The two close-ended questions were statistically probed to illustrate participants' attitudes towards French and French loanword integration in ASA speech system. The remaining responses were thematically coded to investigate the motives behind their borrowing practices. To ensure anonymity, participants were assigned coded identifiers (P1, P2, P3, etc). Initially, the audio-recorded speech data were systematically tabulated to present the pronunciation patterns of French loanwords across the three social classes to provide a basis for the subsequent interview analysis.

2.3.1 Results

The classification of participants followed Labov's (1966) sociolinguistic framework, which highlights that occupation and education are key determinants of social class. Before proceeding with the results, it is noteworthy that the conceptualisation of social class in Algeria slightly differs from that of Labov's with regards to "upper-class". According to him, upper-class speakers have inherited wealth, exclusive social networks, and symbolic dominance, which is notably absent in Algeria, particularly in Relizane. Several studies have the colonial upper-class, which was based on inherited wealth and European dominance, was dismantled after independence. Thus, contemporary social hierarchies are predominantly shaped by education, professional achievement, and economic self-made success (Lazreg, 1994; Rose, 2011). Political and economic power is mainly centred on highly positioned professionals and business owners rather than inherited class (Metz, 1992). For the purpose of this study, participants were classified into three social categories: lower-class, middle-class, and upper-middle class. The upper-middle class includes individuals who perform non-manual work with a higher social positioning through advanced education and prestigious professional roles, or economic self-made success. In contrast, the middle-class consists individuals with moderate income, non-manual jobs, and whose social status is generally linked to stable employment and moderate educational attainment compared to the upper-middle ones. The lower class, however, comprises individuals with manual-work and whose income and social mobility remain limited. This classification reflects the specific sociocultural realities of Relizane while aligning with sociolinguistic approaches to class and language variation. Accordingly, the following table represents participants' educational backgrounds, occupation, and number of individuals in each category.

Table -1-: Occupational and Educational Profiles of Participants

Educational background	Occupation	Number of participants
Primary education (primary school)	Farmer	06
Lower-secondary education (middle school)	House maid	10
Secondary education (high school)	Bus driver	15
BAC	Bus driver	5
	Nurses	6
	Inspector	5
	Security agent	5
License	Unemployed	13
Master's or equivalent	Lawyer	5
	Secondary school teacher	8
	Restaurant owner	6
Doctorate	University doctor	16
	Professor	6
	Lawyer	6
	judge	5
Long-cycle professional degrees	Doctor	10
	Dentist	9
	Pharmacist	8
Total		139

The table above displays the participants' levels of education and occupation across the social classes. The subsequent table presents the three social categories and the placement of each participant according to their educational attainment and the nature of their occupation

Table -2-: Participants' Social Class Distribution by Occupation and Educational Background

Social Class	Participants' occupation	Total number of participants
Upper-middle class	Doctor, dentist, pharmacist, university doctor, professor,	66

	lawyer, judge, restaurant owner	
Middle class	Nurses, inspector, secondary school teacher	19
Lower class	Security agent- bus driver, farmer, housemaid, unemployed	54

The second table displays the distribution of participants across the social class categories, classified primarily on the basis of their occupation, with educational level serving as a complementary indicator. The upper-middle class participants constituted the largest group, comprising 66 of the total number, followed by lower-class with 54 participants, and middle class with 19 participants. It is crucial to highlight that this distribution was not predetermined; rather, it reflects the voluntary participation of the subjects.

The following table illustrates how selected French loan nouns undergo morpho-phonological adaptation in ASA according to the social classification of the participants.

Table -3- The morpho-phonological Adaptation of French Loan Nouns in ASA System

Adapted French Loanword	Social Class						Type of adaptation
	Upper-Class		Middle-Clas		Lower-Class		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	
/banka/	00	00%	10	53%	54	100 %	Vowel substitution/ gender declension
/biru/	00	00%	17	89%	42	78%	Vowel substitution
/kuzina/	31	45%	17	89%	42	78%	Vowel substitution/ gender declension
/llāmba/ /llāmbat/	2	3%	16	84%	50	93%	Gemination/ gender declension/ vowel substitution/ consonant substitution/ feminine plurality adaptation
/bulis/- /pulis/ /polis/	3	4%	17	89%	50	93%	Consonant and vowel substitution
/ksida/ /aksidu/	00	00%	7	37%	4	7%	Omission/ vowel substitution

/filadʒ/ /viladʒ/	00	00%	16	84%	50	93%	Consonant substitution/
/vaksə/	00	00%	16	38%	00	00%	Vowel substitution
/maʃina/	22	32%	16	38%	50	93%	Gender inflection
/batʃimat/	00	00%	9	47%	40	74%	Consonant substitution/ feminine plurality adaptation
/tiliviziu//tilifiziu/	00	00%	10	53%	50	93%	Vowel constitution Consonant constitution
/simana/	19	28%	17	89%	40	74%	Vowel constitution/ gender inflection
/priza/	00	00%	14	74%	12	22%	Gender inflection
/ferʃitʃa/	14	20%	13	68%	54	100%	Vowel substitution/ consonant substitution/ gender inflection
/lista/	00	00%	14	74%	40	74%	
/boʃtʃa/	00	00%	17	89%	10	19%	Consonant constitution/ gender inflection
/kartʃab/	00	00%	10	53%	00	00%	Omission/ consonant substitution
/tʃabla/ /tʃablat/ /tʃwabel/	5	7%	16	84%	54	100%	Consonant substitution/ gender inflection
/ddosji/	28	41%	17	89%	00	00%	Vowel substitution
/mitʃra/	00	00%	8	42%	00	00%	Consonant substitution/ gender inflection
/ʃʃikula/	19	28%	10	53%	54	100%	Gemination/ gender inflection
/revitʃajma/	2	3%	10	53%	49	91%	Consonant substitution/ vowel substitution

/tilifu:n/	34	43%	14	74%	50	93%	Vowel substitution
Total	43%		89%		100%		

Simultaneously, the second table presents the morpho-phonological adaptation of French loan verbs in ASA system.

Table -4- The Morpho-Phonological Adaptation of French Loan Verbs in ASA System

Adapted French Loanword	Social Class						Type of Adaptation
	Upper-class		Middle-class		Lower-class		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	
/neprofiti/	3	4%	17	89%	40	74%	Derivational paradigm
/jiksplikili/	00	00%	17	89%	00	00%	Derivational paradigm/ vowel substitution
/analizit/	00	00%	15	79%	33	61%	Derivational paradigm
/organizina/	00	00%	00	00%	00	00%	Derivational paradigm/ gender inflection
/jpusini/	00	00%	17	89%	54	100%	Derivational paradigm
/tili farʒitah/	00	00%	17	89%	54	100%	Derivational paradigm/ consonant substitution
/fargitah/ /sʰarʒitu/	00	00%	17	89%	54	100%	Derivational paradigm
/ivititah//ivititha/	00	00%	16	84%	10	19%	Derivational paradigm/ gender inflection
/duli:tah/	5	8%	14	74%	00	00%	Derivational paradigm
/stʰasjonit/	9	14%	10	53%	00	00%	Derivational paradigm
/tfondʒa/	3	4%	17	89%	54	100%	Derivational paradigm/ consonant substitution

/camuflit/	00	00%	10	53%	30	56%	Derivational paradigm
/nkmasa/	00	00%	16	84%	54	100%	Derivational paradigm/ omission/ vowel substitution
/monʒit/	00	00%	14	74%	10	19%	Derivational adaptation/ vowel substitution
/fliksi:t/	4	6%	17	89%	54	100%	Derivational paradigm
/tlonsat/	00	00%	9	47%	00	00%	Derivational paradigm/ vowel substitution
/kmondit/	00	00%	17	89%	40	74%	Derivational paradigm/ omission
/koriʒa/	2	3%	7	37%	00	00%	Derivational paradigm
/organizina/	2	3%	8	42%	00	00%	Derivational paradigm
/virifitah/- /firifitah/	00	00%	17	89%	14	26%	Derivational paradigm/ consonant substitution/ vowel substitution
/ngari/	5	8%	10	53%	00	00%	Derivational paradigm
/sisponditah/	00	00%	2	11%	40	74%	Derivational paradigm/ vowel substitution
/ivaluiti rapor/?	00	00%	6	32%	16	30%	Derivational paradigm
Total		8%		89%		100%	

The analysis of the data reveals systematic patterns in the morpho-phonological adaptation of French loan nouns in Algerian Spoken Arabic (ASA). Notable procedures were undergone to nativize the nouns, including, vowel and consonant alternation, omission, and gemination. Consonant and vowel alternation occurred to substitute the French phonemes that do not exist in ASA system, thereby ensuring that the borrowed nouns conform to its phonological structure. Meanwhile, omission was used to simplify the pronunciation of phonetically complex French nouns, while gemination preserved the syllabic weight and stress patterns of ASA. In addition, inflectional adaptations were observed, particularly in adding the morphological marker for gender inflection, as exemplified by /lista/. These inflectional adjustments were systematically applied to conform to the morphological structure of ASA. Similarly, loan verbs underwent both phonological and morphological adaptations.

On the phonological level, vowel alternation and consonant substitution were notably significant in the integration of French sounds into ASA phonological inventory. On the morphological level, derivational adaptation was used to incorporate French verbs into ASA verbal paradigms, as these verbs were given additional prefixes and suffixes to align with ASA conjugational patterns. Inflectional procedures further extended these adaptations by marking tense and subject reference, as observed in /organizina/ and /neprofiti/.

Importantly, the results indicate that social class has a significant role on the morpho-phonological adaptation of French loanwords. Within the upper-class group (n= 66), nouns were adapted at a higher rate (43%) compared to verbs adaptation (8%), highlighting that upper-class speakers are more likely to preserve the original pronunciation of the French loan verbs possibly due to their grammatical and social salience. Meanwhile, nouns, which are commonly used to label concrete objects and frequently encountered in everyday discourse, are more readily adapted to conform to the ASA system. Middle-class speakers, on the other hand, demonstrated a stronger tendency towards loanword adaptation, with both nouns and verbs undergoing adaptation at a similar rate (89%). A closer examination revealed that those who did not adapt were predominantly women. While gender is not a central variable in this study, this finding is sociolinguistically significant; despite belonging to the middle class, these women aligned themselves with prestige norms, as they notably treated French as a form of linguistic capital. Lower-class participants, on the other hand, consistently adapted the French loanwords to ASA patterns. However, the data revealed subtle but salient differences between middle- and lower-class speakers. For instance, the sentence “je l’ai chargé” was realised as “/ʃarʒitheh/” among middle-class speakers, whereas lower-class speakers pronounced it as “/sʰarʒitu/”. This difference highlights two tendencies: first, the middle-class variant preserves the sound /ʃ/ to approximately maintain the French root “change”, whereas the lower-class form replaces the phoneme /ʃ/ with /s/ to fully align with ASA phonological system. In this sense, middle-class speakers were more likely to preserve pronunciation closer to French, while lower-class realization highlights a stronger tendency to ASA morpho-phonological structure, suggesting that loanword adaptation is not only a linguistic process but also a reflection to social class, where preservation and morpho-phonological adaptation convey prestige, social belonging and cultural identity within the speech community.

The subsequent section presents the analysis of the interview data. The two close-ended preliminary questions were statistically summarised to highlight participants position of French as a language within the Algerian society and how they perceive the integration of French loanwords in ASA. Next, thematic analysis for participants’ open-ended responses is proceeded to identify recurring themes.

Attitudes towards French language	Percentage	Number of participants
Prestigious language	57%	79
A means of communication	26%	36
Rejected spoken language	17%	24

The table above displays the results of participants’ perceptions of French status in Algerian society. The data revealed that the majority of the participants (57%, N= 79) associate French with prestige, highlighting the role of French in education and social advancement. This association suggests that French retains linguistic capital within Algerian society, particularly in relation to class mobility. However, 26% (N= 36) explicitly refused to accept French as a spoken language. This may stem from nationalist ideologies, valorisation of Algerian Spoken Arabic as a marker of linguistic identity, or rejection of the prolonged language contact between the two countries. On the other hand, 17% (N=

24) considered French as a means of communication, reflecting a more neutral stance that neither acknowledges nor rejects its value. This perception indicates that French is normalised in daily communication without being ascribed any symbolic or social significance.

Table N°05: Participants' Perceptions of French Loanwords Integration in ASA

Attitudes towards French loanwords integration in ASA	Percentage	Number of participants
Positive	83%	115
Negative	17%	24

The second figure illustrates participants' perceptions of French loanwords integration in ASA. The results revealed that a substantial majority of participants (81 %, N= 97) expressed positive attitudes. However, a smaller yet significant proportion of participants (19%, N= 23) held negative attitudes. The findings suggest that French loanwords integration into ASA is generally viewed as a positive attribute by participants, which demonstrates the practical and communicative value of these loanwords in filling lexical gaps within ASA. The minority who expressed negative attitudes may likely perceive loanwords as culturally or historically sensitive, highlighting a symbolic rejection of French due to its association with colonial influence and the need to assert a cultural and linguistic identity.

- **French as a Marker of Prestige and Social Position**

The data revealed that French serves as a prestige language among upper-middle class speakers, further reflecting a notable association between language, social position, and education. One participant noted, “je préfère prononcer les mots français tels qu'ils sont. Au boulot, j'utilise presque que ça, mon milieu social est rempli de personnes qui parlent un français pur, et en fait, ça me paraît pas logique de les transformer alors qu'ils existent déjà come il faut” (P12) (I prefer to pronounce French loanwords as they are. At work, I mostly use French, my social circle speakers pure French, and honestly, it doesn't seem logical to me to transform them when they already exist in their proper form). This indicates that maintaining the original form is not merely a linguistic choice but also a marker of social identity. By preserving the standard French pronunciation, speakers reinforce their position within a milieu where French carries symbolic capital. Another participant highlighted, “au travail, c'est la seule langue que j'utilise... c'est la seule langue que j'utilise, du coup je dis toujours les mots français comme en français, par habitude...mais parfois j'emploie mon dialecte pour traduire aux patients qui comprennent pas...mais les mots empruntés au français, je les prononce toujours à la française, que ce soit au travail, à la maison ou avec des amis” (P20) (at work, French is the only language I use. Sometimes, I switch to my dialect to explain for patients who do not understand. However, French borrowed words are always pronounced in their original form, whether at work, at home, or with friends”. In particular, the first participant's statement demonstrates the normative code function of French within professional and social settings, where deviation from the standard pronunciation may be perceived as less sophisticated. Similarly, the other excerpt highlights original French pronunciation within formal and informal interactions. Although code-switching practices between French and ASA were used to facilitate comprehension, French loanwords were preserved in their standard form rather than being adapted to the ASA system, reflecting the influence of

frequent professional exposure to French in reinforcing its pronunciation of French loanwords in everyday discourse.

- **French as a Linguistic Capital**

While gender is not a central variable in this study, it is noteworthy that preserving French pronunciation was particularly evident among female middle-class participants. This suggests that women appear more attuned to prestige-oriented linguistic norms, as they selectively mobilised French as a marker of competence and social positioning. As one participant explained, “parfois, je change un peu les mots français dans un sens algérien parce que ça fait partie de notre vie...mais la plupart du temps, je me retrouve à les dire avec la prononciation originale, parce que je connais la bonne prononciation” (P10). While they acknowledged that loanword adaptation occurs in casual or dialectal speech, they emphasized that, in most cases, original French pronunciation is preserved, highlighting the role of French as a linguistic capital. That is to say, the standard French pronunciation becomes a source that participants can draw to assert linguistic competence.

Beyond professional contexts, participants reported that their use of French extended into social interactions where the language carries symbolic value. That is to say, speakers reported a heightened tendency to preserve the original French pronunciation in socially marked contexts, such as formal gatherings where French predominates, interactions with interlocutors who possess fluency in the language, and addressing individuals of higher occupational standing. As one participant noted, “avec mes collègues infirmières, on algérianise parfois les mots empruntés au français...mais quand je parle avec le médecin, je fais toujours attention à les dire en français correct” (P15) (when I speak to fellow nurses, we do nativise the French loanwords. However, when I am speaking to the doctor, I always make sure to pronounce them in their original form). This excerpt highlights the role of French as a linguistic capital through which speakers strategically position themselves in relation to others. Thus, its use emerged as a contextually contingent practice, notably enacted to signal linguistic competence and align with prestige-oriented norms.

- **French Loanwords Adaptation for Belonging and Cultural Identity**

The data revealed that the majority of middle-class and all lower-class participants morpho-phonologically adapted the French loanwords in ASA system. As one participant highlighted, “manif as^hlan ʕadhum fronsi darwak” (P76) (I don’t even consider them as originally French now). This notably highlights how French loanword adaptation communicates a sense of belonging to the Algerian speech community while simultaneously negotiates the historical influence of French on ASA. Hence, participants’ loanword adaptation functions not merely as a linguistic behaviour but also as a sociocultural practice, further highlighting an awareness of the colonial legacy and an assertion of a distinct Algerian identity. Another participant explained, “meʃi manaʕraff nentat^hqhum nifan... ana bark manebyiʃ... w zid nos^h ʃaʕb yahdarhum b dziria” (P34) (it’s not like I don’t know how to pronounce them...I just don’t want to...plus most Algerians pronounce them in an Algerian way”. This response highlights a conscious choice of loanword adaptation, reflecting both personal preference and social belonging. Another factor influencing the degree of the integration of French loanwords into ASA system is the speakers’ attitudes toward French. Some participants viewed it as an external linguistic influence and, whether consciously or unconsciously, resisted the integration of its original pronunciation into Algerian Spoken Arabic. Consequently, they either nativized them or avoided using them when an Algerian Arabic alternative exists. As one participant explained,

“Francais rahi luya bark... meġi lazam netġalem kifef yentqoha...yir li rahum daxlin ġandna bezaf” (P87) (French is just a language... I don’t have to learn how they speak it... the fact that borrowed French words are a part of us is already a lot”. This notably highlights a conscious rejection to fully adhere to the standard French pronunciation. By doing so, speakers align with ASA community patterns to signal belonging and shared identity, highlighting the role of loanword adaptation not merely as a linguistic process but also as a socially embedded practice.

2.3.2 Discussion

The present study examines the role of social class in influencing the morpho-phonological adaptation of French loanwords in ASA system. Evidently, the majority of upper-middle class speakers maintained the standard French form as a marker of social prestige, including their occupational position and educational level. (Lindberg, 2024). A subset of middle-class speakers preserved the original French pronunciation to align with prestige-oriented norms and linguistic capital, lending further support to Bourdieu’s (1991) linguistic capital, which emphasises how certain ways of speaking are socially valued. The fact that middle-class females were more likely to preserve the original French form suggests that women may be more sensitive to social prestige markers in language, a pattern noted in sociolinguistic research (Labov, 2001). However, the majority of middle-class speakers morpho-phonologically adapted the loanwords in ASA system to signal social belonging and Algerian shared identity. Similarly, lower-class exhibited the same pattern of adaptation to reflect a sociocultural orientation toward community identity rather than external prestige, lending credence to Trudgill’s (1974) idea of covert prestige, where non-standard language varieties serve to index solidarity and express group identity within the speech community. The findings of the study align with those of Zhang and Lian (2024), Zenner et al. (2019), Nimavat and Upadhyay (2025), who revealed that language and social class are notably interconnected, with an individual’s speech patterns, accent, and loanword adaptation often reflecting their position within the social hierarchy. Linguistic variables, in this sense, serve as a mirror of social class. Hence, social classification is encoded in individuals’ linguistic behaviours, further reflecting individuals’ social position and sociocultural identity rather than linguistic “sexism”. Seminal sociolinguistic studies, such as Labov (1972) on language variation and social class, highlight that language serves as a representation of society itself rather than a personal preference. Accordingly, avoiding linguistic discrimination is essential for social cohesion (Nchifor, 2013; Baumgartan & Du Bois, 2019).

3. Conclusion

The current research is conducted to investigate the influence of social class in the morpho-phonological adaptation of French loanwords in Algerian Spoken Arabic system (hereafter ASA), targeting participants from the centre of Relizane as a sample. The findings revealed that patterns of loanword adaptation are closely tied to social classification. Upper-middle class speakers preserved the original French pronunciation to reflect the symbolic and prestige-laden value of the language, whereas lower-class speakers predominantly adapted the French loanwords to conform to ASA system to express their Algerian shared identity. Middle-class speakers, however, a subset, particularly female participants, maintained the standard form as a linguistic capital, whereas the majority nativized the loanwords to signal social belonging within the speech community.

The investigation of French loanword adaptation in relation to social class not only deepens the understanding of social classification in shaping lexical borrowing patterns but also contributes to broader discussion on language variation, social class, and identity expression. While the study provides a context-sensitive understanding of class and loanword adaptation, its scope was limited to a specific social and geographical context. Ultimately, given the context-dependent nature of the study, future research could adopt a comparative approach across different Algerian regions, examine

generational differences, and highlight gender-related variations to further elucidate the influence of social factors on the adaptation of French loanwords.

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