

A Study of Linguistic Diversity in Algeria: History and Present and Future

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Abstract: Language is a phenomenon of social characteristics , It is also one of the main factors in maintaining the unity and cohesion of any society. Language is influenced by history, society, culture, politics, it is a symbol of national identity. It not only plays an important role in national innovation and development, but also in national unity. Algeria is a multilingual country, the development of its language is inseparable from historical reasons, and with the development of society, adjusting and changing.

Keywords: The Belt and Road; Language; Algeria; Arabic; Multilingual country

1. Introduction

Algeria is a complex and multilingual country. Due to historical, religious, and colonialist influences, it is home to several languages, including Arabic, Berber, French, and English. As the official language of the country, Arabic is widely used in government, education, news media..... In addition, there are some other languages in the country that are spoken in different regions. Among them, Berber is the main minority language in Algeria. French is also widely used in business and education, as the French colonized the country for more than 130 years, and Algeria still maintains close cultural and economic ties with France. In addition, there are some regional languages in Algeria, such as Tuareg, Kabere, and Motomen.

2. Research implications

The diversity of Algerian languages is inextricably linked to its historical background. During the colonial period, Algeria was under French rule for 100 years, and its location at the junction of Asia, Africa and Europe led to frequent cultural exchanges since ancient times, which led to the linguistic diversity of Algeria, and is still maintained in Algerian society today.

However, the diversity of Algerian languages is also facing changing times. In particular, due to the influence of Islamization and patriotism in recent years, the development of Arabic and English has been actively encouraged at the national level, and the influence of French as a common language has been weakened, so its use has gradually been restricted. In addition, with the spread of modern communication technology, some young people are more inclined to use English to communicate, which has had a certain impact on Algeria's linguistic diversity.

This article will discuss the historical background, current situation and future development trend of Algerian linguistic diversity, aiming to find the underlying logic of current development from the historical origins, so as to create a sustainable future for Algerian linguistic diversity.

3. The historical evolution of linguistic diversity in Algeria

Algeria is located in the Maghreb region of northern Africa. There has been a linguistic competition between Berber and Arabic since ancient times. In 1830, Algeria became a French colony, and French as the language of the colonizers penetrated into various fields such as education and culture, but the native Arabic was regarded as a foreign language. It was not until 18 March 1962 that the signing of the Evian Agreement brought an end to Algeria's seven-and-a-half-year war of national liberation, which led to the emergence of Algeria as an independent nation-state. After independence, Algeria was faced with the question of how to reconcile the colonial language-French with the native Arabic language, and Berber-the national language. The government strengthens national cultural identity and cohesion through language. As can be seen from the country's language policy since 1962, Algeria's

language policy after independence has been divided into two phases: “assimilation” (1962-1999) and “pluralism” (1999-present). In the previous stage, the country took de-Frenchization as an important measure to completely free itself from the influence of French colonial rule, proposing an Arabicized language policy, making Arabic its official language and preventing the spread and development of French and Berber languages in the region. However, this did not solve the complex national problem in Algeria, but instead intensified the Amazigh movement. In the second phase, Arabic remained the official language of the country, but the government de-emphasized Arabic monolingualism and recognized the legitimacy of the presence of French and Berber languages, a more inclusive language policy that gave Algerians from different ethnic groups a sense of national identity and increased national unity and cohesion.^[1]

4. The current state of linguistic diversity in Algeria

4.1 Arabic

After Algeria’s independence in 1962, Arabic was taught only in schools in mosques or in schools run by the Association of Muslim Scholars, which were only a minority throughout the country. The new government decided to promote the teaching of Arabic in public schools and tried to improve the level of Arabic. As a result, most schools use teachers from the Arab Maghreb region, particularly Egypt and Syria. In 1963, out of 1.3 million learners, the number of people who could read Arabic was estimated at 300,000, which is a very small number. As of 2012, despite the provision of educational curricula and the establishment of literacy ministries by the State, generations of people affected by French colonialism were still not fluent in Arabic.

In today’s social reality, the number of young students who are proficient in the official Arabic language is very small. The situation of it is not optimistic, and the pressure for development is enormous. This was stated by a professor at the Faculty of Media at the University of Algiers: “The status of the Arabic language is linked to its position in society as a whole, as it has been changing under the guidance of policy since independence. Although the school promotes standard Arabic, it is counterproductive for many students, which negatively affects the way he learns. For example, Many graduate students are not proficient in the classical Arabic alphabet, which has to do with the environment, Algerian society and even the political class that preferred French in the past. Naziha Wahabi, a teaching researcher at Breida University, said about the Arabic proficiency of college students: “Algerian universities are witnessing a significant decline in the proficiency of students in Arabic.” As for the reasons for the low level of proficiency of students in using standard Arabic, the study points out that this is due to a number of factors, including the tyranny of the local language and its policy guidance in official institutions, the lack of attention to Arabic in the mainstream media, and the lack of an Arabic language environment.

In Algeria, the Arabic language used for everyday communication is very different from the language of writing. It is considered a highly variable vocabulary that includes important differences. For example, the pronunciation of the letter “QAF” is replaced by the letter (K); The influence of the Andalusian dialect from Andalusian refugees is also reflected in the coastal dialects. It can be said that the Algerian dialect is part of the Maghreb dialect.

4.2 French

In the historical context of the French colonization of Algeria, the French language is widely used in today’s Algerian society, such as in the field of culture, media, and university education. Although this is not mentioned in the external propaganda of any official state, French can be considered a quasi-official language of Algeria. The lingua franca of communication in Algeria is French, and this is particularly evident in the field of education. It is part of the higher education curriculum and is widely used (every Algerian who teaches in public schools and attends high school is fluent in reading and writing in French, the rest speak French and generally understand French). Two-thirds of Algerians are characterized by a strong familiarity with French, and half of them speak French as a second language. However, Algeria has not yet joined the International Organization of la Francophonie or the International Organization of la Francophonie.

4.3 Berber

Berber is no longer widely spoken in Algerian society today.

4.4 English

Due to the importance of English as the language of global communication, the Algerian government has been teaching English as a compulsory second foreign language to fourth-grade intermediate students since the late 70s of the 20th century. In September 1993, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education introduced English and French as elective subjects. The Ministry of Education said English learning was encouraged because it was “the language of scientific knowledge”. However, for a long time, very few Algerians

spoke standard English, and the majority of those who could communicate fluently in English were young people.

In 2019, the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education announced the direction of strengthening the teaching of English, with the aim of breaking away from the long-held control of the French language. Since 2022, English has become a basic subject of instruction in primary school. The guidance of the ruling party's policy of "Arabization" will provide positive support for the promotion of the Arabic language, and at the same time, it will also lead the Algerian people to support the rule of the ruling party more and increase national pride and national self-confidence. In recent years, there has been an increase in demand from the media, elites, educational unions and associations of parents of students to initiate a language transition in Algeria in favor of English as the language of instruction instead of French rather than an alternative language for Arabic instruction.

4.5 Sub-Saharan African languages

Barbari, found in the Tabara oasis of the Sahara Desert, is a form of Sunai language influenced by the Amazigh language, which is widely spoken in the southern part near Niger. Daosak is another northern language belonging to the Sunai language family, spoken in the far south, with Bedouin speakers throughout northern Mali.

In addition to this, there are several thousand Hussian speakers in the south.

It can be said that there is a mixture of languages in Algerian society. According to the researchers, "the language spoken at home and on the street is a mixture of Algerian dialect and French words." The linguistic situation in Algeria is linked to many social contexts and centres because of multilingualism and the difficulties it entails.

5. Recommendations for the future development of linguistic diversity in Algeria

5.1 Raise the status of the Arabic language. Today, despite a number of efforts at the national level to raise the status of Arabic as an official language, it is undeniable that Arabic has long since been reduced to the religious language of the Qur'an. Arabic is the language that brings together all languages and maintains national cohesion, a national identity that plays a role that cannot be ignored in the hearts and minds of the people. Therefore, guided by government policy, schools must elevate it to the top of all that is taught in the school system in order to maintain its supreme status as a language. Specific recommendations are as follows:

- a. Spreading linguistic awareness to preserve the Arabic language.
- b. Coordinating the efforts of institutions and individuals in disseminating the use of the Arabic language.
- c. Supporting the teaching of the Qur'an in madrasas, the mastery of the Arabic language in the reading and memorization of the Qur'an, and the interest in the development and harmonization of scientific terminology among Arab countries.
- d. Instilling pride in the Arabic language in the child's heart.
- e. Supporting the efforts of researchers in developing language instruction.
- f. Closing liaison with scientific institutions such as the Supreme Council of the Arabic Language.
- g. Writing and translating books and scientific references from Arabic are encouraged.

5.2 Respect the national lingua franca, Berber, and promote its education to a certain extent, but not allow its development to be imposed on the official Arabic language, and not to belittle the official Arabic language.

6. Conclusion

Language is one of the most important ties that bring human nations together to highlight their common identity, since its role is not limited to being a tool for linguistic communication, but also a means of connecting generations of people of the same country, transmitting its historical heritage and knowledge production among them in a way that strengthens cohesion among its members and strengthens a sense of belonging. In general, the linguistic diversity of Algeria, as an important part of Algerian culture, has important historical, cultural, social and economic values that need to be fully protected and developed. Algeria still has a long way to go in using linguistic planning to build a multi-ethnic culture, to preserve the identity of all ethnic groups and to maintain the unity and stability of the country as a whole.

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