

The Algerian Sociolinguistic Situation and the Problem of Multilingualism: A Descriptive-Analytical Study

Dr. Choumousse Berrezoug

Moulay Tahar University, Saida , Algeria

choumousseb@gmail.com | <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-9431-7867>

Abstract

This study aimed to describe and analyze the Algerian sociolinguistic situation as a model of a multilingual society and to examine the principal forms and functions of multilingualism within this context. Particular attention was given to the relationships among Classical Arabic, vernacular Arabic, Amazigh, and French, as well as to the distinction between diglossia and bilingualism. The study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach based on a desk review and qualitative analysis of specialized sociolinguistic literature addressing the Algerian and broader Maghrebi linguistic context. The analysis indicates that linguistic plurality in Algeria is characterized by the coexistence of different linguistic varieties and languages performing differentiated social functions. Diglossia is particularly evident in the relationship between Classical Arabic and vernacular Arabic, while contact between Arabic and Amazigh varieties also reflects complex patterns of linguistic coexistence. Bilingualism is particularly visible in the Arabic–French relationship, which has been shaped by the historical legacy of French colonialism and its continuing presence in several institutional, educational, economic, technical, and media domains. The findings suggest that multilingualism should not be considered inherently threatening to Classical Arabic. Vernacular Arabic and Amazigh generally perform complementary communicative, cultural, and identity-related functions, whereas French presents a more significant challenge where its functional and symbolic position overlaps with domains traditionally associated with Arabic. The study therefore argues for a balanced language-planning approach that recognizes linguistic diversity while strengthening the functional capacity and social status of Classical Arabic.

Keywords: multilingualism, diglossia, bilingualism, language planning, Arabization, Classical Arabic, Algerian sociolinguistic situation.

Introduction

Language is not merely a neutral instrument of communication; it is also a social institution closely connected to identity, culture, education, power, and social organization. The linguistic situation of a society therefore reflects the historical, political, cultural, and educational processes that have shaped its development. For this reason, the study of language use requires attention

¹ Received: January 06, 2026; Accepted: April 11, 2026; Published: August 20, 2026



not only to linguistic structures but also to the social functions and domains in which different languages and varieties are employed.

Language planning constitutes an important dimension of this process because it seeks to organize language use, determine the functions assigned to particular languages or varieties, and develop the linguistic resources necessary for education, administration, communication, and social development. From this perspective, language planning is not limited to the technical regulation of linguistic forms; it also involves decisions concerning the status, functions, dissemination, and development of languages within society (Al-Fassi Al-Fihri, 1990, 2007; Abu al-Azm, n.d.).

The Algerian linguistic environment provides a particularly relevant context for sociolinguistic investigation. Its linguistic landscape has been shaped by the coexistence of Classical Arabic, Algerian vernacular varieties, Amazigh varieties, and French. These linguistic resources do not perform identical functions. Rather, they occupy different domains and enjoy different degrees of institutional recognition, social prestige, and everyday use. Such a situation makes Algeria an appropriate context for examining multilingualism, diglossia, bilingualism, language contact, and language planning (Bala'id, 2003; Benini, 2017; Lasab, 2009).

The relationship between Classical Arabic and its vernacular varieties has traditionally been discussed in terms of diglossia. Ferguson (1959) established one of the most influential formulations of the concept by describing a situation in which distinct varieties perform differentiated functions within the same speech community. The Arabic sociolinguistic context subsequently became one of the major settings in which diglossia was discussed, particularly in relation to the coexistence of a formal or literary variety and spoken vernacular varieties (Marçais, 1930; Al-Zaghloul, n.d.; Kaida Mahmoud, 2002).

At the same time, the Algerian linguistic situation cannot be reduced to Arabic diglossia alone. The presence of Amazigh varieties and the continuing use of French have produced a more complex sociolinguistic configuration. The interaction between Arabic and French, in particular, is related to Algeria's colonial history and to the continuing use of French in a number of institutional, educational, economic, technical, and communicative domains (Grandguillaume, 1995; Benini, 2017; Lasab, 2009).

The language question in Algeria is consequently related not only to communication but also to identity, cultural belonging, education, and national language policy. Questions concerning Arabization, multilingualism, and the status of Classical Arabic have therefore occupied an important place in linguistic and educational discussions in Algeria and the wider Maghreb (Belkandouz, 2015; Ibrahim, 2007; Al-Wadghiri, 2014).

The present study examines this situation through a descriptive-analytical reading of the relevant literature. Rather than treating multilingualism as intrinsically positive or negative, it investigates the functional distribution of the linguistic resources available in Algerian society and asks whether linguistic plurality necessarily threatens Classical Arabic or whether it can be managed as a linguistic and cultural resource.

Study Problem and Questions

The central problem of this study concerns the relationship between multilingualism in Algeria and the status and functions of Classical Arabic. The problem arises from the coexistence of several languages and varieties that differ in their historical origins, sociocultural functions, institutional positions, and degrees of social prestige.

The Algerian situation is particularly complex because Classical Arabic coexists with vernacular Arabic varieties, Amazigh varieties, and French. These forms of linguistic plurality do not necessarily constitute equivalent phenomena. Some represent relationships between varieties,

while others involve contact between structurally different languages. Consequently, a distinction must be made between diglossia and bilingualism when analyzing the Algerian sociolinguistic situation (Ferguson, 1959; Marçais, 1930; Kaida Mahmoud, 2002).

Accordingly, the study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the principal features of the sociolinguistic map of Algerian society?
2. What is meant by multilingualism, and what are its principal causes and forms in the Algerian context?
3. How are Classical Arabic, vernacular Arabic, Amazigh, and French distributed across different communicative and social domains?
4. Does multilingualism, particularly in its diglossic and bilingual forms, constitute a threat to the status of Classical Arabic, or can linguistic diversity be employed as a resource?

Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to:

- describe the principal components of the Algerian linguistic reality;
- identify the major forms of multilingualism found in Algerian society;
- distinguish between diglossia and bilingualism in the Algerian context;
- examine the functions assigned to Classical Arabic, vernacular Arabic, Amazigh, and French;
- analyze the principal historical, social, educational, and linguistic factors underlying multilingualism;
- assess whether multilingualism necessarily threatens the status of Classical Arabic;
- propose general language-planning perspectives capable of reconciling linguistic diversity with the strengthening of Arabic.

Importance and Limitations of the Study

Importance of the Study

The importance of this study derives from the continuing relevance of language to identity, education, cultural continuity, and social development. The Algerian linguistic situation illustrates the complexity that may emerge when several languages and varieties coexist within the same society.

The study also contributes to discussions concerning the status of Arabic in the Maghreb. Previous linguistic research has emphasized that the status of a language cannot be evaluated solely through its formal or constitutional recognition; its actual use in social, institutional, educational, economic, and cultural domains must also be considered (Al-Fassi Al-Fihri, 1990, 2007; Al-Wadghiri, 2014).

Furthermore, the study is important because it avoids treating linguistic diversity as automatically synonymous with linguistic conflict. Instead, it examines the possibility of functional complementarity among linguistic resources. Such an approach is particularly relevant to language planning, because effective language policy must take account of existing linguistic practices rather than simply attempting to eliminate them (Abu al-Azm, n.d.; Al-Qasimi, 2012).

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to a descriptive-analytical examination of sociolinguistic literature dealing with Algeria and the wider Maghreb. It is based on documentary sources rather than direct

fieldwork. Consequently, its conclusions concern patterns and interpretations identified in the reviewed literature rather than statistically generalizable attitudes of the Algerian population.

The study also focuses primarily on the contemporary sociolinguistic situation, while recognizing that this situation has been shaped by historical developments, particularly the colonial period and subsequent language-planning policies.

Definitions of Terms

Multilingualism

Multilingualism generally refers to the coexistence or use of more than one language within an individual, community, institution, or society. It may result from historical contact, migration, colonization, education, political arrangements, or social interaction (Al-Qasimi, 2012; Lahwimel & Hasni, n.d.).

For the purposes of this study, multilingualism refers to the coexistence of several linguistic resources within Algerian society, particularly Classical Arabic, vernacular Arabic, Amazigh, and French, including both diglossic and bilingual relationships.

Diglossia

Diglossia refers to a sociolinguistic situation in which two varieties or linguistic forms coexist within a speech community and perform differentiated functions. In Ferguson's (1959) classical formulation, the varieties are associated with different social domains and levels of formality. The Arabic context has frequently been discussed as a prominent example of diglossia because of the coexistence of a formal/literary variety and spoken vernacular varieties (Marçais, 1930; Al-Zaghloul, n.d.).

In this study, diglossia primarily refers to the functional differentiation between Classical Arabic and vernacular Arabic, while recognizing that the Algerian linguistic situation is more complex than a simple two-variety model.

Bilingualism

Bilingualism refers to the use of two different languages by an individual or within a social environment. In the Algerian context, Arabic–French bilingualism constitutes a particularly important example because of the historical and sociopolitical circumstances that have maintained French in several domains of communication (Grandguillaume, 1995; Benini, 2017).

Study Procedures

Study Approach

The study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach. The descriptive dimension was used to identify and characterize the principal components of the Algerian linguistic situation, while the analytical dimension was employed to interpret the relationships among the different languages and varieties and their respective functions.

This approach is appropriate because the study does not seek to test a causal hypothesis through field experimentation or statistical measurement. Instead, it seeks to synthesize and interpret findings and arguments contained in existing sociolinguistic literature.

Study Population and Instrument

The study population consisted of a corpus of sociolinguistic studies, books, articles, lectures, and other specialized references addressing Arabic, multilingualism, diglossia, bilingualism, language planning, and the Algerian or Maghrebi linguistic context.

The principal instrument was a desk-review framework used to identify, classify, and compare information extracted from the selected literature. The reviewed material was organized around four principal linguistic components: Classical Arabic, vernacular Arabic, Amazigh, and French.

Method of Data Analysis

The literature was analyzed qualitatively according to the following dimensions:

1. the status and functions of Arabic;
2. the sociolinguistic distribution of linguistic varieties and languages;
3. the conceptual distinction between multilingualism, diglossia, and bilingualism;
4. the historical and sociocultural causes of multilingualism;
5. the functional relationship between Classical Arabic and other linguistic resources;
6. the implications of multilingualism for language planning and Arabization.

The analysis therefore focuses on patterns of functional distribution rather than numerical measurement.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

First: The Reality and Status of the Arabic Language

The status of Arabic in contemporary societies is determined by a combination of legal, institutional, social, educational, cultural, and functional factors. Consequently, the formal recognition of a language does not necessarily guarantee an equivalent level of use in all domains. Al-Fassi Al-Fihri (1990, 2007) emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between the formal or legal status of a language, its actual status in everyday and institutional practice, and its internal capacity for development and expression.

From this perspective, the position of Classical Arabic in Algeria should be considered through more than its official status. It is also necessary to examine the domains in which it is actually used and the extent to which it functions effectively as a language of education, administration, science, technology, media, and economic activity.

The distinction between the formal status and practical use of Arabic is particularly important in multilingual societies. Al-Wadghiri (2014) similarly emphasizes the relationship between language, social environment, and cultural identity. Arabic therefore occupies a dual position: it possesses considerable symbolic, cultural, religious, and institutional significance, while simultaneously encountering competition from other linguistic resources in particular domains.

The historical development of language policy in the Maghreb further demonstrates that language cannot be separated from questions of power and social organization. Grandguillaume (1995) shows how language policies and linguistic practices in the Maghreb have been deeply connected to historical and political processes. In the Algerian context, French acquired a particularly strong position during the colonial period, creating linguistic patterns whose effects continued beyond independence.

The status of Arabic therefore involves two interconnected challenges. The first concerns the ability of Classical Arabic to maintain and strengthen its functional position in contemporary domains of knowledge and professional communication. The second concerns the relationship between Classical Arabic and the other linguistic resources used by Algerian speakers.

Language planning becomes particularly important under these circumstances. Al-Fassi Al-Fihri (1990) argues that effective linguistic planning requires a clear understanding of the existing linguistic reality before attempting to modify it. Consequently, Arabization cannot be reduced to replacing one linguistic form with another; it must also involve the development of terminology,

educational resources, institutional practices, and professional capacities that allow Arabic to perform contemporary functions effectively.

Second: The Sociolinguistic Map of Algerian Society

The Algerian linguistic environment is characterized by the coexistence of several linguistic resources whose geographical distribution, social functions, and symbolic values differ. Research on the Algerian linguistic situation points to the importance of distinguishing between everyday spoken varieties and the languages or varieties used in formal, educational, administrative, cultural, and professional contexts (Bala'id, 2003; Benini, 2017; Lasab, 2009).

The main components considered in this study are Amazigh, Classical Arabic, vernacular Arabic, and French.

The Amazigh Language

Amazigh constitutes an important component of Algeria's linguistic and cultural heritage. Its varieties are geographically and socially diverse and include, among others, Kabyle, Chaoui, Mozabite, and Tuareg varieties.

The sociolinguistic position of Amazigh cannot be understood exclusively in terms of the number of speakers. Its significance is also connected to identity, cultural heritage, regional belonging, and linguistic diversity. The coexistence of several Amazigh varieties illustrates the complexity of linguistic standardization and language planning in multilingual societies.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the recognition and development of Amazigh need not necessarily be interpreted as competing with Classical Arabic. Instead, the two can be understood as components performing partly differentiated cultural and communicative functions. Such an approach corresponds to the broader principle that language planning should recognize existing linguistic realities while organizing their functions in a coherent manner (Abu al-Azm, n.d.; Al-Qasimi, 2012).

Classical Arabic

Classical Arabic occupies a central position in the Algerian linguistic system because of its association with formal communication, education, religious discourse, literature, administration, and national cultural identity.

However, the functional distribution of Classical Arabic differs considerably from that of vernacular Arabic. Whereas Classical Arabic is associated primarily with formal and institutional domains, vernacular varieties are more commonly used in spontaneous interpersonal communication. This functional differentiation constitutes one of the central features of Arabic diglossia (Ferguson, 1959; Marçais, 1930).

The continued significance of Classical Arabic is also related to its historical and religious role. Arabic has long functioned as a major language of religious and intellectual production, while its cultural significance extends beyond everyday communication. Ibn Faris (1977) and Ibn Jinni (n.d.), although writing in very different historical contexts, illustrate the longstanding intellectual concern with the structure, functions, and linguistic richness of Arabic.

The contemporary challenge therefore does not necessarily arise from the existence of vernacular Arabic itself. Rather, it concerns whether Classical Arabic possesses sufficient functional capacity and institutional support to meet the demands of modern education, science, technology, administration, and economic activity (Al-Fassi Al-Fihri, 1990, 2007; Al-Wadghiri, 2014).

Vernacular Arabic (Darija)

Algerian vernacular Arabic varieties constitute the principal linguistic resources of everyday interpersonal communication for many speakers. Their forms vary according to geographical and

social environment, and they are used particularly in family interaction, informal communication, popular culture, and ordinary social relations.

The existence of vernacular Arabic alongside Classical Arabic exemplifies the functional differentiation generally associated with diglossia. Ferguson (1959) emphasized that the varieties involved in diglossic situations do not necessarily compete for exactly the same functions. Instead, they may occupy different communicative domains.

The Arabic situation was already described in terms of diglossia by Marçais (1930), whose work contributed significantly to the development of the concept in Arabic sociolinguistic studies. Later discussions of Arabic diglossia further emphasized the distinction between the formal variety and spoken varieties (Al-Zaghloul, n.d.; Kaida Mahmoud, 2002).

Accordingly, vernacular Arabic should not automatically be interpreted as an existential threat to Classical Arabic. Its primary function is often interpersonal and informal, whereas Classical Arabic continues to occupy formal, educational, literary, religious, and institutional domains.

This does not mean that there is no linguistic interaction between the varieties. On the contrary, contact between Classical Arabic and vernacular varieties creates continuous processes of linguistic influence, adaptation, and variation. The issue is therefore better understood as one of functional differentiation and interaction rather than simple competition.

French

French occupies a distinctive position within the Algerian linguistic landscape. Unlike vernacular Arabic and Amazigh, whose presence is closely connected to the country's indigenous linguistic history, French acquired its position primarily through the colonial experience.

The colonial period transformed the linguistic environment and established French in a number of institutional domains. The historical relationship between language and power in the Maghreb has been extensively discussed by Grandguillaume (1995), who demonstrates that language policy cannot be separated from broader political and social structures.

The contemporary persistence of French is therefore partly a historical consequence of colonial language policy and partly the result of its continued functional use. It remains associated in various contexts with education, science, technology, administration, business, and professional communication. Benini (2017) highlights the complexity of language use in the Algerian sociolinguistic environment, particularly where several linguistic resources coexist.

French consequently occupies a different sociolinguistic position from vernacular Arabic. While vernacular Arabic generally performs complementary everyday communicative functions, French may enter domains in which Classical Arabic seeks to establish or strengthen its own presence. This creates a more direct functional relationship between French and Arabic.

Third: The Concept of Multilingualism, Its Causes, and Forms

Multilingualism is a complex sociolinguistic phenomenon that cannot be reduced to the simple numerical presence of several languages. It involves the ways in which languages coexist, interact, and are distributed across social domains.

Al-Qasimi (2012) relates multilingualism to broader questions of human and social development, while Lahwimel and Hasni (n.d.) emphasize its implications for language education. In sociolinguistic terms, multilingualism may emerge from historical contact, migration, political transformations, education, colonization, economic interaction, or geographical proximity.

The Algerian case reflects several of these factors simultaneously.

Historical Factors

The colonial period represents one of the most important historical factors shaping the current linguistic configuration. French colonial rule from 1830 to 1962 established French in institutional and educational domains and contributed to the restructuring of the linguistic hierarchy.

The relationship between language and colonial power has been emphasized in Maghrebi sociolinguistic research. Grandguillaume (1995), in particular, demonstrates that the spread and institutionalization of French cannot be understood independently of colonial political structures.

Migration and Language Contact

Migration has also contributed to sustained linguistic contact. Movements between Algeria and European countries have created opportunities for speakers to use and encounter multiple linguistic resources. Such contact may contribute to bilingual or multilingual practices and to the circulation of linguistic forms across geographical boundaries.

Educational Factors

Education represents another important factor in the maintenance of multilingualism. The use of different languages for different subjects, levels, and educational functions can produce complex linguistic repertoires among students. The relationship between multilingualism and language education is therefore an important issue in sociolinguistic and pedagogical research (Lahwimel & Hasni, n.d.).

In Algeria, the historical use of French in scientific and technical fields has contributed to its continued functional presence. At the same time, Arabization policies have sought to strengthen Arabic in education and public life. The coexistence of these tendencies contributes to the complexity of the country's linguistic situation (Belkandouz, 2015; Benini, 2017).

Social and Psychological Factors

Language choice is also influenced by social attitudes and perceptions of prestige. Languages associated with economic opportunity, education, professional mobility, or social advancement may acquire symbolic value beyond their purely communicative functions.

This dimension is important because language competition is not necessarily determined by the number of speakers. A language may have considerable influence because of the prestige attached to its use or because it provides access to particular social and professional domains.

Forms of Multilingualism in Algeria

The Algerian situation may be analyzed through two principal sociolinguistic forms: diglossia and bilingualism, although the boundaries between them may sometimes overlap.

Diglossia

Diglossia is particularly visible in the relationship between Classical Arabic and vernacular Arabic. Classical Arabic is associated with more formal and institutional domains, while vernacular varieties are dominant in informal everyday interaction.

Ferguson (1959) conceptualized diglossia as a situation in which different varieties perform different social functions. Marçais (1930) had previously applied the concept to the Arabic context. Subsequent scholarship has continued to discuss Arabic through the framework of diglossia, while also recognizing the complexity of the relationship between formal and spoken varieties (Al-Zaghloul, n.d.; Kaida Mahmoud, 2002).

The Algerian situation nevertheless extends beyond a simple High/Low dichotomy because speakers have access to several linguistic resources and may move between them according to context, interlocutor, topic, and communicative purpose.

Bilingualism

Bilingualism in Algeria is particularly evident in the relationship between Arabic and French. Unlike the relationship between Classical Arabic and vernacular Arabic, which can be interpreted largely in terms of variation within the Arabic linguistic continuum, Arabic–French bilingualism involves two historically and structurally distinct languages.

The persistence of French is related to historical factors but also to its continuing role in particular institutional and professional domains. This has generated a situation in which speakers may alternate between Arabic and French or combine resources from both according to communicative context.

Benini (2017) emphasizes the complexity of language use in the Algerian sociolinguistic environment, while Grandguillaume (1995) provides a broader historical interpretation of the relationship between language, power, and society in the Maghreb.

Fourth: Discussion of the Results: Is Multilingualism a Threat or a Resource?

The central finding of this descriptive-analytical study is that multilingualism should not be considered inherently threatening to Classical Arabic. Its effects depend largely on the functions assigned to each linguistic resource, the degree of institutional support provided to them, and the balance established through language planning.

The literature reviewed suggests that the different components of the Algerian linguistic environment do not occupy identical positions.

Classical Arabic performs important formal, educational, religious, literary, cultural, and institutional functions. Vernacular Arabic, by contrast, is predominantly associated with informal and interpersonal communication. Amazigh performs important cultural, identity-related, and regional functions. French maintains a significant presence in particular educational, technical, economic, professional, and media-related contexts.

This distribution suggests that multilingualism can involve functional complementarity rather than permanent competition.

The relationship between Classical Arabic and vernacular Arabic provides the clearest example. The existence of spoken varieties does not automatically eliminate the formal variety. As Ferguson (1959) demonstrated, diglossic systems may involve differentiated functional domains. In the Arabic context, Marçais (1930) and subsequent scholars have similarly identified functional differentiation between formal and spoken varieties.

The situation involving Amazigh can also be interpreted in terms of functional differentiation. The cultural and identity-related significance of Amazigh does not necessarily imply that it must replace Classical Arabic in domains where Arabic serves as a common language. Rather, the two linguistic resources may coexist if language policy recognizes their distinct cultural and communicative roles.

The relationship between Arabic and French is more complex. The historical position of French and its continuing use in certain high-prestige domains create a situation in which French may function not merely as an additional linguistic resource but also as a competitor for particular domains of knowledge and professional communication. Grandguillaume (1995) demonstrates how the historical relationship between language and power in the Maghreb continues to provide an important framework for understanding this phenomenon.

The challenge for Classical Arabic is therefore not the existence of multilingualism itself but the possibility of functional imbalance. When a foreign language becomes dominant in domains such as science, technology, higher education, business, or professional communication, the ability of

the national language to perform these functions may gradually weaken unless appropriate planning and development measures are adopted.

This observation supports the position advanced by Al-Fassi Al-Fihri (1990, 2007), according to which language planning must consider both the existing linguistic reality and the internal development of the language. Arabization therefore cannot consist simply of declaring Arabic the language of a particular domain. It must provide the terminology, educational resources, professional training, institutional practices, and technological tools necessary for Arabic to function effectively in that domain.

The study consequently rejects two extreme positions.

The first is the exclusionary position, according to which all linguistic diversity should be eliminated in favor of a single language. Such an approach does not adequately reflect the sociolinguistic reality of Algeria and may ignore the communicative and cultural functions performed by vernacular Arabic, Amazigh, and foreign languages.

The second is the unregulated multilingualism position, according to which all languages may develop freely without any functional or institutional coordination. Such an approach may contribute to linguistic imbalance and may weaken the capacity of Classical Arabic to serve as a language of contemporary knowledge and professional activity.

A more appropriate alternative is therefore managed multilingualism. This approach recognizes linguistic diversity while assigning clear and complementary functions to the different linguistic resources.

Within such a framework:

- **Classical Arabic** should be strengthened as a common language of formal education, knowledge, administration, culture, and national communication;
- **vernacular Arabic varieties** should be recognized as important languages of everyday interpersonal communication and cultural expression;
- **Amazigh** should be supported as an important component of Algeria's cultural and linguistic heritage;
- **French and other foreign languages** should be taught and maintained as additional resources for international communication, scientific exchange, and professional mobility rather than as substitutes for the national language.

The central issue is consequently not whether Algeria should be multilingual. Its sociolinguistic reality already demonstrates substantial linguistic plurality. The more relevant question is how multilingualism should be organized and managed so that linguistic diversity does not result in functional marginalization of Classical Arabic.

This interpretation is consistent with broader approaches to language planning that regard linguistic diversity as a social reality requiring management rather than denial (Abu al-Azm, n.d.; Al-Qasimi, 2012). It also corresponds with discussions of Arabic language planning in the Maghreb, which emphasize the importance of strengthening Arabic while taking account of existing linguistic practices (Ibrahimi, 2007; Al-Wadghiri, 2014).

Conclusion

The Algerian sociolinguistic situation represents a complex configuration in which Classical Arabic, vernacular Arabic, Amazigh, and French coexist and perform different communicative, cultural, educational, institutional, and symbolic functions.

The analysis demonstrates that the Algerian situation cannot be adequately described through the concept of multilingualism alone. It also involves different forms of language contact, particularly

diglossia and bilingualism. Diglossia is most clearly associated with the relationship between Classical Arabic and vernacular Arabic, while Arabic–French bilingualism represents a different form of linguistic coexistence shaped strongly by historical and sociopolitical factors.

The study further indicates that linguistic diversity is not inherently incompatible with the maintenance of Classical Arabic. Vernacular Arabic and Amazigh generally perform functions that are complementary to those associated with Classical Arabic. Their existence therefore does not necessarily constitute a direct threat to Arabic.

The more significant challenge emerges when another language occupies domains in which Classical Arabic needs to function as a language of knowledge, science, technology, education, administration, and economic activity. In this respect, the continuing presence of French in several high-prestige domains represents a more significant language-planning challenge.

The solution should not be the rejection of multilingualism. Rather, Algeria requires a balanced model of language planning capable of recognizing linguistic diversity while strengthening the functional capacity of Classical Arabic. Such an approach would transform multilingualism from a perceived source of conflict into a potential resource for cultural richness, international communication, education, and development.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval: The study was conducted in accordance with applicable ethical principles.

Informed Consent: Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Data Availability: Data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI Use Disclosure: The authors declare that no generative AI was used in the research or preparation of the manuscript

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthen the functional use of Classical Arabic** in education, administration, economic activity, scientific communication, and other formal domains through gradual and carefully planned implementation.
2. **Develop the contemporary capacities of Classical Arabic** by expanding scientific and technical terminology, digital resources, educational materials, translation capacities, and professional language training (Al-Fassi Al-Fihri, 1990, 2007).
3. **Adopt a balanced multilingual language policy** that recognizes the sociolinguistic reality of Algeria rather than attempting to eliminate existing linguistic practices.
4. **Support Amazigh linguistic and cultural development** while recognizing its contribution to Algeria's linguistic heritage and identity.
5. **Recognize the communicative role of vernacular Arabic varieties** rather than treating their everyday use as inherently incompatible with the development of Classical Arabic.

6. **Reconsider the functional position of French** by maintaining its value as a foreign-language resource while avoiding unnecessary dependence on it in domains where effective Arabic alternatives can be developed.
7. **Promote multilingual education strategically**, ensuring that foreign-language competence is developed without weakening learners' mastery of Classical Arabic.
8. **Strengthen teacher and researcher training** in Arabic terminology, translation, language planning, sociolinguistics, and multilingual education.
9. **Develop evidence-based language planning** based on continuous sociolinguistic monitoring of actual language practices rather than relying exclusively on ideological or purely prescriptive approaches.
10. **Conduct future empirical studies** involving students, teachers, professionals, policymakers, and different regional communities in order to measure actual language attitudes, language choices, patterns of code-switching, and perceptions of the status of Classical Arabic, Amazigh, vernacular Arabic, and French.

References

- Abu al-Azm, A. G. (n.d.). *Al-takhtit al-lughawi lil-irtiqā bi-al-tanmiyah al-bashariyyah* [Language planning for the advancement of human development]. *Majallat al-Nahdah*, (9).
- Al-Fassi Al-Fihri, A. (1990). *Al-muqaranah wa-al-takhtit fi al-baḥṡ al-lisani al-mu'asir* [Comparison and planning in contemporary linguistic research]. Dar Toubkal.
- Al-Fassi Al-Fihri, A. (2007). *Hiwar al-lughab* [Dialogue of language] (H. Al-Ismaïli Al-Alaoui, Ed.; 1st ed.). Manshurat Al-Zawiya; Dar Abi Raqraq.
- Al-'Ilmi, A. W. (n.d.). *Fi al-tarbiyah al-lughawiyyah wa-anba' al-tawassul* [On language education and forms of communication]. Manshurat Ikhtilaf, (11).
- Al-Qasimi, A. (2012). *Al-ta'addud al-lughawi wa-al-tanmiyah al-bashariyyah* [Multilingualism and human development]. *Majallat al-Mumarasat al-Lughawiyyah*, (16).
- Al-Wadghiri, A. A. (2014). *Lughat al-ummah wa-lughat al-umm: 'An waqi' al-lughab al-'arabiyyah fi bi'atiha al-ijtima'iyyah wa-al-thaqafiyyah* [The language of the nation and the mother tongue: On the reality of the Arabic language in its social and cultural environment] (1st ed.). Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.
- Al-Zaghloul, M. R. (n.d.). *Iḍdawajjiyyat al-lughab: Naẓrah fi hadir al-'arabiyyah wa-tatallu' nahw mustaqbalihā fi daw' al-dirasat al-lughawiyyah* [Diglossia: A view of the present of Arabic and prospects for its future in light of linguistic studies]. *Majallat al-Lisan al-'Arabi*, 18(1).
- Bala'id, S. (2003). *Al-lughab al-umm wa-al-waqi' al-lughawi al-jaza'iri* [The mother tongue and the Algerian linguistic reality] [Lecture]. University of Mouloud Mammeri of Tizi Ouzou.
- Belkandouz, H. (2015). *Ishkaliyyat al-lughab al-'arabiyyah bayna al-ta'rib wa-al-ta'addud* [The problem of the Arabic language between Arabization and multilingualism]. *Majallat al-Susiolisanat wa-Tablil al-Khitab*, (1).
- Benini, A. K. (2017). *Al-isti'malat al-lughawiyyah fi al-wasat al-susiolisani al-jaza'iri: As'ilah wa-mulabazat* [Language uses in the Algerian sociolinguistic context: Questions and observations]. In *A'mal al-yawm al-dirasi hawl mazahir al-ta'addud al-lughawi wa-in'ikasatibi fi ta'limiyyat al-lughab al-'arabiyyah* [Proceedings of the study day on manifestations of multilingualism and their implications for Arabic language teaching]. University of Saida.
- Dubois, J. (1994). *Dictionnaire de linguistique*. Larousse.
- Ferguson, C. A. (1959). Diglossia. *Word*, 15(2), 325–340.

- Grandguillaume, G. (1995). *Al-lughah wa-al-sultab wa-al-mujtama'* [Language, power, and society] (M. Aslim, Trans.; 1st ed.). Al-Farabi Publishing.
- Ibn Faris, A. (1977). *Al-Sahibi fi fiqh al-lughah wa-sunan al-'Arab fi kalamih*a [Al-Sahibi on philology and the linguistic practices of the Arabs] (A. Al-Saqr, Ed.).
- Ibn Hazm. (n.d.). *Al-Ihkam fi usul al-ahkam* [The precise exposition of the principles of legal rulings] (1st ed.).
- Ibn Jinni, A. F. U. (n.d.). *Al-Khasa'is* [The characteristics] (M. 'Ali Najjar, Ed.). Dar al-Huda li-al-Tiba'ah wa-al-Nashr.
- Ibrahimi, A. (2007). *Wad' al-lughah al-'arabiyyah bi-al-Maghrib: Wasf wa-rasd wa-takhtit* [The status of the Arabic language in Morocco: Description, monitoring, and planning] (1st ed.). Manshurat Al-Zawiya.
- Kaida Mahmoud, I. (2002). *Al-'arabiyyah al-fusha bayna al-izdawajiyyah wa-al-thuna'iyah al-lughawiyyah* [Classical Arabic between diglossia and bilingualism]. *Al-Majallah al-'Ilmiyyah li-Jami'at al-Malik Faysal: Al-'Ulum al-Insaniyyah wa-al-Idariyyah*, 3(1).
- Lahwimel, B., & Hasni, N. H. (n.d.). *Maẓahir al-ta'addud al-lughawi wa-in'ikasatuhu 'ala ta'limiyyat al-lughah al-'arabiyyah* [Manifestations of multilingualism and their implications for Arabic language teaching]. *Majallat al-Mumarasat al-Lughawiyyah*, (30).
- Lasab, W. (2009). *Al-waqi' al-lughawi al-jaz'a'iri* [The Algerian linguistic reality]. *Majallat al-Lughah al-Umm*. Dar al-Houma.
- Marçais, W. (1930). La diglossie arabe [Arabic diglossia]. *L'Enseignement Public*, (97).
- Tha'lab, A. A. (1984). *Kitab al-Fasih* [The book of eloquence] (A. Madhkur, Ed.). Dar al-Ma'arif.