University of Mostaganem-Algeria

VOL: 11 / **N°:** 03 / **(2024)**, p. p. 295/307

International Journal of Social Communication

ISSN: 2437 – 1181 EISSN: 2710 – 8139



Communication and the Language Market in Algeria: How Does Communication Affect Language Shift Among Social Groups?

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DOI: 10.53284/2120-011-003-018

Abstract:

This study aims to delve into various aspects of the sociology of communication, examining the nature of the relationship between communication and the language market and its impact on language shift among social groups in contemporary Algeria. In this regard, the study sought to present and discuss the nature of communication and its influence on language shift within several local language markets, such as cafes, sports fields, and schools. It also highlights the importance of colloquial Arabic as a dominant and unifying national language that encompasses all the linguistic systems coexisting within it, from the standpoint that it constitutes a bridge between the various Algerian linguistic groups, including Amazigh and Arabic.

Keywords: Communication; Language Market; Language Shift; Social Groups; Algeria.

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1. INTRODUCTION

When researchers delve into the various definitions assigned to the concept of communication, they encounter a multitude of definitions that have linked the concept to the social state associated with communication media and technology without discussing its sociological context or its place within the communication community (communauté de communication). This raises the following question: Why has the concept of communication been so narrowly defined? And why has it not been given its due as a socio-anthropological subject linked to the daily lives of speech communities?

Communication, as an emerging and complex concept, encourages the unification of separate epistemological themes and the achievement of a type of multidisciplinary alliance involving sociology, anthropology, linguistics, and philosophy. It proposes a return to the social space in any relationship, interaction, or social friction. This presupposes a cultural background that takes on several forms: local, class-based, and global. It governs the non-separation of communication practices from the set of predispositions and representations that individuals carry in all aspects of their daily lives. This is because every cultural structure and every individual act produces implicit or explicit communication that supports social behavior and the power of linguistic friction between groups.

Since the early 1990s, sociology has examined communication as acentral question, which can be addressed from three main perspectives: the investigation of the concept and nature of social interactions within the public sphere, the relationship between communicative action and socio-cultural and linguistic studies, and the reflexive nature that governs social life, which was established by Pierre Bourdieu and later developed by Anthony Giddens.

The way of communication and the language used in a specific situation within daily life does not depend solely on competence (in the sense that Chomsky intended), but also on the acceptability imposed by the language market on speakers despite the possible difference in their native languages. Therefore, any linguistic situation acts as a market, in which the speaker places his products and interactive offers that are based mainly on the degree of social acceptance.

Any process of cultural construction or identity building is subject to a process of symbolic capital construction that requires following what is happening within society from practices, especially those related to communication and language processes. Therefore, analyzing the movement of language markets shows the extent to which language is used in its diverse structure, expansion, and spread within Algerian society, and how to make massive changes in speech and communication habits, to implicitly ensure the existence of collective acceptance of linguistic



difference despite the existence of obstacles and problems specific to the nature of the general Algerian social structure, such as the problem of regionalism.

2. The Relationship between Communication and Algerian Linguistic Capital

Linguistic capital is an organized and structured set of dispositions for speaking a second language competently, in a way that generates a tendency to form culturally appropriate utterances and instills representations early in life through explicit teaching methods (language within the family) or implicit methods (school/peer groups...). On the one hand, the language market defines a set of mechanisms to control what should and should not be said (bullying, blasphemy or insults...) and the way communication and interaction take place, as well as the rewards and penalties associated with them.

In his quest to understand the mechanisms that ensure the continuity of the domination relationship between different social classes and agents, Bourdieu turned to the concept of symbolic capital in order to analyze all forms of visible and hidden domination within society, and to try to explain the process of its acceptance by the dominated (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 17). Inspired by Weber's idea that the continuation of any social domination is conditional on its being recognized as legitimate and accepted domination (156 مفحة 2018), he adds to it the characteristic of reproducing relations of domination as a fundamental dimension of it. In his book La domination masculine, he notes that the dominant parties construct representations and definitions of the social structure thanks to the position or status they enjoy thanks to tools that produce and reproduce a vision of the world as guided dispositions for the dominated.

In this sense, linguistic capital is also refined through the communication and interaction of individuals belonging to different geographical areas in Algeria, where the use of the local language resulting from the sense of acceptability and linguistic friction is positioned by exchange processes and borrowing of words within a formally equivalent framework, in order to conform to the sociological event where the discourse based on bilingual practices coexists with monolingual practices.

Before delving into a discussion of the nature of linguistic capital in Algeria and its relationship to communication, we make the following observations:

- 1. Social fields are spaces organized by social positions where interactions are determined by the distribution of capital. They are also spaces of conflict and competition between individuals to maintain or modify a particular distribution of linguistic capital.
- 2. The language market uses a system of rules to produce the social conditions that determine the value of words and their place within the general social order.
- 3. The language market is one of the drivers of linguistic change. Therefore, the language used in a given situation depends not only on competence but also on feedback.
- 4. A distinctive feature of the linguistic structure in Algeria is the primacy of social status over geographical distribution as a determinant of the quality of a speech community's



language.

Parallel to these observations and as a result of its nature, inherited cultural capital in Algeria tends to reproduce the unequal distribution of linguistic relations. Attention is paid more to the nature of the language of a particular linguistic group at the expense of another, despite the changeability of language and its ability to bear the dynamics of social construction subject to strategies of assimilation and acceptance (Chaoui/Shawiya ...e.g), and related primarily to the specificity of each linguistic group or geographical area, far from the general structure of the distribution of reproducible linguistic capital. Therefore, social linguistic categories cannot claim to be responsible for the nature of their linguistic vocabulary and the meanings it carries, since both are created by the language market in which production takes place every time there is social interaction. What deserves attention is the objective relationship that we find in the linguistic competence of the entire speaker group and also the social competence that generally depends on social status, age, religion, and economic status. Can Linguistic Capital be a Better Means of Social Distinction than Other Forms of Capital? In his early research on Algeria, Pierre Bourdieu addresses the question of whether linguistic capital can be a better means of social distinction than other forms of capital, such as financial capital or cultural capital. By comparing modern societies to traditional local societies (villages/douars), he observed a clear difference in the way access to linguistic capital is achieved, which in turn establishes a socially accepted symbolic hegemony.

The competition that exists between agents in society is constant. Therefore, the evaluation of work and the value of the individual begins with money and is preferred over cultural or linguistic capital. In societies of honor, we find a well-structured cultural capital with a system of dispositions (habitus) that is disinterested and largely devoid of conflict and symbolic violence. This leads to the conclusion that nobility imposes itself (noblesse oblige), embodying a strong habitus within traditional local societies.

The local community within the language market, which imposes a set of constraints and rules, appears to be a rational community. It acts according to goals based on its ability to sense what is in its own self-interest when it temporarily abandons its mother tongue in favor of the dominant language. Thus, it defines goals and choices based on non-reflective knowledge, rooted in its set of dispositions, and embedded in its socio-linguistic and cultural practices and behaviors. This is evident in its linguistic transformation, communication, and interaction within the general social structure.

Like any social reality, linguistic practices and communication processes in Algeria are subject to a set of rules that ensure the conformity of linguistic behavior and social action with the customs and norms of society. Highlighting these rules or regularities provides us with an appropriate analysis of the set of linguistic practices and a good understanding of the forms of communication specific to the existing linguistic groups (Olivesi, 2005, p. 20).



Communication practices vary according to a certain number of variables, the degree of domination relationships between linguistic groups (Arabic, Berber), as well as the relational logic that brings them together around a social reality and a shared social particularity, and also the skills, dispositions, and acceptability required of speakers to be able to deal with lived reality.

3. Language Markets in Algeria

In its simplest and most obvious sense, a linguistic community can be defined as a group of people who speak the same language. However, this definition is ineffective in describing the reality of a group of speakers who, even if they share the same language or linguistic code, are influenced by regional (Kabyle /Chaoui /Arab /Shawiya...), geographical (rural /urban /nomadic...), social (middle class /wealthy...), and professional (simple worker /executive...) differences, and by the diversity of communication situations they may encounter. We know the degree to which social factors influence the diversity of linguistic practices and forms that coexist within the general language market, and therefore make the idea of sharing the "same" language obsolete; because the language spoken by one individual is never the same as the language spoken by another.

To which language market does a speaker belong? And who determines their membership? The individual here determines their membership in a particular linguistic community according to the social or communicative situation in which they find themselves comfortable, because it is not the use of language that defines the linguistic community but rather the way in which its members make languages connect and interact with each other according to the roles they must play in social life. Thus, an individual who has a linguistic repertoire (mastery of several local and international languages) will move from one language market to another with ease, far from the idea of identity and adherence to belonging, and will adapt to the situation by choosing the appropriate code for the general social context. Therefore, he will move from one linguistic community to another without any need to prove membership; therefore, we can say that the speaking individual belongs to several language markets.

This idea leads us to consider the distinction between belonging and participation in the linguistic community. All speakers in Algeria, for example, in Arabic are part of a broad group of speakers of this language and speakers of Berber dialects, but the hegemony of the language used in a given context or in the region where they live will precisely determine the linguistic community of which they are members.

The question of belonging leads us to ask another question: is the fact of speaking a particular language sufficient to evoke a feeling of belonging to the community? It seems to us that the feeling of belonging among members of the same linguistic community is an essential criterion for determining what this community can be, but how can we assess and perceive the feeling of belonging among speakers who often find it difficult to distinguish between their



actual linguistic practices and their representation of them? And since language does not seem to be enough to define the community and it is complex to question the awareness of individuals, the question that also arises is whether the linguistic community, despite the different descriptions that make it up, is a socially observable reality and not just a hypothetical unit.

The linguistic community is seen as a geographically local entity, and it is true that this is the direction in which most linguistic and social studies describe the linguistic practices associated with urban and rural communities (Cohen, 1971, p. 43). However, the idea of place and the language market, which the linguistic community will form, raises some questions: When does the linguistic shift from one language market to another begin? How and why does it stop?

In reality, even if a society is monolingual, it still allows itself to be mixed with other languages (national, regional, foreign, etc.). This is because all or some members of the society may be proficient in multiple languages. Therefore, we find that linguistics has not been able to provide a cognitive field that defines the differences between secondary language markets (home/school/mosque...), despite the communication and interactions that have occurred over time in North African countries in general. Therefore, we must be careful not to give any type of language (Arabic/Berber) an absolute privilege, no matter how important it is.

However, we can say that the language market is a social norm for defining linguistic geography, because linguistic plurality and difference is the clearest sign of the existence of cultural diversity within society.

4. Arabic and Amazigh: The Mother Tongues of Algerian Society

Like culture, language represents a doubled reality for society. It is both the law that frames the nature and dynamics of society, and it imposes itself on individuals during the process of socialization that leads them to integrate with society.

The linguistic community socializes the individual and frames them in a single process (87 غرانغيوم، 2011، عرانغيوم). In this process, the mother tongue occupies the first place, and it also holds great importance in the individual's social life even after they abandon it and replace it with another language. The mother tongue of Algerians is either Arabic or one of the Amazigh dialects. In most cases, these are oral languages, regardless of the attempts that have been made to write in Arabic, for example, because in the context of writing, it changes its direction towards the French language to borrow from it.

Therefore, the language situation, as we mentioned earlier, is tripartite. The mother tongue, whether Arabic or Amazigh, occupies a place in family and social life. It also occupies an important place in school life as a language market that reproduces the same dominant linguistic system in the general social market to which it belongs. The choice of the dominant language in the language market is not neutral, as the mother tongue imposes countermeasures



to maintain its position, even symbolically, in a general language market that contains more than one linguistic system.

The essential characteristic of the mother tongue is to return the individual/society to the collective ethos that contains inherited customs, traditions, and cultural practices. It transmits this ethos as it transmits the way society conceives of the issue of honor as separating between the internal and external fields. This includes two language markets that distinguish, for example, between genders (men/women) and between generations (elders/youngsters) or what is known in Arabic as "respect and dignity."

Despite the re-molding of many words in the French vocabulary and their integration into the mother tongue (Dourari, 2022, p. 66) (Arabic/Kabyle...), the essential characteristic of the mother tongue has not changed. This is because its own language market allows it to play the role of reference and origin.

5. Models for Discussing the Relationship: Communication-Language shift

The expectation of receiving communication and its "price" within the market is a prerequisite for its production. It is not possible to interact in a language that is not understood or dominated and expect a positive response from the actors within the language market. Therefore, linguistic relations within any secondary language market (cafes /schools /popular markets...), are an integral part of power relations, as language imposes linguistic capital or is imposed on it.

The linguistic landscape is an important tool for building a sociological understanding of the relationship between communication and the linguistic phenomenon, and the phenomenon of linguistic change in particular. The linguistic landscape within the general language market can reveal the state of languages used in public spaces and closed places such as mosques and cafes. Therefore, the study will present a set of secondary language markets that exist within Algerian society, in order to clarify the socio-cultural nature of language and its specificity.

5.1 Cafés

According to American sociologist Ray Oldenburg, cafés are one of the three types of language markets. He argues that in addition to the home market and the workplace, the "third market" or third place is a general term for a wide variety of other secondary markets that contain informal gatherings that a large segment of society cannot do without (ray, 1999, p. 28). These include the café market, which he describes as vibrant socio-linguistic spaces where interesting conversations and dialogues take place, often in a unified language even if the speakers are of different origins, regions, or mother tongues (Oldenburg, p. 165)

Cafés have attracted the attention of researchers in the field of linguistics in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of linguistic phenomena (deng, 2021). They have found that middle-class individuals intentionally frequent cafés like Starbucks to distinguish themselves from the poor who do not fit their social status, including their language and style of



communication with their social environment (Gaudio, 2003, p. 658). Conversely, it is rare to find a capitalist frequenting a simple popular café.

Cafés, especially popular ones, have played a vital role in promoting communication and interaction among Algerians. The social consumption of coffee has a long history, but we will focus on the status of cafés as language markets during the revolution and after independence, with the mention that this culture began to appear during the Ottoman presence.

Algerian cafés, especially those in major cities like Constantine and the capital, were a shared social market among Algerians of different languages, especially after the First World War. They hosted secret meetings held by the mujahideen, artistic evenings that featured folk songs, hawzi or poetry, and discussions of the socio-economic problems that Algerians were facing at the time.

To this day, cafés as secondary language markets impose a set of rules and frameworks that participants in the space must adhere to, including (even if relatively) respecting the dominant language of the present linguistic group, and therefore switching from their mother tongue instantly. This happens in the case of a newcomer whose mother tongue is one of the Amazigh dialects and not Arabic, as the dominant and most widely understood language within the Algerian language market. Speakers of Arabic are rarely found to be proficient in Amazigh or one of its dialects, which is why we have adopted the idea that power relations and hegemony dictate the language in which interaction takes place.

5.2 Stadium Stands

The language of the stands is a market that contains specialized vocabulary, practical terms, and phrases formed from diverse linguistic dictionaries. These terms are reshaped to fit the chants and poems of the fans, which are often composed in a relatively respectful language that suits public taste, especially those that address social issues and deal with political or economic problems.

For example, the stands occupied by Ultras fan groups often deal with the problems of young people in a youthful language that has been shaped to fit the specificities and concerns of this social group. This language is conveyed to the authorities in the form of songs, slogans, or tifo displays. This is in contrast to some fans who are limited to the Italian stands, known as the "Curva Sud" or the fanatical fans who occupy the south stand. These fans often belong to the poorer classes, which explains their fanaticism and their use of insults and protests in an aggressive manner in their songs and sports slogans.

There is growing concern in the research on language in football stands due to the racial, sexist, and regional issues that fans adopt. This is what we can observe, for example, in the stands of Italian stadiums, especially among the supporters of teams from northern Italy. When they play against southern teams like Napoli and Palermo, they use a dialect that is framed within a competitive discourse that includes a struggle for superiority, origin, seniority, and



who has more Latin words in their vocabulary. This is what we find in depth in the analysis of Patrick Murphy and others (Eric Dunning, 1990, p. 56).

One of the most important studies that discussed the language loyalty of fans as a form of resistance to change in football matches is the study by Joanne Luhrs (Joanne luhrs (2014)) which dealt with the case of Tottenham fans who use slogans and songs that highlight the most famous linguistic elements of their Cockney dialect. They pronounce them with a high verbal emphasis that makes the listener gauge the degree of the fans' attachment to their local mother tongue.

In Algeria, the linguistic landscapes within the stands of the stadiums are more closely linked to the songs organized by the Ultras supporters. Their origin dates back to 2007, thanks to the group "Verde Lyon" belonging to the MC Alger club. The phenomenon then spread quickly to include all Algerian football clubs.

Before this, in the 1980s, Algerian football stands witnessed several slogans and songs containing local words specific to Algerian Arabic, such as the song "Jibuha Ya L'walad" released in 1982 on the occasion of the participation of the Algerian national team in the World Cup. But later, the supporters mixed words from the Amazigh or French or English dictionary into their songs and reshaped them to fit the rhythm and style of sports melodies as well as the region to which the team belongs.

It is clear that the social relationship between football stands and language is dialectical and complex. Measuring the degree of change in it remains secondary, because the linguistic landscape brings together several cultural systems that indicate the decentralization of the sports linguistic landscape in particular and the youth in general. However, it is also linked to several social categories and phenomena, most of which contain many socio-cultural connotations.

5.3 Schools

After independence, Algeria faced the major challenge of approaching the first school year in the history of independent Algeria. This was due to the withdrawal of more than twenty thousand French teachers from Algeria (74 عماري) and the lack of infrastructure and time to remedy the situation. However, on the other hand, there was a growing awareness of the importance of education and the Arabic language, which had been dominated by the French language. Thus, the school became a vessel containing ideological battles and conflicts in which all Algerian elites, Francophones, Franco-Berbers, and Arabizers, were involved.

The linguistic shift experienced by the Algerian school after independence can be understood by referring to the authorities' reliance on Eastern teachers from Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. The increase in their numbers had an impact on the rapid Arabization of the Algerian school. In addition, from the early years of Algerian education, modifications were introduced to the curricula that preserved the French educational system but changed its content, such as history



and geography programs.

However, the forced start of the educational system in 1962 had many repercussions, including the decline of the level of the Algerian school on the one hand, and the state of the language within it, where the French language lost its presence like Arabic, as the results of the outputs of the educational system did not match the size of the investments that the state allocated to this sector, which in turn helped to spread an image within society about the failure of the Algerian public school and its production of generations of illiterates who do not master Arabic or French (Benrabah, 2007, p. 228), and even the Amazigh language, which was introduced into the educational system, must be feared for its failure.

5 Algerian Colloquial Arabic as a Unifying Language

As mentioned earlier, the Algerian linguistic situation revolves around three poles: the mother tongue (colloquial or one of the Amazigh dialects), Arabic or French, and English. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) or written Arabic is very different from colloquial Arabic because it contains a rich vocabulary, collected over time from several languages, which its speakers have reshaped to fit the linguistic specificity of the Algerian language.

Colloquial Arabic is used by the majority of Algerians because, in our opinion and as is obvious and evident, it is a unifying language for all the dialects and languages found in this rich linguistic geography. Specialists in linguistics distinguish North African dialects, and especially Maghreb dialects, between three types: urban, nomadic, and rural dialects. The origin of this difference in dialects is subject to several interpretations, including those presented by W. Marçais (W.Marçais, 1938, p. 21) on the influences of the different migrations that came from the Middle East, especially the Hilali migrations.

The mother tongue, in its two forms (colloquial/one of the Amazigh dialects), is an oral language that prevails in daily family and social life. It also remains a language of communication between students and the administrative staff and teachers in school life, and recently it has even been used during the educational process. The choice of linguistic register is not neutral. While the choice of the mother tongue aims to establish direct interaction and communication with the social environment, the use of MSA (classical language) goes beyond that to suggest that it is a matter of declaring a linguistic behavior within a social act that goes beyond ordinary simple communication.

Colloquial Arabic has established its presence in literary works such as the novel "Fahla" by the writer Rabah Sebbah, as well as in cinematic works such as the film " omar gatlato", which made good use of colloquial Arabic and, in contrast, presented a state of competition between colloquial Arabic and MSA, which in turn became a subject of ridicule in one of its scenes.



Thus, Algerian colloquial Arabic dominates the language market (134 مفحة 2017), so it can be considered a main tool of communication between the different Algerian linguistic groups, because the Algerian individual, wherever he is, is bilingual.

As is the case with multilingualism and bilingualism, the state of language shift in Algeria reflects all the cracks that have shaken society and made the languages used go through a deep structural crisis. Since independence, and despite the quantitative progress (the continuous increase in the percentage of school enrollment) in educational institutions, the quality of Arabization has deteriorated and French education has lost its class balance. As long as the authority defends itself and tries to maintain its position, it hinders the independence of social spaces, including the language market, whose demands and concerns are subject to a set of political auctions that achieve several gains for it. Therefore, the linguistic uses that pass cleverly in political fields carry in their content a form of standardization and a demand for recognition or as a step to attract the attention and interest of a certain social group.

As a result, it can be said that the social uses of language are saturated with real social and economic value because they tend to form a meaning for communication. Therefore, language can be considered a form of capital, where its different systems provide access to unequal utilitarian resources from one linguistic group to another. Secondary languages within the general language market cannot contribute to increasing symbolic capital if the speaker leaves the geographical environment to which he belongs. This is why research conducted on multilingual language markets shows that in native environments as well as in other places, the relative social weight of the languages present can vary from one field of activity to another (dorais, 2015, p. 53), although the laws of supply and demand prevail when it comes to determining speech acts or speaker behaviors that are presented as the highest linguistically valuable.



4. CONCLUSION

Despite its local linguistic diversity, Algeria constitutes a genuine cultural unity, automatically linked by social behavior that is generally understandable by most social groups in Algeria, especially young ones. For example, the system of jokes remains consistent in its basic themes, especially cultural and political ones, throughout all Algerian regions and even North Africa, despite the linguistic diversity.

In reality, linguistics cannot provide an epistemological field for determining identity differences despite the human interactions that have occurred over time in North African countries in general. Therefore, we must be careful not to give any type of language absolute privilege, no matter how important it is - for example, the distinction between Arabs and Amazighs (despite its stereotypical image).

However, we can say that the linguistic system is a social standard specific to determining linguistic geography, because linguistic plurality and difference is the clearest sign of the existence of a certain cultural diversity. Therefore, the ethnologist who is keen to follow the natural expressions of linguistic reality in Algeria can still sort out linguistic groups (such as Kabyle or Mzab speakers) and deal with their social spaces and cultural specificities within which linguistic practices are shaped.

The Algerian linguistic reality encompasses various practices that are primarily based on multiple language markets, supported by ethnic/religious/colonial systemic references, resulting from historical language contact and borrowing between linguistic groups. The boundaries between these markets, as well as the cultural variables specific to Amazigh and local Arabic or French dialects, redefine the social functions of each dominant or dominated language market. Therefore, linguistic change always provides a methodological way to study language shift, which is shaped as coexisting social alternatives. This coexistence does not occur on the basis of the spread of one language at the expense of another, but rather on the basis of a structural change conditioned by social distribution and the mechanisms specific to the way of communication between different social groups, as well as linguistic relations, which are always relations linked to symbolic power. Therefore, it is impossible to interpret communicative action within the limits of linguistic analysis alone, and it is necessary to use variables related to gender, class origin, and educational level in order to determine the objective structure of communication and interaction processes between individuals. Thus, the form taken by linguistic interaction essentially follows the structure of that unconscious and collective ethos.



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