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The French Media's Reaction to Algeria's latest language policy: A Dissatisfied Discourse with the Promotion of English Language Teaching

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Abstract

Not only has the new language policy in Algeria caused controversy domestically, but it has also been hotly debated by the French themselves. The longest colonized country in Africa by France has officially began drifting away from its French linguistic legacy; a ground-breaking decision that has resented France. This paper sheds light on the French media's reaction on the implementation of English in Algerian primary and higher education. Using media content analysis, this research further analyses the French press' discourse, which was sometimes characterized by bias and lack of pragmatism. Findings indicate that French media have highly politicized Algeria's decision while neglecting the actual utilitarian aims that are beyond the degradation of the Algiers-Paris diplomatic relations.

Keywords: Algeria, language policy and planning, French media, English *versus* French.

1. Introduction

As any post-colonial country, Algeria has been a fertile ground for linguistic dilemmas and contentious language-in-education policies. The French language has stood as the colonizer's prominent legacy; therefore, any emerging language, be it local or foreign, would present a threat to French. In this respect, the arabisation undertaken at the dawn of independence, received extreme antagonism by francophone lobbies and people alike. However, presidents Ahmed Ben Bella and Houari Boumediene were so adamant in their pursuit of this linguistic transition that the current status of Arabic is much owed to their policies. The arabisation in the sixties and the seventies by no means wiped out French language use in Algerian education, but the process was rather gradual starting with

using Arabic as a medium of instruction in some subjects like history. Then, AMI was introduced in the first grade of elementary school until it entirely encompassed Algerian curriculum in lower education.

On the contrary, higher education is still marked by bilingualism where social sciences are arabized while technical majors are exclusively using French until 2022. The latter has served as the language of economic and administrative institutions as well as a vehicle to science and technical knowledge for the people of the third French-speaking country after France itself and the Republic of Congo. Sebaa (2002) comments that it has been the language of university and scientific research without possessing an official status (as cited Cordel2014, 215). Excluding the humanities, Algerian academia was largely francophone and English was not yet a threat, at the local level at least. Yet, two years after president Abdelmadjid Tebboun took office, he openly announced: “French is a spoil of war while English is an international language”: a statement that hooked public opinion and language policy experts alike. Expectedly, the shift from French to English was a landmark decision that have received objection and appraisal equally. This news item spilt the ink of French media outlets seeing the historical rapport between both countries and the implications of such decision on France’s diplomacy towards Algeria. In this respect, French journalism has generously covered Algeria’s new language policy and planning. The media discourse, however, usually accentuates the downsides of such decision and the ‘unreadiness’ of Algeria to adopt a policy fostering the teaching of English. The aim of this paper is to shed light on French media coverage, from 2019 to 2023, with respect to Algeria’s shift to English whose discourse is sometimes biased due to the implications of promoting English for France’s influence in its previous main African colony. To contextualise our study, the timeline below shows the governmental decisions that triggered the French media criticism and journalistic reactions.

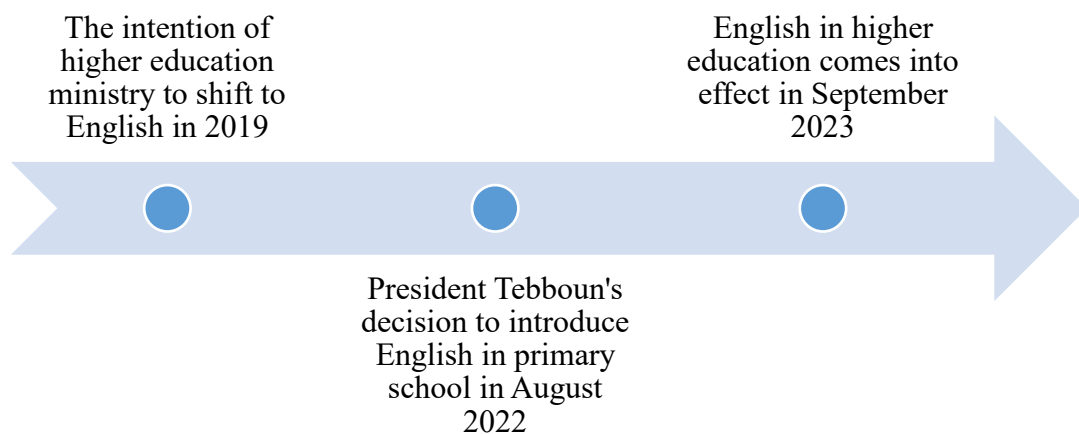


Fig.1. Timeline of Algeria’s transitional policy towards English

At the heart of this investigation lie the following central research questions:

- 1- What commonalities are there among the news articles selected for this study?
- 2- How does French media outlets view Algeria’s transition to English?
- 3- To what extent is the news free from bias and subjectivity and hence credible?
- 4- How does the media discourse align with Paris’ stance from promoting English language teaching?

1.1 Literature Review

Because the integration of English in Algerian institutions, specifically at school and university, could be transitional, it has been an interesting area of investigation among researchers. In a comparative study conducted to look into the reception of substituting French with English in higher education by both Arabophone and Francophone Algerian written press, Laila Becheneb (2020) concluded that French-speaking journalists had used a variety of arguments with depreciative lexis to convince the reader of this decision’s inconvenience. In a more recent study within the same context by Khelif Fatima Zohra (2023), findings indicated that the Algerian media had no clear position towards the decision while French media that is originally from France clearly expressed their

disapproval against Algeria's language-in-education policy. Although these studies offer valuable contributions to the topic, the first one considers only the articles reacting to the 2019 ministerial decision that was not fully enforced immediately. Similarly, in addition to limiting itself to French articles reacting to English in Algerian primary schools, the second study analyses the headlines only.

1.2 Significance of the study

To address the limitations and the gap in the literature, this paper attempts to offer a comprehensive analysis including other media outlets like broadcast interviews without narrowing the study to the French written press only. It explores the reaction of French media to the promotion of ELT in Algeria in both primary and higher education taking into account both the 2019 precursor of replacing French with English at university, which was enforced under president Tebboun in September 2023, and the presidential decision issuing the teaching of English in primary school in August 2022. Unlike previous studies, this research looks thoroughly into the whole media item from headline to body so as to highlight the subjectivity of its creators and to illustrate that the news was not only reported but also was criticized inaccurately, sometimes neglecting ethical journalism standards. Our perspective is that such biased reaction stems from a language ego that rejects the potential override of English over French in Africa's largest country.

2. Methodology and Tools

In order to fulfil the aim of this paper, a qualitative media content analysis of news articles flowing from France is necessary; other media outlets funded by France are also to be considered. This article begins with a synopsis of how the media can politicize news and shape public opinion. It then overviews the prominent Franco-Algerian diplomatic tensions since the coming of president A. Tebboun, the aspect that French media owes the most to Algeria's implementation of English in higher education and primary school. Taking this into account, geopolitical-based interpretations will be elicited from the selected twelve (12) articles and the two (02) interviews edited by French media so as to illustrate their bias and dissatisfaction, which deviate the public opinion of the French and Algerian francophiles from the utilitarian reasons behind language-in-education policies.

2.1 Media Content Analysis

Before setting a definition for 'media content analysis', it is crucial to define 'media content'. According to Stephen D. Reese and Jae Kook Lee, 'media content' is an inclusive phrase meaning a "range of visual and verbal information carried in the media" ranging from "mainstream professional media" to "smaller more interactive and targeted channels" (2012, p.749). Since media content is broad, it is primordial to specify the media content when conducting a media content analysis. Henceforth, this research narrows down media content to news articles and media interviews while 'smaller more interactive' channels like social media are disregarded. According to Neuman (2014), content analysis is: "A technique for examining the content or information and symbols contained in written documents or other communication media (e.g., photographs, movies, song lyrics, advertisements)" (p.49).

Weber (1990) defines content analysis as: "a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text" (p.9).

'Media content analysis' is the study of "texts from transcripts of interviews and discussions in clinical and social research to the narrative and form of films, TV programs and the editorial and advertising content of newspapers and magazines" (Macnamara, 2018, p. 1). The content's creator and whether it is sponsored and funded by an external party are also of paramount importance in media content analysis.

2.2 Analysing French Media News Articles

Below is a list of the selected articles and interviews relevant to our study and representative to most, if not all, French media coverage of promoting English. The choice of this sample is also justified by the timeline of the decisions that might be perceived as a threat to French language in the former colony, Algeria.

Number of the Article	Newspaper or website	Journalist	Date of publication	Headline
1	France24	Chamseddine Bouzghaia	01/08/2019	“Français ou anglais? La polémique linguistique de retour en Algérie.” (“French or English? The language controversy is back in Algeria.”)
2	Courrier International	Malik Ben Salem	15/07/2022	“En Algérie, l’anglais à marche force.” (“In Algeria, English is being forced through.”)
3	Le Point	Kamel Daoud	05/09/2022	“L’anglais, une “langue Arabe.” (“English, an “Arab language.”)
4	Courrier International	Unknown	17/11/2022	“L’introduction de l’anglais en primaire ravive les querelles linguistiques en Algérie.” (“The introduction of English at primary level rekindles linguistic quarrels in Algeria.”)
5	Lesfrançais.press	Samir Kahred	20/09/2022	« Francophonie en Algérie: l’inquiétude. » (« Francophonie in Algeria: A Cause for Concern. »)
6	Orient XXI	Ali Boukhlef	20/10/2022	“L’Algérie introduit l’anglais dans le primaire pour contrebalancer le français. » (“Algeria introduces English in Primary school to counterbalance French”)
7	Courrier Internationale	Unknown	17/11/2022	“L’introduction de l’anglais en primaire ravive les querelles linguistiques en Algérie.” (“The introduction of English at primary level rekindles linguistic quarrels in Algeria.”)
8	L’orient-le jour	Mussa Acherchour	16/07/2023	« En Algérie, l’anglais remplace le français à l’université, une décision éminemment politique. » (“In Algeria, English replaces French at university, a highly political decision.”)
9	Le Figaro	Jeanne Paturaud	18/07/2023	“En Algérie, le français est remplacé par l’anglais à l’université. » (« In Algeria, French is replaced by English at university.”)
10	Front populaire	Nicolas Granié	21/07/2023	« Xavier Driencourt : “Le pouvoir algérien montre aux Anglo-Saxons qu’il se débarrasse de la France ” (“Xavier Driencourt: “The Algerian government is showing the Anglo-Saxons that it is getting rid of France.”)

11	EkleBlog	Michel Dandelot	05/10/2023	« L’Algérie traque le français jusque dans les écoles privées : “Une nouvelle gifle pour la France” (“Algeria hunts down French in private schools: "Another slap in the face for France.”)
12	Jeuneafrique	Arezki Said	03/11/2023	« Le lent déclin du français en Algérie. » (“The gradual decline of French in Algeria.”)

Number of the interview	Hosting Channel	Interviewee	Date	Headline
1	TV5MONDE	Slimane Zeghidour	10/07/2019	« Le français bientôt "has been" dans les universités algériennes ? » (« Will French soon be a ‘has-been’ at Algerian universities? »)
2	TV5MONDE	Marie Chominot Louanchi	08/08/2019	« Algérie : l'anglais remplace le français en première langue étrangère à l'université. » (« Algeria: English replaces French as the first foreign language at university. »)

3. Results

Going through those media items, it is noted that:

3.1 ELT promotion in Algeria: An Ill-conceived Hasty Decision

Among the commonalities in the articles under study is the ‘rush’ of the Algerian government to foster the academic use of English. The decision being made by the Algerian president in June 2022 to come into effect right in the following school year, that is, in September 2022, has prompted French journalists and critics to label the decision as hasty and a trend that would accelerate. The relatively short three-month gap was a solid argument on the basis of which editors characterized the policy execution as “a race against the clock” (Kahred, 2022). In other articles, this “hastiness” was not literally voiced but was rather implied. The focus on designing a syllabus with an accompanied textbook and the mobilisation of more than 5000 teachers in “a three-month span” also demonstrates French media’s tendency to deem the decision impromptu and hence poorly planned. In Ali Boukhlef’s words (2022), it was “[h]asty, rushed and thoughtless”. Meanwhile, the use of English in higher education received a similar criticism arguing that teachers had not received an anglophone training; thus unable to lecture in English, and university students had started to learn English at a later age; an imperfection that Mussa Acherchor (2023) referred to as “logistical issues” while neglecting the fact that 64.000 are under training so as “to master academic writing and analysis in the English language” (“Anglais à l’université : 64.000 enseignants en formation”, 2024). Likewise, baccalaureate holders were granted access to “Improve Your English” MOOC to enhance the use of English language skills in their academic pursuit.

It is worth noting that the precursor to promoting English language teaching had appeared before President Tebboun won the elections in December 2019. In July from the same year, the minister of higher education Tayeb Bouzid (2019) declared that “the French language gets you nowhere”, which fuelled a linguistic controversy and the news received the same media attention as Tebboun’s “French is a spoil of war while English is an international language”. France24 described the decision made in 2019 as “a bone tossed to the people” in the midst of the Hirak, a series of weekly protests against Bouteflika’s regime, to absorb some protesters’ anger and scatter the Algerian people’s unity over linguistic issues so as to deviate them from political participation (Bouzghaia,

2019). In an interview on TV5monde, Slimane Zeghidour (2019) describes the decision as riding “populism”, a term sometimes used pejoratively to denote governmental emotional rhetoric and poorly studied decisions that pretend to cater societal needs. He adds that promoting English is based on “post-colonial reflexes” that are anti-French. Interviewed on the same channel, historian Marie Chominot Louanchi (2019) does not hesitate to state that language policies have been instrumentalised for ideological ends and that discarding French for English was expeditious without negotiating the decision with other politicians or university professors. She even discredits the survey to gain insights about the students’ opinion by saying: “there is no way to know how it was conducted” while 33000 students participated in the online survey on MESRS whose findings revealed 95% of Algerian university students favoured English over French in higher education.

In tracing the failure of this policy, Malik Ben Salem (2023) from *CourrierInternational*, quotes the words of Boumediene Sid Lakhder who deems the decision “a civilizational massacre”. He believes that allowing English into Algeria’s languages entails ideology and “the stupidity of hypocrite nationalism” and that Algeria would lose the historically inherited languages, among which is French. This statement is misleading in that it suggests that French is one of Algeria’s local languages that is devoid of any colonial history. Although Ben Salem quotes an admiring opinion, opening his article with the ‘hastiness’ of policy makers and ending it with a pejorative quote, bearing a fallacy and insult, insinuates his inclination to regard the decision with disfavour. Direct quoting is a very common practice in the media especially nowadays with the widespread of online news outlets and is supposed to add credibility instead of spreading misinformation like quoting an opinion that rejects the fact that French is a foreign and colonial language in Algeria. By further labelling the process of promoting English as “a civilizational massacre”, the reader might infer that French has been the sole language of contemporary Algeria overlooking Arabic and Berber that have shaped the culture, civilisation, and politics of the people over centuries prior to the coming of the French colonisation in the 1830s.

3.2 Algeria Wants to Detach from its Colonial Past

Through shifting to English and containing the presence of French in Algeria, policy-makers aim at a long-term goal: the wipe out of France’s persistent linguistic legacy. “*L’algérie française*”, or French Algeria, remains among the most peculiar phases in Algeria’s history with a French occupation of 132 years blemished with the subjugation and suppression of indigenous people’s lives, language, culture, and identity. Because language is a whole environment and is more than just a set of symbols or a tool for communication, the Frenchification of the Algerian people has had cultural dimensions that are still apparent until today, ranging from food and clothing to arts and literature. Back during the early stages of colonialism, Cardinal Lavignerie, archbishop of Algiers and a prominent Christian figure who founded the White Fathers’ Missionary in Algeria, preached for association and assimilation through the spread of French (Leblond, 1938, p.35). Apparently, he was fully cognizant of the fact that “language symbolizes cultural reality” (Kramsch, 1998, p.3) knowing that religion is “expressed and clothed in a cultural guise” (Beyers, 2017, p.2); hence, through the teaching of French, Algerians had been stealthily driven into acquiring Christian values. In the light of this, according to some French media, the juxtaposition of the traumatizing French colonizer’s brutalities and identity-suppression with the Algerians’ want to uphold their Muslim Arabo-berber identity, gives Algeria enough reason to renounce French and opt for English, a language with a neutral mold and devoid of any cultural peculiarities given its international status (Wardhaugh as cited in Houghton, p.6). The fact that language and culture are interwoven echoes Malek Haddad’s famous saying: “French language is not my homeland; it is my exile” (as cited in Girard, 2010), describing an alienation among one’s community where they are supposedly ‘glued’ with the same culture, language, and identity, yet Haddad’s exclusive mastery of French was a deprivation from the sense of belonging. To further illustrate the clout of the colonizer’s language on the indigenous’ identity, Assia Djebar (1985) voices that her “mother language”, which is Arabic, “had vanished, abandoned [her] on the side-walk, and ran away” (as cited in Gauvin, p.2), leaving her deprived of the poetic romantic beauty of Arabic while unwillingly embracing French, or “ [her] stepmother”, which connotes distancing and detachment as opposed to her “mother language”, a language with deeper, more intimate emotional resonances (François, 2018, p.5). Haddad and Djebar are among the renowned venerated francophone writers who, despite their use of French to raise the people’s

awareness to embrace the fight against colonialism and to uphold their ‘Algerianity’, confessed the estrangement that French had provoked.

Accordingly, the acculturation due to frenchification explains Algeria’s reticence to further promote French. In this respect, Acher and Pagesy from *Slate Fr* state that through its latest educational reform, Algeria seeks a gradual detachment from French culture. On the contrary, Kateb Yacine, another renowned Algerian writer in francophone literature, deems French to be “a spoil of war”, pointing to the weight of the Algerian Francophone novel that spoke against the Other, the occupier. This colonial linguistic legacy empowered the powerless colonized to rewrite another version of history to counter the discourse of the powerful colonizer. In the words of Aimé Césaire, the language of the colonizer is the outlet that renders the invisible visible, the unspeakable speakable, and gives a voice to the voiceless (as cited in Mestaoui, 2017,p.4). Similarly, upon his declaration to introduce English in primary school, the Algerian president quoted Kateb’s: “French is a spoil of war” rather than Haddad’s “French is [our]exile” or Djebbar’s “French is[our] stepmother”. The French/Arabic bilingualism that Algerian institutions witnessed during the sixties and the seventies greatly served the economic and educational continuity of the freshly independent country, yet with the striking overtake of English over French, the latter is not as efficient as it once used to be, both locally and internationally; hence, the president followed his view about French with: “...while English is an international language” pointing out the ‘beneficial’ status quo of English. While it is undeniable that the French language had acculturated many Algerians under colonialism and has continued to culturally affect many in post-independent Algeria, the declared government’s impetus behind this shift is not to detach itself from French culture as emphasized by French media, but rather to advance the use of English that has been the world’s lingua franca for decades. The present status of English justifies former minister of higher education’s assertion back in 2019 that French leads academicians nowhere seeing that 98% of scientific papers are in English (Castañeda, 2020, p.2). Not to undervalue any language, but English language promotion is a requirement for researchers in compliance with the “Publish in English or Perish” credo.

3.3 The Policy Has Geopolitical Ends

Upon his visit to Algiers on August 25th, 2022, President Macron was welcomed with “Presidency of the Republic” instead of “Présidence de la République”, an unexpected daring move in the eyes of commentators in Paris. Few days later, Algeria’s determination to enforce the language policies made in June to effectively start in September further persuaded many observers, including French media, that replacing English with French was a politically-driven decision. Following the Franco-Algerian tensions and the surfacing shaking diplomacy, it is utterly expected to signal Algeria’s shift to English as “a highly political decision” (Acherchour, 2023). Diplomatic bickering has ranged from historical matters to recent offenses. The issue of Algerian martyrs’ skulls kept in the *Musée de l’homme* and France’s reluctance to return them to Algeria has been the Achilles’ heel of any attempt to arrive at an act of reconciliation over the war memory. France’s acquiescence to return twenty four (24) skulls under Algeria’s request was a remarkable chapter in the memory file between the two countries, yet still insignificant as the skulls’ estimated number is 536, according to historian Ali Farid Belkadi (“Provoking Paris... ‘Skulls of Algerian resistance fighters’ back in the spotlight”, 2023). France’s consent to return all skulls would imply a formal confession of its horrendous war crimes that need to be compensated. Algeria’s rightful urge to reclaim its freedom fighters’ skulls and to demand a formal apology and recognition of war crimes by France was denied by Macron who claimed that accounts about Algeria under the French occupation was a “totally rewritten official history” that “is not based on truth” but on “a discourse based on hatred towards France” (as cited in Kessous, 2021). In this regard, commenting on Algeria’s pro-English policies, journalist Said Arezki from *Jeune Afrique* opens up his article with describing the tensions between the two countries as “a long series of disputes, quarrels and misunderstandings, like an old couple who missed their divorce because their inheritance was too heavy” suggesting that the policy is eminently diplomatic. “This is obviously a way of taunting France whenever one of its leaders makes a remark about the conduct of Algeria's internal affairs”, Boukhlef reacted (2022). Samir Kahred (2022) from *Les français presse* holds that it is a decision against France following Macron’s declaration describing the Algerian regime as “politico-military”. “A New slap on France’s face”, that was how Michel Dandelot referred to Algeria’s banning of the French curriculum in private

schools and mandating the teaching of the Arabophone national one, and further considers Algerian students as “victims of political stakes” as a result of swaying away from French.

A more radical perspective from which Kamel Daoud (2022), Algerian writer and journalist for *Le Point*, perceives the growing presence of English language in Algeria is the Islamists’ nurtured grudge against the colonizer’s language. In his article “English, an ‘Arabic Language’”, he contends that Islamists’ ardent support for ELT promotion is not that because English would accelerate the Algerian University’s productivity; rather, it is partly an ideological tool to expurgate francophonie in an Arab Muslim country. Raising the issue of identity, Daoud mocks Algeria’s opting for English calling the latter “their identity-purifier” from French alluding to the inevitable cultural influence that English would exert on Algerian’s cultural identity because English is as foreign as French. He further added that this language reform is part of an “imaginary decolonization” referring to post-colonial efforts to undo any colonial legacy, opposing Ngugi Wa Thiong’o who insists that decolonisation is broader than territorial independence but is also a restoration of indigenous languages and cultures. Despite the fact that Algeria has been undergoing a process of ‘decolonising [its] mind’ through language reforms since independence, the government’s motive behind its pro-English decisions is to ensure more openness to the world, whose lingua franca is English; and access to greater academic and scientific content.

Another episode when the Franco-Algerian tensions have reached their peak was the clandestine exfiltration of Amira Bouraoui, a French-Algerian political opponent of the Algerian regime. On February 6th, 2023, Bouraoui, whose physical presence on Algerian land had been proscribed by the authorities, fled to France through Tunisia under French diplomats’ protection. The stealth and illegal eviction contrived by French entities was a blatant offense of Algeria’s legal system, which issued suspended sentence against the activist hence banned to exit the territory, and a violation of interstate law. Algiers commented on the occurrence as an infringement of state sovereignty and that fulfilling the activist’s right of asylum by France was undeserved. Paris on the other hand debunked the ‘allegations’ and justified its intervention as a legal response to secure the safety of a French citizen seeing that Bouraoui had a dual citizenship. Although the incident took place before the switch to English, it has unequivocally escalated turbulence between Algiers and Paris, a factor that Jeanne Paturaud (2023) from *le Figaro* believes would boost Algeria’s determination to implement its anti-French language policies.

Expectedly, French diplomats also find it difficult to view Tebboun’s decision devoid of any geopolitical instigators. Interviewed by Nicolas Granié from *FrontPopulaire*, Xavier Driencourt (2023), diplomat and former ambassador of France in Algiers from 2008 to 2012 and from 2017 to 2020, declared that through promoting English, Algeria shows Anglo-Saxons that it is discarding France. He further belittles Algerians’ linguistic profile and defines them as “illiterate” because of the ‘poorly-planned’ language policies that have often ended up with people mastering none of the languages taught at the Algerian school. Successive attempts by right-wing Republicans (LR) to revise the Franco-Algerian migration agreements signed back in 1968, which grants Algerian migrants a special status in relation to employment and residence, have vexed Algerian authorities. In retaliation, president Tebboune issues the promotion of ELT, visits Moscow, and reinserts an anti-French verse to the national anthem (Driencourt, 2023). Notwithstanding the failure of LR to repeal the 1968 migration agreement, Driencourt maintains that the new language planning in the Algerian academic setting is not politically innocent.

French media bias in covering Algeria’s new linguistic tendencies was not restricted to highly politicizing the decision only but was sometimes even derogatory. In a satirical caricature by *Courrier International* comparing the Algerian school before and after promoting ELT, the Algerian primary-schooler is portrayed as a confused unhappy boy on the left wearing a bunny-like hat with the ears up and the word “*ane*”, meaning donkey, written on the forehead; on the right of the cartoon, the same boy is smiling doing a very American gesture, the corna, also known as the “devil’s horns”, with the word “donkey” written literally in English on the forehead and a “Yes!” in a speech bubble (see fig.2). Not only does it suggest that Algerian language-in-education policies are a failure but it insinuates that the whole Algerian education system is a fiasco, and introducing English in primary school came to camouflage its defects while the Algerian student is still a “donkey” whether he receives a francophone or an anglophone education. Had it been objectively conceived, the cartoon could have used other neutral expressions that show a linguistic shift like a greeting formula: “Salut” and “Hello”,

or sentences like “je parle français” and “I speak English”. The corna, often perceived as a Satanic salute made by rock and metal fans meaning “You rock!”, “Hell yeah!”, or “I love you”, symbolizes adopting an anglophone culture since gesticulation is an inherent part of language while language and culture are essentially inseparable. By means of a disparaging caricature, the designer apparently conveys his discontent with French language and culture losing ground in a former colony. Likewise, Boukhlef argues that French has been counterbalanced to the benefit of English to whitewash the Algerian university’s poor international ranking.



Fig.2. A Caricature by Courier International Comparing the Algerian Pupil Before and After Introducing English in Primary School.

3.4 Why does it matter to France?

In addition to the arbitrary mobilization of violence, linguistic imperialism has been a soft power to gain ascendancy over the colonized. The physical withdrawal of the French was not consequently followed by a termination of francophonie in Algeria because of the prolonged deep-rooted occupation leaving behind a cultural and linguistic heft. Despite the language amendments since independence, Algeria is still home to the third largest francophone population; thus, the potential rise of any other language would be dismantling France’s linguistic empire, let alone the spread of a more international language like English. In a new world order that is seemingly free of political and military empires, previous colonial empires still seek to maximize speakers of their languages in the interest of building a language empire by means of which they maintain influence. Similarly, Algeria has been standing out among other France’s previous colonies as an important sphere where francophonie enjoys a leading rank in the linguistic hierarchy of the country. Although not a member of the Francophonie, French language and culture are promoted through other bodies, chief of which is the “*Institut Français d’Algérie*”, or the French Institute of Algeria, operating in five big states: Algiers, Oran, Tlemcen, Constantine, and Annaba. Although French, like any other imperial language, has been “an instrument and outcome of imperial policy”, it has been equally appropriated by the colonized to stand against hegemony (Hamel). Even after granting Algeria its territorial independence, France still aspired to assert control through other tools, among which was French. Counting as a soft power, France has vehemently attempted to preserve its linguistic legacy on Algerian soil. It coexisted with Arabic as a de facto language of administration, technical majors in higher education, and political speeches by a great portion of Algerian politicians who treated the whole people as francophone, which is not the case.

While French is no more used today in independent Algeria to ensure the social and political subjugation over the colonized, France still has other motives to root its linguistic and cultural hegemony. Conceived by Rainer Enrique Hamel, the phrase “language empires” suggests “the existence of entities that are imperial solely in the realm of language” (3). Thus, even in a relatively post-imperial world, language empires compete to exert linguistic and cultural influence, as building a language empire, which entails a culture empire, is as mighty as military imperialism. France’s colonial language policy imposed French not aiming to evolve the African man but rather it believed in the evolution of French (A French official, 1933, as cited in Brutt-Griffler, 2002, as cited in Hamel, 2005, p.57). Achard states that it was based on the conviction that French was “the natural

language of Reason (as cited in Hamel, 2005,p.18). Therefore, this linguistic pride and egocentrism is still vivid and further exhibited itself through a dissatisfied reaction towards Algeria's language policy favouring English. After it held a supreme position around 1900 in international diplomacy, literature, and culture, French has been significantly undermined by the rapid growth of English that has ended up as the world's hegemonic language of globalization. Despite not adhering to the Francophonie, Algeria remains home to a large francophone population. Consequently, the potential total replacement of French with English would largely contribute to the dismantling of the French language empire and the empowerment of English as the world's lingua franca.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper by no means advocates the success of Algeria's latest language policy. Rather, it highlights the inclinations of French media towards characterizing the policy as a failure while neglecting the government's efforts in policy implementation. While it is too early to determine its failure from its success, Algeria's new language-in-education policies have been a chief concern for French media and diplomats alike, as this linguistic shift would mark a further step towards the decay of the French language empire. Littered with bias and lingual supremacy, this news coverage has been mostly chasing the imperfections that have not yet floated on the surface due to the recency of the decision. By engaging in an unmethodical assessment, politicizing a purely educational and linguistic shift, and making derogatory statements about the Algerian student, the articles and interviews under study fail to reach a thoughtful and objective coverage. If French occupied a more prestigious, global, and beneficial status than English, then I would myself corroborate that Algeria's act of promoting English over French evokes the war memory and colonial past. Thus, French media's interpretations have gainsaid the utilitarian reasons of English that would be advantageous to the Algerian individual in terms of scientific research, tourism, economy, and global citizenship. One wonders: in a post-colonial era, does this media discourse imply a superiority complex of France portraying its previous colonial subject as 'inferior'; therefore, unqualified to embark on a linguistic shift?

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