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## Al-arabiyyah, le Français, and the Soul of Algeria: The Language Tango Between Arabic and French in Algerian Education Policy and Defining post-Colonial Algerian National Identity

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AL-ARABIYYAH, LE FRANÇAIS, AND THE SOUL OF ALGERIA:  
THE LANGUAGE TANGO BETWEEN ARABIC AND FRENCH IN  
ALGERIAN EDUCATION POLICY AND DEFINING POST-COLONIAL  
ALGERIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

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By Amir Aziz

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion  
of the Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies at the  
Croft Institute for International Studies and the  
Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College  
The University of Mississippi

The University of Mississippi  
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## Note on Translation

All translations, including questionnaires in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and French, were conducted by the author, unless otherwise noted.

## Note on the Usage of the Term “Modern Standard Arabic” (MSA)

The term “Modern Standard Arabic” (MSA) or “*al-‘arabīyah al-fuṣḥá*” in Arabic used throughout this thesis refers to the modern, standardized register of literary Arabic used in a variety of formal discourse and writing in the Arabic-speaking world today. MSA is a direct linguistic progeny of an older version of literary Arabic called “*fuṣḥá al-turāth*,” or commonly known as Classical Arabic. Classical Arabic existed as a spoken language of the Arabian Peninsula between the seventh and ninth century, and is also the written language of the Holy Qur’an. While there are linguistic differences between MSA and Classical Arabic, they both refer to the formal, standardized register of Arabic that contrasts against other informal, non-standardized dialects of Arabic, such as Algerian Arabic.

## INTRODUCTION

*« At that time I felt it necessary to speak French even better than the French themselves, to convince them that we were not French. Someone had to write a book in a language that would truly shake the French, to the point of saying: This – This is Algeria! »<sup>1</sup>*

- Kateb Yacine

June 29 1992, Annaba, Algeria. The scene has been set. Events have already been set into motion. Mohamed Boudiaf, the then-Algerian president, is seated comfortably at the center of an elevated stage, addressing the nation in a televised speech.<sup>2</sup> There is a palpable tension in the room, a kind of hidden, suppressed electricity furiously charging through the atmospheric circuit of the air, anxiously waiting for a spark to trigger its release. The camera is rolling, projecting the determined visage of the Algerian president, brimming with confidence and conviction, onto television screens across the country. In the middle of his speech and unwittingly foreshadowing events to come, he booms in rapid-fire Algerian Arabic:

“The human being possesses a short life - we may very well all die tomorrow. So if a person is qualified, we must ensure that there are several conditions determining access to (work) responsibilities, among which are competence, honesty, and excellence in work ethic. We see all these nations that have surpassed us! Through what? Through knowledge!”

The audience, composed of solemn-looking Algerian men, listens with rapt attention, with nary a person daring to budge. Boudiaf is talking about the need to rethink Algerian economic policies.

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<sup>1</sup> Je sentais qu'il était nécessaire de parler français mieux que les Français, pour les convaincre, justement, que nous n'étions pas français. Il fallait écrire un livre dans une langue telle que les Français soient réellement ébranlés, jusqu'à se dire : « Ça, c'est l'Algérie! »

<sup>2</sup> Boudiaf was addressing a public meeting in the eastern Algerian city of Annaba.

Suddenly, the sound of a grenade explosion reverberates in the room. Boudiaf hesitates and looks to his left. An uninterrupted, rapid stream of gunfire soon follows, causing smoke to fill the room. The camera swivels frantically left to right, futilely attempting to locate the source of the unexpected commotion. Chaos reigns and people dive for cover behind their seats to avoid getting caught in the line of indiscriminate firing. The cloud of smoke, as transient as the gunfire that preceded it, clears a few moments after. A horrible, billowing silence overwhelms the room. The immobile body of the Algerian president lays on the ground, bloodied and riddled with bullets.

The assassination of Boudiaf, caught on tape, was emblematic of Algeria's national identity crisis. Boudiaf's assassin was, in an ironic turn of events, the former president's own bodyguard and self-professed Islamist sympathizer of *Le Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS).<sup>3</sup> The Algerian civil war that intensified after Boudiaf's assassination was waged between radical Islamist groups pushing for an increased Arabization and Islamization of the country and the military-backed government wanting to preserve the secular status quo. The war was essentially an ideological crisis, with both sides fighting to impose their own vision of an Algerian national identity.

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<sup>3</sup> *Le Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS), or the Islamic Salvation Front, was one of the various Islamist guerilla groups fighting to overthrow the military-backed Algerian government during the start of the bloody Algerian civil war that endured throughout the 1990s.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

In Algeria, Arabic and French are the two most commonly spoken languages, sharing a contentious relationship with one another in relation to national identity. The centrality of French and its continued importance in Algerian society are due to the legacy of French colonialism, discussed in Section 1.1. The centrality of Arabic and its prominence is attributed to the spread of Islam and Arabo-Islamic culture, discussed in Section 1.2. The core of my research inquiry thus focuses exclusively on Arabic and French, due to their high visibility in Algerian society.

The Berber language is the third most commonly spoken language, spoken by approximately 15% of the 39 million Algerian population, and has played a vital role in shaping nationalist Berber movements in the 1980s. However, since the objective of the thesis is to examine how Arabic and French, in their capacity as the two most commonly spoken languages in Algeria, fit into expressions of national identity in relation to one another, and not to an additional third language, I will not be discussing how the Berber language relates to Algerian national identity.

In my research, I am examining how Arabic and French help shape perceptions of an Algerian national identity, working within the framework of language as an identity boundary marker. I am applying various theories on national identity to analyze the components that make up an Algerian national identity, which is discussed in Section 1.1. Since language policies are largely communicated in schools, my research also focuses on Algerian schools and how Arabic and French are represented within the education system. My research explores the question: How have Algeria's Arabic-French language policies in its schools since

independence shaped attitudes about the relationship of Arabic and French in relation to post-colonial Algerian national identity?

It should also be noted that throughout the thesis, the term “Arabic,” unless otherwise stated, refers collectively to Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), the standardized, literary form of Arabic taught in schools, and Algerian Arabic, the non-standardized form of Arabic spoken informally.

I conducted a research study in December 2014 - January 2015 in Algiers, Algeria, using questionnaires, conducted in Arabic or French. As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, the results of the surveys are used to answer the stated research question, through discursive analysis, on how Arabic and French each contribute to Algerian attitudes towards national identity.

The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter addresses three key theoretical concepts pertinent to the understanding of national identity: What is national identity? What are the influencing factors that contribute to an individual’s formulation of identity? In exploring these theoretical concepts, the first chapter will also proceed to examine how language and national identity manifest in Algerian discourse.

The second chapter examines the historical development of Algerian language policies and how expressions of national identity became linked to educational language policies. This chapter examines how Arabic and French implemented within the structure of the Algerian education system over three successive historical eras: the French colonial era (1830-1962), the post-independence Arabization era (1962-1999) and the present day, post-civil war era (1999-present).



The third chapter merges the historical framework and theoretical analysis of the first two chapters to analyze results of the questionnaires and address the stated research question.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### *Quelle langue devrait définir l'identité algérienne?*

#### The Conflict between Language and Identity in Post-Colonial Algeria

« How is it that the space of white rectangular leaves of paper has superimposed itself upon the vast white space of the canvases that have not been painted yet? And how have letters of the alphabet fled me as colors once fled me? And the world been transformed into an antique television set, broadcasting images in black and white?»<sup>4</sup>

- Ahlam Mosteghanemi<sup>5</sup>

### 1.1 Defining national identity

In order to understand how Algerian national identity is constructed around Arabic and French, it is necessary to define the theoretical concept of “national identity.” In his seminal work *National Identity*, Anthony Smith defines it as possessing several fundamental characteristics, among which are “a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.”<sup>6</sup> Smith also characterizes national identity as “fundamentally multi-dimensional” and “complex constructs composed of a number of interrelated components.”<sup>7</sup> Smith’s constructivist theory proposes that national identity, the process of self-identifying with a nation based on personal experiences and pre-conceived notions of belonging, is as much a synthetic, imagined social construct as it is varied and abstract.

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<sup>4</sup> Ahlam Mostaghanemi, *Dhākirat al-Jasad* (Beirut : Hachette Antoine). 2013. Page 9.

<sup>5</sup> Ahlam Mostaghanemi is a famous Algerian author renowned for being the first Algerian female writer to compose literary works strictly in Modern Standard Arabic.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press). 1993. Page 14.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid: Page 15.

This constructivist theory postulating that national identity is an invented socio-political reality has been set forth numerous times before. Eric Hobsbawm describes traditions and identity in his seminal work *The Invention of Tradition*, as a set of fabricated norms and values imposed through ritualization and repetition established to complement a constructed historical narrative.<sup>8</sup>

Likewise, Benedict Anderson proposes in *Imagined Communities* that national identity requires “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”<sup>9</sup> Anderson is postulating that constituent members will likely never have the opportunity to meet most of their other comrades due to the demographic immensity of any given population; however, the assumption of the existence of an imagined camaraderie or common fellowship is needed to ensure the durability of any fabricated national identity.<sup>10</sup>

French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas in *L'Altérité et Transcendance* introduces the concept of alterity in identity formation. According to Lévinas, alterity is the process of “othering” or constructing boundary markers to separate the self from the “other” or non-self.<sup>11</sup> With regards to national identity, alterity determines the denominational boundary markers, such as language, that distinguish a particular national identity from another, promoting identity exclusivity.

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<sup>8</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). 1992. Page 4.

<sup>9</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso). 1991. Page 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Emmanuel Lévinas, *L'Altérité et Transcendance* (New York: Columbia University Press). 2000. Page 32.

Alterity, imagined political community, and invented traditions are henceforth building blocks crucial to the historical innovation of national symbols, memories, even notions of a shared language, to construct a fluid, albeit superficial, narrative of a national identity. Thomas Hylland Eriksen in *Ethnicity and Nationalism* proposes that the historical construction of any national narrative is not a product of the past but instead a response to requirements of the present, which signifies the fluidity and elasticity of national identity.<sup>12</sup> The state is thus able to invent and impose its own reconstructive, selective version of history to formulate national identity for purposes of national unity, depending on present circumstances.

If national identity is a multi-dimensional, invented construct malleable to requirements of the present, then it can be created, negotiated, imposed, removed, and re-negotiated depending on prevailing circumstances. Henry Kissinger defines identity negotiation as “a process of combining conflicting positions into a common position, under a decision rule of unanimity, a phenomenon in which the outcome is determined by the process.”<sup>13</sup>

Using this definition, the process of constructing a common national identity thus requires a continuous process of negotiation, constituting the following steps occurring simultaneously: 1) the process of alterity requiring the drawing of specific identity boundary markers to a distinct national identity, 2) the process of imagining a political community based on a shared historical narrative, and 3) the process of inventing traditions reinforcing the sense of a national identity. In the

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (London: Pluto Press). 2010. Page 72.

<sup>13</sup> Henry Kissinger, “The Viet Nam Negotiations,” *Foreign Affairs: Vol. 47, No. 2. (1969)*. Page 47.

case of Algeria, language policy-making in MSA and French is a central part of the national identity construction process, due to each language's centrality in Algerian society, whether through Francization imposed during French rule or the Arabization enforced by post-independence Algerian administrations, both of which are further discussed in Chapter Two.

### **1.2 Issues of identity in Algerian literary discourse**

If the Algerian national identity is treated as a potential point of conflict that requires the constant process of negotiation, then the assassination of President Boudiaf during the Islamist civil war of the 1990s was symptomatic of that ongoing process - a violent ideological climax after decades of the antagonistic processes of Arabization and Francization in Algeria. The war could be described as the process of alterity manifesting in an especially potent manner, with radical Islamists and secular government forces fighting for the political power to establish their own boundary markers and impose their vision of a distinct Algerian national identity.

The Arabic language, in the form of MSA or dialectal Algerian Arabic, evokes an Algerian national identity as an Arabo-Islamic socio-political construct based on Islamic and Arabic traditions. This ideological predilection was seen throughout the enforced Arabization from 1963 to the 1990s, a historical process discussed in Section 2.2, which was targeted at constructing an Arabic-centric national identity. The French language imagines an Algerian national identity as a secular, modernized Francophone socio-political construct that may also be inadvertently associated with the socio-historical trauma of French colonization and the

dispossession of Algeria's existing indigeneous languages. Arabic and French in Algeria have thus often been a "us-versus-them" categorizer - powerful boundary markers and expedient political tools that enforce identity exclusivity and evoke differing images of Algerian identity.

Since Algeria's independence in 1962, Algerian intellectuals and politicians have expressed a plethora of views arguing for the future of Arabic and French in Algeria. Algerian intellectuals such as Kateb Yacine and Assia Djebar viewed French as a link to the greater Western world, where they could access scientific works and philosophical thought through French translations.<sup>14</sup> It was also a language to communicate ideas from a uniquely Algerian perspective, connecting Algerians to a larger Francophone world beyond their traditional Arabophone sphere of influence.

While they objected against French rule in Algeria, they regarded the French language as a legitimate vehicular metaphor for the Algerian experience, disengaging it from its colonial origins and embracing it as a language authentically Algerian and as much a carrier of Algerian identity as Arabic. An independent Algeria had to continue the teaching of French so as to produce literary, scientific and philosophical works in French expressed within a uniquely North African context, as French had become an inseparable part of Algerian history.

Assia Djebar, a prominent Algerian novelist renowned for her work in Algerian feminist literature written in the French language, is a proponent of a strong Arabic-

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<sup>14</sup> Farida Abu-Haidar, "Arabisation in Algeria," *International Journal of Francophone Studies: Vol. 3, No. 3, (2000)*. Page 153.

French bilingual policy.<sup>15</sup> Djebbar advocates preserving both Arabic (as MSA and Algerian Arabic) and French as important boundary markers to define Algerian identity. In a speech given at the *L'Académie Française* on June 22 2006, Djebbar declares herself an Algerian who has internalized French in such a manner that the stigma of French as a colonizing language no longer exists, as French is a natural part of her as Arabic is:<sup>16</sup>

The French language, which is yours, ladies and gentlemen, has become mine, at least in writing, French has thusly become the place of the deepening of my work, the space of my meditation or of my daydreams, the target of my utopia perhaps, I will even say it is the tempo of my breathing, from day to day: (it is) what I would like to sketch right now, where I dwell as a silhouette standing at your doorstep.<sup>17</sup>

In her speech, Djebbar acknowledges the trauma of French colonization on the Algerian population, where the French language was imposed to the detriment of Algeria's other existing languages such as Arabic and Tamazight. She also fully embraces French, dissociating it from its colonial origins and accepting it as a language that is authentically Algerian and as much a carrier and preserver of Algerian identity and culture as Arabic. However, Algerian writers such as Djebbar and Kateb Yacine, who continued writing in French, were harshly criticized through accusations that they were sacrificing the integrity of their cultural identity by using French.

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<sup>15</sup> Djebbar was elected to the *L'Académie Française* (the French Academy) in 2005, a prestigious, influential body specializing in pedagogical matters of the French language.

<sup>16</sup> Assia Djebbar, *Discours du réception: Réception de Madame Assia Djebbar*. Paris, Palais de l'Institut. 22 June 2006. Retrieved September 14 2014 from: <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/discours-de-reception-et-reponse-de-pierre-jean-remy>.

<sup>17</sup> La langue française, la vôtre, Mesdames et Messieurs, devenue la mienne, tout au moins en écriture, le français donc est lieu de creusement de mon travail, espace de ma méditation ou de ma rêverie, cible de mon utopie peut-être, je dirai même ; tempo de ma respiration, au jour le jour : ce que je voudrais esquisser, en cet instant où je silhouette dressée sur votre seuil.

Kateb Yacine (1929-1989) was an Algerian author raised in the colonial education system who was a staunch advocate of preserving French within the cultural sovereignty of Algeria. He is regarded as an Algerian revolutionary hero who gave a literary voice to the previously undocumented Algerian experience. In a televised interview in 1986, Yacine rejected accusations made by his critics: “I write in French because France invaded my country and that it held such a powerful position that I have to write in French to survive. But through writing in French, I retain have my Arab and Berber roots that are still very much alive.”<sup>18</sup>

His novel *Nedjma*, published in 1956 and written in poetic French, is considered a literary masterpiece in contemporary French literature. The novel takes place in Bône, Algeria, in the wake of the Sétif massacres in May 1945, and revolves around an alluring married woman, Nedjma, who is pursued by four revolutionary Algerians.<sup>19</sup> Throughout the novel, the titular character is not provided much character development, but it is implied that her character serves as a metaphor for Algeria. Written in an unconventional, non-chronological literary style, the novel instead focuses on the efforts of the four men who strive for her attention and her heart. The metaphor of their endless pursuit of Nedjma reveals the overarching theme of the novel: Algeria is a motherland, fiercely independent, mysterious, indecipherable and unattainable, and no colonial power or even her own people could ever completely restrain her or unravel her mysteries.

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<sup>18</sup> Hafid Gafaiti, *Voix multiples : Yacine, un homme, une œuvre, un pays*, Laphormic, 1986. TV interview.

<sup>19</sup> Kateb Yacine, *Nedjma*, (Paris: Points French). 1996.



Yacine's novels thus emphasize on the resilience and diversity of Algeria and Algerians. For Yacine, French only served as a vehicular mechanism for the dissemination of ideas. What was more paramount was the voice of the Algerian literary character, expressed in French, transmitted to other Francophone readers and translated into different languages. In 1966 in an interview for a TV broadcast, Yacine declared:

"The use of the French language is to serve a neocolonial political machine, which only perpetuates our alienation. However, the usage of the French language does not mean that we are agents of a foreign power... I write in French to tell the French that I am not French."<sup>20</sup>

It mattered less that his works were written in French, the language of his colonizers, as what mattered was the literary empowerment of Algerians. French could thus engender a new and empowered generation of Algerians who would use the language to gain their independence.

Likewise, Algerian novelist Rachid Boudjedra took a similar position when he encountered criticism: "As an Algerian, I did not choose French. French chose me, or rather, it was imposed upon me through decades of blood and tears and through a painful history of colonialism."<sup>21</sup> To Boudjedra, language was a means to an end and did not mean a betrayal of one's cultural roots.

For Djébar, Yacine and Boudjedra, the imposition of French did create a profound sense of loss in identity and culture, through the displacement of Arabic, Tamazight and Algerian traditions. However, they also viewed Arabic and French as two inseparable parts of a united whole. They believed in the importance of a

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<sup>20</sup> Tahar Djaout, *Hommage à Kateb Yacine*, Office des Publications Universitaires, 1987. Documentary.

<sup>21</sup> Rachid Boudjedra, *Lettres Algériennes* (Grasset). 1995. Page 31.

strong bilingual education system that taught both languages with equal pedagogical emphasis to acknowledge the complex socio-linguistic history of Algeria.

In particular, the usage of French did not amount to a betrayal of their socio-historical Algerian heritage; rather, the French language allowed them to strengthen and reclaim their dispossessed heritage by carving a distinct Franco-Algerian identity that was unique in itself. To them, what was more harmful was forcing Algerians to learn only a particular language, such as Arabization that destroyed the harmony of Algeria's linguistic diversity, as well as the perpetuation of the myth that Arabic was reserved for prayer, poetry and spirituality while French was for scientific progress and technology. They believed that Algerians should be educated and be allowed to write in both languages to express all domains of the Algerian experience.

On the opposing side of the ideological spectrum, there exists a class of pro-nationalist, pro-Arabic Algerians who wish to see Arabic regain prominence and French eliminated. Pro-nationalist groups were most active in the period between the late 1920s to the start of the Algerian war of independence in 1954, and amongst them two influential nationalist groups emerged: *Étoile Nord-Africaine* (ENA)<sup>22</sup> and *Association des Uléma Musulmans Algériens* (AUMA)<sup>23</sup>.

The ENA, formed in the late 1920s, is considered the first organized nationalist movement in Algeria led by Ahmed Ben Messali Hadj, a prominent revolutionary

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<sup>22</sup> The North African Star.

<sup>23</sup> Association of the Algerian Muslim 'Ulemas.

figure often referred to in Algeria as the father of Algerian nationalism.<sup>24</sup> The ENA was primarily composed of laborers from the northern Algerian region of Kabylie who rejected French assimilationism and were committed to the domination of Arabic and Arabo-Islamic culture. Their programs included calling for the propagation of free, mandatory Islamic schools that taught Arabic and Islamic values at every level of the education system, the withdrawal of French troops and the independence of Algeria.<sup>25</sup> Messali Hadj and ENA members were brought up in the colonial system and thus acquired French literacy; however, they refused to accommodate space for French in an independent Algeria.

Likewise, the AUMA, formed by Abdelhamid Ben Badis in 1931, assumed similar ideological positions as the ENA, calling for Algerians to reject French assimilationism. The AUMA, backed by Algerian religious *'ulama*,<sup>26</sup> actively undermined French influence, organizing social activities in mosques and opening free, clandestine Quranic schools that taught Arabic.<sup>27</sup> In an AUMA manifesto published in April 1936, Ben Badis proclaimed:

“[Algeria] has her own religious and linguistic unity, her culture, her traditions and her characteristics, both good and bad like any other nation. We then say that this Algerian nation is not France, it cannot be France and it will not be France. It is impossible to become French even if she desires so; on the contrary, it is a nation completely different from France, by its language, its customs, its ethnic origins and its religion. She rejects assimilation.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Paulin G. Djite, “The Arabization of Algeria: Linguistic and sociopolitical motivations,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language: Vol. 98, No. 1, (1992)*. Page 18.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> A group of Islamic scholars knowledgeable in Islamic law and theology.

<sup>27</sup> Heather J. Sharkey, “Language and Conflict: The Political History of Arabisation in Sudan and Algeria,” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism: Vol. 12, No. 3, (2012)*. Page 432.

<sup>28</sup> Charles-André Julien, *L'Afrique du Nord en Marche : Algérie, Tunisie, Maroc, 1880-1952* (Omnibus). 2002. Page 104.

In his declaration, Ben Badis rejected assimilationism, affirmed the irreconcilability of France and Algeria and shattered the carefully constructed colonial myth of the intertwining of French and Algerian destinies. Like Djébar, Yacine and Boudjedra, Ben Badis and Messali Hadj believed in Algeria's territorial and cultural sovereignty. However, unlike Yacine, they saw French as a false prophet, as subserviently participating in the colonial project was tantamount to betraying their Algerian roots.<sup>29</sup> It was necessary to reject French to remain authentically Algerian.

It is worth noting that the FLN government and the Islamists of the civil war traced the origins of their anti-French, pro-Arabic ideological lineage to Ben Badis and Messali Hadj. The FLN government saw the role of Arabic in a secular context, as Arabic was a symbolic antithesis to counter French influence and solidify national unity, stopping short of imposing Islamic law as a basis for political governance. The Islamists of the civil war, on the other hand, wanted to enforce Islamic law, as for them linguistic Arabization also meant political Islamization.

This divide in beliefs over the future of Arabic and French in Algeria is rooted in the history of Algerian language policy-making that stretches back to the French colonial era. To understand how this ideological divide came into being, the next chapter examines the historical development of language policies over three successive historical eras: the French colonial era (1830-1962), the post-independence Arabization era (1962-1999) and the post-civil war era (1999-present).

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<sup>29</sup> Boumediène Berrabah, "Post-Independence Algerian Linguistic Policy," *Research Journal in Organizational Psychology & Educational Studies: Vol. 2, No.5, (2013)*. Page 272.

**CHAPTER TWO:**  
*Au Cœur et l'Ame de l'Algérie:*  
**Arabic, French and the Algerian Education Sytem in Crisis**

« When one of the languages is the language of the ruler, when it provides access to a great, modern civilization, when it is clear, when its spoken and written expressions are as close as possible; and when the other language is the language of those who are ruled, when even its best writings express a medieval ideal, when it is ambiguous, when it takes on a different form when it is written than when it is spoken, the match is really unfair: the first must inevitably overcome the second.»<sup>30</sup>

- William Marçais<sup>31</sup>

## **2.1 L'ALGÉRIE FRANÇAISE: FRENCH COLONIAL RULE (1830 - 1962)**

« *All of you are good little French children; all of you love your homeland... Starting from today you have to fulfil a duty towards France: which is to better know it to serve it well!* »<sup>32</sup>

- Claude Augé and Maxime Petit (1892)<sup>33</sup>

### **2.1.1 Ideological basis for the spread of French in French Algeria**

On the eve of the French conquest of Algeria in 1830, there were at least 1 - 3 million indigenous inhabitants in Ottoman Algeria, governed by local authorities appointed by the Ottoman Sultan in Constantinople.<sup>34</sup> A mix of dialectal Arabic and

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<sup>30</sup> Quand l'une des langues est celle des dirigeants, qu'elle ouvre l'accès d'une grande civilisation moderne, qu'elle est claire, que l'expression écrite et l'expression parlée de la pensée s'y rapprochent au maximum; que l'autre est la langue des dirigés, qu'elle exprime dans ses meilleurs écrits un idéal médiéval, qu'elle est ambiguë, qu'elle revêt quand on l'écrit un autre aspect que quand on la parle, la partie est vraiment inégale: la première doit fatalement faire reculer la seconde.

<sup>31</sup> William Marçais was a colonial administrator of French Algeria in the early 1900s.

<sup>32</sup> « Vous êtes toujours de bon petits Français; vous aimez tous votre patrie... Vous avez dès aujourd'hui à remplir un devoir envers la France: c'est de la bien connaître pour la bien servir! » – This refrain was found in one of many colonial-era history textbooks used in French Algeria to instill patriotic loyalty towards France in Algerian children.

<sup>33</sup> Claude Augé and Maxime Petit, *Premier Livre d'Histoire de France* (Paris: Librairie Larousse). 1892. Préface.

<sup>34</sup> Kamel Kateb, *Européens, Indigènes et Juifs En Algérie (1830-1962)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France). 2001. Page 11.

varying strains of the Berber language served as the principal *lingua franca* of the indigenous population. After the French conquest in 1830, colonial administrators began to enforce Francization, the process of cultural assimilation that introduced French culture and the French language onto the indigenous population through a national colonial education system.<sup>35</sup> The introduction of a national colonial education system constituted the first historical encounter indigenous Algerians had with the French language.

The initial propagation of the French language starting from 1830 was rooted in French approaches to colonial policy. France labeled itself as “*la patrie*” or “the motherland,” a necessary mother figure responsible for the protection and nourishment of its daughter colonies.<sup>36</sup> French literature written about Algeria in the early twentieth century, decades after the initial conquest in 1830, indicated how the Franco-Algerian relationship was imagined in the early decades of French Algeria. The titles of texts such as *L’Algérie, fille de France* (1935) and *Notre Enfant l’Algérie* (1949) written by French intellectuals affirmed the matriarchal mother-daughter relationship as envisioned by French colonial administrators, an effective metaphorical strategy aimed at legitimizing the re-shaping of Algeria as a daughter colony embodying French culture.<sup>37</sup>

The French also utilized the ideological concepts of “*la mission civilisatrice*” or “the civilizing mission” and cultural assimilationism in envisioning the future of French Algeria. The ideology of the civilizing mission instructed colonial

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<sup>35</sup> Jonathan K. Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria, 1930-1954* (New York: University of Rochester Press). 2002. Page 16.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*: Page 14.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*.

administrators to “civilize” colonized populations by turning them into “Frenchmen” and to re-shape Algeria, a daughter colony, in the image of its motherland, France. In a parliamentary debate on March 28 1885, Jules Ferry, a French statesman who served as Minister of Public Instruction between 1880 – 1883 during the French Third Republic (1870-1940), defended colonialism by using the civilizing mission as justification:

“It must be stated openly that, in effect, superior races have rights over inferior races. I repeat that superior races have a right, because they have a duty. They have the duty to civilize inferior races...”<sup>38</sup>

Ferry’s views were not radical at the time as they were shared by like-minded proponents of the continued colonial expansion of the French Third Empire. Ferry staunchly believed that colonial schools played a vital role in spreading the “civilizing” influence of French culture and in eliminating corrupting vestiges of non-French influences. Pro-colonialist advocates like Ferry thus regarded themselves as preservers and proponents of human rationality and scientific progress, charged with the perceived moral duty of molding other non-French civilizations to their image.<sup>39</sup>

Indigenous Algerians were thus often referred to as “*sauvages*” or “*barbares*” in French, loaded terms for groups of savages lacking attributes of civilization.<sup>40</sup> To achieve the goal of civilizing those who they viewed as “savages,” the French adopted a policy of cultural assimilationism in which indigenous Algerians were

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<sup>38</sup> Jules Ferry, "Speech Before the French Chamber of Deputies, March 28, 1884," *Discours et Opinions de Jules Ferry*, ed. Paul Robiquet (Paris: Armand Colin & Cie), 1897. Page 215.

<sup>39</sup> Malika Rebai Maamri, “The Syndrome of the French language in Algeria,” *International Journal of Arts and Sciences: Vol. 3, No. 3, (2009)*. Page 78.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

made to learn French through a massive colonial education project. The French language was regarded as a natural extension of French culture and a potent carrier of French thought and self-expression.<sup>41</sup>

French Algeria was treated as a non-contiguous extension of mainland France, as French colonial administrators intended to develop Algeria an inseparable part of mainland France through permanent French settlement. To achieve this vision of fully incorporating and assimilating Algeria as part of mainland France, Algerians needed to develop characteristics associated with French culture before they could become civilized “Frenchmen.” The concepts of colonial patriarchy, the civilizing mission and cultural assimilationism thus provided the collective moral impetus and ideological basis for launching systemic, comprehensive national education policies in French Algeria that would entrench the French language in Algerian society starting from 1848.

### **2.1.2 Cultural colonialism and the teaching of “French-ness” (1848 – 1962)**

The establishment of colonial schools, based on the French model of cultural colonialism, contributed significantly to the Francization of Algerians between 1848 - 1962. At the onset of colonization in 1830, literacy rate in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) among indigenous Algerians was estimated to be around 40 – 50% while French remained a completely unfamiliar language.<sup>42</sup> To discourage the use of Arabic and to permit the spread of French, the French instituted a direct system

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<sup>41</sup> Rebecca Rogers, “Teaching morality and religion in nineteenth-century colonial Algeria: Gender and the civilizing mission,” *History of Education: Vol. 40, No. 6, (2011)*. Page 741.

<sup>42</sup> Paulin G. Djite, “The Arabization of Algeria: Linguistic and sociopolitical motivations,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language: Vol. 98, No. 1, (1992)*. Page 16.



of colonial administration. They set up a new national education system that taught the history of French civilization and French philosophical thought.

The process of dispossessing MSA and introducing French in schools was gradual. Starting from 1863, religious Islamic schools called *Medersas*<sup>43</sup> that taught in MSA were slowly phased out, in favor of public colonial schools that instructed in French: There were initially around 2000 religious schools in 1863, but by the end of the 1880s, only around 750 remained with approximately less than 100 students enrolled in each of them.<sup>44</sup> The teaching of Arabic pedagogy and Arabic literature was officially banned starting from 1904, and in 1938, French colonial authorities introduced a law decreeing Arabic a foreign language and completely prohibited its usage in official government documents.<sup>45</sup> As a result, literacy rates in Arabic plummeted between the 1880s and 1962. By the end of the colonial era in 1962, literacy rates in MSA among young Algerians were as low as 10%.<sup>46</sup>

In the same manner in which Arabic was gradually phased out in schools, the introduction of French as the principal language of instruction was just as slow but progressive. In 1870, forty years after the initial French conquest, school attendance rates were at an all-time low: 5% of indigenous Algerian children were attending any form of education in schools.<sup>47</sup> In March 1882, France introduced a group of

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<sup>43</sup> *Medersas* were religious Islamic schools in Algeria that exclusively taught children in Modern Standard Arabic.

<sup>44</sup> Boumediène Berrabah, "Post-Independence Algerian Linguistic Policy," *Research Journal in Organizational Psychology & Educational Studies: Vol. 2, No.5, (2013)*. Page 271-272.

<sup>45</sup> Farida Abu-Haidar, "Arabisation in Algeria," *International Journal of Francophone Studies: Vol. 3, No. 3, (2000)*. Page 152.

<sup>46</sup> Mohamed Benrabah, *Language Conflict in Algeria: From Post-Colonialism to Independence (Multilingual Matters)*. 2013. Page 72.

<sup>47</sup> John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press). 2005. Page 104.

educational reforms called the Ferry Laws that declared primary education free, secular and mandatory for all young children; these laws were also extended to French Algeria, by then considered a non-contiguous extension of France.<sup>48</sup> In October 1882, reforms were introduced which decreed for the establishment of specific vocational schools and elite schools in French Algeria, in part to combat low indigenous school attendance rates seen in 1870.<sup>49</sup> Vocational schools, taught in French, prepared for jobs in agriculture and non-skilled labor. In addition to spreading French, vocational schools also helped direct the indigenous population to specific types of jobs to serve the labor needs of the colonial economy.

On the other hand, elite colonial schools created a small, significant elite of French-speaking, French-educated Algerians who had successfully adopted a French cultural identity and assimilated fully into French culture. These elite intellectuals were also most often semi-lingual, fully proficient in French but somewhat proficient in MSA. They were appointed in political and administrative positions where indigenous representation was necessary.<sup>50</sup> However, their usage of French by these Algerians was paradoxical: The language of Descartes finally became a legitimate language of Franco-Algerian self-expression, capable of articulating the Algerian experience, but French colonial policy dictated that they could only do so through the lens of subservient matriarchal loyalty to France.

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<sup>48</sup> Jonathan K. Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria, 1930-1954* (New York: University of Rochester Press). 2002. Page 46.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Craig A. Sirles, "Politics and Arabization: The Evolution of Postindependence North Africa," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language: Vol. 137, No. 1, (1999)*. Page 118.

Franco-Algerian self-expression by Algerians who had access to political power was confined by imposed ideological limitations.

Thus, colonial schools also served a socio-political purpose in addition to spreading the French language. Through academic exclusion, the French controlled social mobility among the indigenous population. This allowed them to build an educated, albeit subservient, French-speaking Algerian elite who took up political and administrative positions in government, while maintaining a lower-class peasant majority who pursued vocational training in less elite institutions and fulfilled the labor needs of the expansionist Third French Empire.<sup>51</sup>

Instruction in the French language was a cornerstone of the colonial education system. By instructing in the French language, colonial schools could teach French history, philosophy and cultural norms, as French was regarded as an important tool for Algerians to achieve cultural assimilation and become “Frenchmen.” Colonial-era textbooks were designed to present French as a language linguistically capable of expressing sentiments crucial to everyday Algerian life. These textbooks aimed at presenting French grammar in an accessible manner, using familiar terms and concepts recognizable to Algerian children.

For example, science textbooks included chapters that described North African flora, fauna and natural landscapes, while social studies textbooks covered issues related to villages, farms, markets and various aspects pertinent to Algerian daily life.<sup>52</sup> Several textbook chapters were also titled using words of Arabic-origin, such

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<sup>51</sup> Jonathan K. Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria, 1930-1954* (New York: University of Rochester Press). 2002. Page 47.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*: Page 52.

as *Un Souk* (A Market) and *Matin dans le Bled* (Morning in the Countryside), to bring an immediate sense of indigenous familiarization to the teaching of French.<sup>53</sup> Other words of Arabic-origin, such as *toubib* (doctor) and *cleb* (dog) were also imported and became a common feature of the colloquial French spoken by indigenous Algerians.<sup>54</sup>

The teaching of French cultural and social norms in classrooms were also considered essential in inculcating a French identity. Consider the following example: in an illustration in a textbook titled *Bonjour Ali! Bonjour Fatima !*<sup>55</sup>, a refined mouse regards another less sophisticated-looking mouse and advises him: “*Mon cher, nous, les gens de la ville, nous ne mangeons pas comme vous. Chacun a son assiette, sa cuillère, son couteau.*”<sup>56</sup> The illustration was based on a popular children’s fable by famed French fabulist, Jean de La Fontaine, written in the late seventeenth century.<sup>57</sup> The French syntax employed is simple and straightforward, with the usage of affectionate terms such as “*mon cher*” (my dear) and “*nous, les gens de la ville*” (we, the people of the city) to appeal to the sensibilities of young children. The grammatical simplicity of the text meant that it could be easily understood by young children while transmitting a valuable cultural lesson: In order to be French and “civilized,” it is necessary that one eat like a French person with

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<sup>53</sup> Jonathan K. Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria, 1930-1954* (New York: University of Rochester Press). 2002. Page 52.

<sup>54</sup> *Toubib* is derived from the Arabic word for doctor (*ṭīb*), while *cleb* comes from the Arabic word for dog (*klb*).

<sup>55</sup> Paul Bourgeois and Léon Basset, *Bonjour Ali ! Bonjour Fatima! 1er livre de lecture courante pour le cours préparatoire des écoles franco-musulmanes* (F. Nathan). 1955. Page 36-37.

<sup>56</sup> My dear, we, the people of the city, do not eat like you. Each has his own plate, his own spoon and his own knife (*Original text is provided in French to explain how French grammar is presented*)

<sup>57</sup> Jean de La Fontaine, *Fables de La Fontaine : Le Rat de Ville et Le Rat des Champs* (Claude Barbin). 1668.

the appropriate cutlery and social etiquette. To lack such basic values for a simple task such as eating is to lack the fundamental elements to become truly French.

Algerian colonial schools also taught how the histories of France and Algeria were inextricably intertwined. Segments from French history would be taught in tandem with corresponding segments from Algerian history, often on pages back-to-back, so as to emphasize the inseparability and simultaneity of French and Algerian history.<sup>58</sup> The contributions of Algerian infantrymen who served under the French Army during World War II were also included in revised editions of textbooks printed after 1945 to emphasize the importance of colonial participation in the liberation of Nazi-occupied France.<sup>59</sup> By providing a historical space where Algerians could fit within a broader, grandiose notion of French history, Algerians would eventually see themselves as a quintessential element of French culture and accept the ongoing Francization of Algerian society.

The social usage of French in familial situations expanded exponentially between 1882 - 1962. By the mid-twentieth century, more than half of the indigenous Algerian population could speak some form of French, using it in familial conversations.<sup>60</sup> While degrees of oral fluency and literacy in French varied from person to person, the fact remained that French had begun to take root. Colonial education policies, along with the continued interaction between French-speaking European settlers and French-speaking Algerians, thus cemented the

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<sup>58</sup> Jonathan K. Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria, 1930-1954* (New York: University of Rochester Press). 2002. Page 56.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*: Page 58.

<sup>60</sup> Craig A. Sirles, "Politics and Arabization: The Evolution of Postindependence North Africa," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language: Vol. 137, No. 1, (1999)*. Page 120.

unofficial status of French as the common *lingua franca* of French Algeria by the early 1950s.

### **2.1.3 Consequences of French influence in French Algeria (1882 – 1962)**

There are three principal consequences of the propagation of French and the dispossession of Arabic between 1882 and 1962. Firstly, there was the rise of anti-French, pro-independence nationalist groups as early as the 1920s. On May 8 1945 in the northeastern Algerian town of Sétif, in response to Nazi Germany's surrender that officially ended World War II, Algerians gathered on the streets to celebrate the end of the war and to protest for Algerian independence.<sup>61</sup> The demonstrations escalated into violence as French police opened fire on protesters and riots continued for at least five days. Subsequent retaliatory attacks by French police on Algerians also contributed to the death toll, estimated to be anywhere as low as 1,400 by the government of then-French President Charles de Gaulle to as high as 30,000 by Algerian nationalist groups.<sup>62</sup> The Sétif incident was a major turning point in French-Algerian relations as it affirmed the growing Algerian distrust of French colonial rule and the increasing popularity of nascent nationalist movements calling for independence.

In the late 1940s, French colonial authorities introduced reforms that fused indigenous Algerian schools and European settler schools, creating common schools where Algerian and European children learned in the same classroom and

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<sup>61</sup> Martin Thomas, "Intelligence and the Transition to the Algerian Police State: Reassessing French Colonial Security after the Sétif Uprising, 1945," *Intelligence and National Security: Vol. 28, No. 3 (2013)*. Page 377-378.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*: Page 382.

were taught the same material.<sup>63</sup> These new fusion schools were aimed at assuaging rising tensions between Algerians and European settlers and at encouraging social interaction between Algerian and European children. New textbooks were circulated and included lessons on encouraging peaceful co-existence between communities. One textbook published in 1949 proclaimed the importance of inter-cultural communication:

“School children from cities, towns and the countryside, regardless of belonging, you are all seated at the same desks and studying the same books. Perhaps most importantly, you are learning to know one another and to love one another. This is essential.”<sup>64</sup>

This emphasis on a common school system and on the French language serving as the unifying link between the two disparate communities became more critical than ever, in efforts by the French to pacify increasingly persistent calls for independence and resistance against colonialism.

The second principal consequence of French influence in Algeria was the refusal of many Algerians who refused to send their children to public colonial schools. They resisted what they perceived as encroaching French influence detrimental to their cultural identity. They sent their children to Quranic schools, which were few and far between by the 1950s, that instructed in Arabic and transmitted Islamic teachings in a passive act of resistance against French influence.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Jonathan K. Gosnell, *The Politics of Frenchness in Colonial Algeria, 1930-1954* (New York: University of Rochester Press). 2002. Page 60.

<sup>64</sup> Edgar Colin, Pierre Damville, Jean Guillemin and Marcel-Edmond Naegelen, *L'Algérie, histoire et géographie : Préface de M. Marcel-Edmond Naegelen, ... A l'usage des cours moyens et des classes de fin d'études* (Baconnier Frères). 1949. Page 135

<sup>65</sup> James McDougall, “Dream of Exile, Promise of Home: Language, Education and Arabism in Algeria,” *Middle East Studies: Vol. 43, No. 2 (2011)*. Page 255.

Thirdly, as discussed in Section 1.2, the introduction of French triggered an ideological divide within the new generation of bilingual Algerians born in the early twentieth century who went through the colonial education system. While they would go on to wield their acquisition of French as a tool to call for independence, their visions for an Algerian identity were starkly different. One side advocated for the preservation of French along with Arabic in defining the Algerian character, while the other sought for the complete elimination of French while promoting Arabic.

As discussed in the following section, the consequences of French influence played a vital role in the shaping of the language education policies of the *Front Libération Nationale* (FLN), the first Algerian government post-independence in 1962. They demonstrated how language quickly became a nationally-divisive tool in the conversation defining Algeria's national identity and how it created persistent conflict even after independence.



## 2.2 POST-ALGERIAN INDEPENDENCE: ARABIZATION (1962 - 1999)

« Arabic is to Islam what the Church is to the Catholic religion; one could not live without the other. The belief of an illiterate Muslim is a web of indigestible superstitions. The reading of the Qur'an is everything. It stands at the cement of our faith. Is it then necessary to declare our commitment to the teaching of the Arabic language, the basis of our belief?»<sup>66</sup>

- Ferhat Abbas (1936)<sup>67</sup>

### 2.2.1 Oral proficiency and literacy rates in 1962 post-colonial Algeria

By independence in 1962, the spoken languages of everyday Algerian life were a combination of French, dialectal Algerian Arabic and Berber.<sup>68</sup> MSA was used exclusively for learning and writing in religious schools, and it was estimated that only 300,000 out of approximately 10 million Algerians in 1962 could understand MSA.<sup>69</sup> Most Algerians conversed in dialectal Algerian Arabic, a mix of Arabic and French, which became the principal *lingua franca*. Due to colonial schools, approximately 6 million Algerians could speak some form of French, using both French and Algerian Arabic to fit a wide array of social circumstances.<sup>70</sup>

However, aside from the universality of complete oral fluency in Algerian Arabic, individual oral proficiencies in MSA and French varied from person to person. In general, Algerians who had access to elite higher education could express themselves in French fluently, but were not as knowledgeable in MSA. Those who only attended colonial vocational schools could also speak French, perhaps in a less

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<sup>66</sup> Claude Collot and Jean-Robert Henry, *Le Mouvement National Algérien, Textes 1912-1954* (Editions L'Harmattan). 1978. Page 66.

<sup>67</sup> Ferhat Abbas served as the provisional Algerian president of an interim government established between 1958-1961 during the height of the Algerian cause for independence.

<sup>68</sup> Boumediène Berrabah, "Post-Independence Algerian Linguistic Policy," *Research Journal in Organizational Psychology & Educational Studies: Vol. 2, No.5, (2013)*. Page 273.

<sup>69</sup> Mohamed Benrabah, "Language-In-Education Planning in Algeria: Historical Development and Current Issues", *Language Policy. Vol. 6, (2007)*. Page 230.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

eloquent manner than their elite counterparts, but they were not as knowledgeable in MSA. For those Algerians who rejected colonial schools and attended religious Islamic schools, such as those established by Ben Badis and Messali Hadj, they could express themselves in MSA better, but were linguistically less competent in French.

However, oral proficiency rates did not accurately reflect literacy rate. Literacy rate in the Algerian context referred to those who were able to read and write in both MSA and French. In 1962, Algeria's literacy rate was as low as 10%, leaving the remaining 90% unable to read and write in both MSA and French, despite being able to speak them.<sup>71</sup>

The asymmetrical distribution of oral proficiency and literacy rate could be attributed to a complex intersection of socio-linguistic factors, exacerbated by French colonial education policies: the limited social usage of MSA, the limited instructional and academic usage of Algerian Arabic, the historical association of French with colonialism and a lack of ideological consensus on the linguistic character of Algerian language education policies. These irregularities thus engender a new generation of Algerians who each speak, write and read MSA, Algerian Arabic and French with disproportionate levels of proficiency.

### **2.2.2 Arabization reforms in the Algerian education system (1963 - 2001)**

The systemic Arabization of Algeria following independence was complex, fueled by a rigid fixation in rejecting French influence and fraught with pedagogical

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<sup>71</sup> Heather J. Sharkey, "Language and Conflict: The Political History of Arabisation in Sudan and Algeria," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism: Vol. 12, No. 3, (2012)*. Page 433.

shortfalls and poor educational planning policies. In 1963, a year after independence, school enrollment was as low as 850,000 students as Algerian society attempted to recuperate in the wake of six continuous years of strife and conflict.<sup>72</sup> As the first step of the Arabization process, the first Algerian president, Ahmed Ben Bella, in 1963 decreed MSA as the national language of Algeria and the sole language of academic instruction, instructing all primary and secondary institutions to comply. The process was progressive and began from the basic levels of education. Textbooks and educational materials in French were gradually abandoned in favor of teaching material in MSA.

For example, Grade One of the primary level, *cycle de base*, became fully Arabized a year after in 1964, teaching only in MSA and using Arabic educational material imported primarily from Egypt.<sup>73</sup> Other levels also began teaching certain subjects in MSA, while maintaining the use of French for the rest, and in 1967, Grade Two became fully Arabized.<sup>74</sup> To make up for the lack of Algerian teachers qualified to teach MSA in any circumstance, the Algerian government recruited starting from 1964 as many as a thousand Egyptian, Syrian and Iraqi teachers.<sup>75</sup> With the influx of imported educators, Arabization gained momentum and the teaching of MSA as a subject in itself increased to as much as ten hours of classroom instruction per week, with the addition of religious and Islamic studies as core subjects. By end of the 1960s, French had been completely removed from

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<sup>72</sup> Hind Amel Mostari, "A sociolinguistic perspective on Arabisation and language use in Algeria," *Language Problems & Language Planning: Vol. 28, No. 1, (2004)*. Page 29.

<sup>73</sup> Mohamed Benrabah, "Language-In-Education Planning in Algeria: Historical Development and Current Issues", *Language Policy. Vol. 6, (2007)*. Page 229.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid: Page 230.

<sup>75</sup> Farida Abu-Haidar, "Arabisation in Algeria," *International Journal of Francophone Studies: Vol. 3, No. 3, (2000)*. Page 154.

primary schools, but it still persisted in the teaching of several subjects at the secondary level.

The most drastic Arabization changes occurred during the presidency of the second Algerian president Houari Boumediène (1965 – 1978), whose supporters staged a military coup of Ben Bella's government in 1965. Boumediène adhered strictly to the vision of Algeria as an Arabo-Islamic entity, and initiated more stringent Arabization. In February 1966, Boumediène terminated the market monopoly of French publishing houses that distributed French literature in Algeria, and established a new publishing house, *Société Nationale d'Édition et de Diffusion* (SNED) to publish Algerian writers who wrote exclusively in MSA; Franco-Algerian writers like Kateb Yacine who wrote mostly in French were chastised by national newspapers and media.<sup>76</sup>

By the mid-1970s, teaching of MSA as a subject rose to fifteen hours per week.<sup>77</sup> By 1974, all levels of primary and secondary education and even training academies for teachers had been fully Arabized – core subjects were taught in MSA and French was reduced to an optional foreign language subject taught starting from Grade Three.<sup>78</sup> In May 1975, the first National Conference on Arabization was held to devise more reforms.<sup>79</sup> A January 1991 law completed the process, adopting

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<sup>76</sup> Farida Abu-Haidar, "Arabisation in Algeria," *International Journal of Francophone Studies: Vol. 3, No. 3, (2000)*. Page 156.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid: Page 154.

<sup>78</sup> Hind Amel Mostari, "A sociolinguistic perspective on Arabisation and language use in Algeria," *Language Problems & Language Planning: Vol. 28, No. 1, (2004)*. Page 30.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

harsher language and explicitly decreeing French a foreign language to be banned completely in all educational, governmental and economic spheres.<sup>80</sup>

Besides education, Arabization also influenced various facets of Algerian public life. In the workplace, a 1968 national law decreed that all government administrators were required to prove themselves competent in MSA by January 1971; those who could not meet these minimum standards would eventually be dismissed and only potential candidates fully proficient in MSA would be considered for government employment after 1971.<sup>81</sup> By 1971, all government documents, court cases, and workplace interactions were expected to be conducted solely in MSA.<sup>82</sup> In 1977, an official Technical Committee on Arabization was established to entrench further the usage of MSA in government administration jobs.<sup>83</sup> The use of colloquial Algerian Arabic and French in these work circumstances was thus stringently forbidden by law.

A 1976 law, unusually written in French, firmly states: “Arabiser totalement toutes les enseignes extérieures des administrations et sociétés publiques et interdire absolument toute inscription en langue étrangère.”<sup>84</sup> The law was primarily targeted at converting French names of streets and buildings to those of Arabic origin. For example, a street named *La Rue de Baudelaire*, eponymously named after the famed

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<sup>80</sup> Farida Abu-Haidar, “Arabisation in Algeria,” *International Journal of Francophone Studies*: Vol. 3, No. 3, (2000). Page 157.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Paulin G. Djite, “The Arabization of Algeria: Linguistic and sociopolitical motivations,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*: Vol. 98, No. 1, (1992). Page 21.

<sup>83</sup> Hind Amel Mostari, “A sociolinguistic perspective on Arabisation and language use in Algeria,” *Language Problems & Language Planning*: Vol. 28, No. 1, (2004). Page 27.

<sup>84</sup> Arabize completely all external signs of public administrations and absolutely ban any inscription written in a foreign language.

French poet, was changed to *Shā-ra' Sakiēt Sidi Youcef*, named after a historical Algerian warrior, with *shā-ra'* as the MSA word for “street.”<sup>85</sup>

In December 1990, stricter Arabization laws were passed, mandating that all meetings, debates and conferences in both the public and private sectors be written solely in MSA.<sup>86</sup> Documents and records that were written in any other language would be considered null and offenders would be subject to harsh fines amounting to at least 1,000 Algerian dinars.<sup>87</sup> These reforms altered visible facets of public life and were aimed solely in promoting the use of MSA over French.

In the same manner in which the French attempted to convert Algerians into Frenchmen through an assimilationist policy to foster colonial unity, Algerian governments post-independence attempted to conduct a systemic make-over of national identity through Arabization, in a hastened effort to distance Algeria from its French colonial roots and to carve a geopolitical Arabo-Algerian identity, which had not existed prior to independence, within the Arab-Muslim world.

### **2.2.3 Criticisms of Algerian language policies in re-making national identity**

Successive Algerian administrations envisioned MSA as the sole official language of Algeria and wanted to displace French in public domains, particularly in education. However, the reality was that majority of Algerians could neither speak nor write in MSA, French was still widely used and Algerian Arabic, an

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<sup>85</sup> Hind Amel Mostari, “A sociolinguistic perspective on Arabisation and language use in Algeria,” *Language Problems & Language Planning: Vol. 28, No. 1, (2004)*. Page 28.

<sup>86</sup> Paulin G. Djite, “The Arabization of Algeria: Linguistic and sociopolitical motivations,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language: Vol. 98, No. 1, (1992)*. Page 15.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

improvised mix of dialectal Arabic and French, emerged as the dominant *lingua franca*.

A major criticism of Arabization was that it ignored Algeria's multi-cultural character, in particular the fact that most Algerians were of ethnic Berber descent. The Arabization process involved a dogmatic compulsion in convincing Algerians that they had always been ethnically, linguistically and culturally Arabs, in the same way the French attempted to convert them into Frenchmen. As a result, antagonistic confrontations between Berber nationalists and government forces broke out in 1980, known as the year of the Berber Spring, and active Berber resistance continued until the early 1990s.<sup>88</sup> Pro-Berber activists refused to speak MSA, preferring to use French and the Tamazight language<sup>89</sup> in public domains.

Berber resistance persisted until 2001 when violent demonstrations erupted in Kabylie, a fiercely pro-Berber region in northern Algeria, in an event called the Black Spring. Following these clashes, President Abdel-Aziz Bouteflika introduced a law in 2002 recognizing Tamazight as a national language of Algeria to appease pro-Berber Kabyle activists.<sup>90</sup> However, the law stopped short of according Tamazight full recognition, and did not mandate that the language be taught in public schools.<sup>91</sup> A critical flaw of Arabization was therefore the failure to

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<sup>88</sup> Mohamed Benrabah, "Language-In-Education Planning in Algeria: Historical Development and Current Issues", *Language Policy*. Vol. 6, (2007). Page 234.

<sup>89</sup> Tamazight is the umbrella term to refer to a group of Berber languages indigenous to the North African region. While Tamazight has been officially recognized by the Algerian government in 2002 as a "national language", the issue of Berber nationalism and linguistic Tamazight nationalism remains contentious and controversial.

<sup>90</sup> Mohamed Benrabah, "Language-In-Education Planning in Algeria: Historical Development and Current Issues", *Language Policy*. Vol. 6, (2007). Page 235.

<sup>91</sup> Hind Amel Mostari, "A sociolinguistic perspective on Arabisation and language use in Algeria," *Language Problems & Language Planning*: Vol. 28, No. 1, (2004). Page 35.

recognize the ethno-linguistic plurality of Algeria and the attempt to erase the Berber origin of Algerians, even if a significant part of the population did eventually identify themselves as Arabs.

A second major criticism of Arabization was directed at its poorly-executed pedagogical methods of teaching MSA as a language of academic instruction, from which emerged two principal problems. Firstly, because the majority of French Algeria's teachers who were mostly of European origin left the country after independence in 1962, Algeria suffered from a severe shortage of highly-skilled teachers.<sup>92</sup> There were Algerians who had attended Islamic schools during the French colonial era and were fluent in MSA, but their numbers were insufficient to support the nationwide Arabization process.

To resolve this, Ben Bella's government starting from 1964 began recruiting individuals from Egypt, Iraq and Syria, even if they did not have formal experience in teaching in MSA, as anyone from the Middle East who could speak it was regarded with approbation and esteem.<sup>93</sup> This created low standards for entry into the teaching profession in Algeria, allowing even those with questionable teaching competence to qualify.

Secondly, the Arabization of the education system was poorly monitored and suffered from inadequate long-term planning and a lack of clearly-defined pedagogical methods from its moment of inception.<sup>94</sup> Modern Standard Arabic

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<sup>92</sup> Farida Abu-Haidar, "Arabisation in Algeria," *International Journal of Francophone Studies: Vol. 3, No. 3, (2000)*. Page 154.

<sup>93</sup> Mohamed Benrabah, "Language-In-Education Planning in Algeria: Historical Development and Current Issues", *Language Policy. Vol. 6, (2007)*. Page 230.

<sup>94</sup> Boumediène Berrabah, "Post-Independence Algerian Linguistic Policy," *Research Journal in Organizational Psychology & Educational Studies: Vol. 2, No.5, (2013)*. Page 274.



textbooks were imported primarily from Egypt, but Algerian students found it difficult to comprehend the complex intricacies of Modern Standard Arabic presented in a syntactic rubric meant for Egyptian Arabic speakers.<sup>95</sup> This is further compounded by the fact that their Middle Eastern teachers had to overcome huge lexical and phonological differences between MSA and Algerian Arabic to communicate with students, which adversely affected scholastic performance of students who failed to receive the proper linguistic instruction needed to master MSA.<sup>96</sup>

#### **2.2.4 *La Décennie Noire*: The Algerian civil war (1990 – 2001)**

“The Black Decade” (or *La Décennie Noire* as it is referred to in Algeria in French) is a cautionary tale used as a reminder of the volatility of Algerian politics. It refers to the ten to eleven years of sectarian conflict that started when an Islamic fundamentalist group, *Front Islamique du Salut* (FIS), won national elections in 1990 and took the incumbent government by surprise.<sup>97</sup>

The rise of the FIS and other radical groups triggered a particularly violent civil war between radical Islamists and government forces that was completely unprecedented; the assassination of the Algerian president Mohamed Boudiaf was but one of the many casualties. The Algerian civil war was at its core a conflict between radical Islamists, who wanted to glorify the Arabic language, eliminate

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<sup>95</sup> Boumediène Berrabah, “Post-Independence Algerian Linguistic Policy,” *Research Journal in Organizational Psychology & Educational Studies: Vol. 2, No.5, (2013)*. Page 274.

<sup>96</sup> Farida Abu-Haidar, “Arabisation in Algeria,” *International Journal of Francophone Studies: Vol. 3, No. 3, (2000)*. Page 155.

<sup>97</sup> Heather J. Sharkey, “Language and Conflict: The Political History of Arabisation in Sudan and Algeria,” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism: Vol. 12, No. 3, (2012)*. Page 439.

French and adopt a fundamentalist version of Islamic law as basis for governance, and a secular government struggling to find a balance between its secular Arabization policies and Francophone linguistic roots. The resulting political vacuum plunged Algeria into chaos, leaving up to 100,000 dead, ravaging infrastructure and completely destroying public trust in both governmental and religious institutions.

The rise of these opportunistic radical Islamist groups occurred within the context of unresolved socio-economic problems plaguing the country since independence. In 1989, four million out of a population of twenty-five million Algerians were unemployed.<sup>98</sup> Up to two million young Algerians were also without a job, creating a gaping socio-economic divide between the French-speaking elite and the Arabic-speaking working-class majority.<sup>99</sup> Compounded by a poorly maintained and underfunded education system and an unstable job market, Arabization produced generations of Algerians who could not find employment in sectors that demanded a mastery of technical, technological and scientific knowledge in French.<sup>100</sup> The weak economy, the pervasive sense of pessimism and the rise in resentment against the government encouraged some to turn to radical ideology as a means for political governance.<sup>101</sup> In particular, the *Hittistes* - jobless youth who roamed the streets – were aggressively recruited, and Islamic

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<sup>98</sup> Heather J. Sharkey, "Language and Conflict: The Political History of Arabisation in Sudan and Algeria," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism: Vol. 12, No. 3, (2012)*. Page 439.

<sup>99</sup> Paulin G. Djite, "The Arabization of Algeria: Linguistic and sociopolitical motivations," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language: Vol. 98, No. 1, (1992)*. Page 24.

<sup>100</sup> Hind Amel Mostari, "A sociolinguistic perspective on Arabisation and language use in Algeria," *Language Problems & Language Planning: Vol. 28, No. 1, (2004)*. Page 38-39.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*: Page 39.

fundamentalism was presented as a way out of economic poverty and employment discrimination.<sup>102</sup>

When I was conducting research in Algiers in December 2014, the Black Decade was discussed with a mixture of somber reminiscence and fearful respect. The majority of Algerians directly attributed radical Islamism in Algeria to the Arabic language and the arrival of Arabic-speaking teachers from Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries, whom they blamed for introducing radical strands of Islam that would not have otherwise taken root in the country. It is imperative to emphasize, however, that it was not the concept of Arabization itself that directly gave rise to Algerian Islamist groups. Writer Francis Karam explains that the outcome of language policies depends greatly on the socio-political realities of the country in question:

“Regardless of the type of language planning, in nearly all cases the language problem to be solved is not a problem in isolation within the region or nation but is directly associated with the political, economic, scientific, social, cultural, and/or religious situation.”<sup>103</sup>

Rather, it was a volatile combination of enduring economic woes, political instability, unemployment and shortfalls in the education system that collectively fostered the suitable conditions for the FIS and radical Islamist groups to take root in Algerian society.

The effects of the war, to this day, are still prominent, leaving a permanent scar in the Algerian conscience. Most strikingly, there is a prevalent atmosphere of

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<sup>102</sup> Paulin G. Djite, “The Arabization of Algeria: Linguistic and sociopolitical motivations,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language: Vol. 98, No. 1, (1992)*. Page 25.

<sup>103</sup> Francis X. Karam, “Toward a definition of language planning,” *Advances in Language Planning*, Joshua A. Fishman (ed.) (The Hague: Mouton). 1974. Page 104.

distrust and suspicion of foreigners embedded within the Algerian bureaucratic administration – Algeria remains a closed country with few diplomatic relations with other nations, visas are notoriously difficult to obtain and foreigners are explicitly discouraged from discussing Algerian politics. Even though the government officially declared the war over in 2001, radical Islamists who survived are still operating clandestinely in the Algerian mountains to this day. The beheading of a French mountain guide, Hervé Gourdel, by fundamentalists in September 2014 in the Djurdjura mountains of northern Algeria is a bleak reminder of this unresolved chapter in Algerian history.

## 2.3 POST-CIVIL WAR: EDUCATION SYSTEM IN CRISIS (late 1990s - present)

*“For Algeria, I will speak French, Spanish and English, and, if necessary, Hebrew. Let it be known that an uninhibited opening up to other international languages does not constitute perjury... This is the price that we have to pay to modernize our identity.”*

- Abdel-Aziz Bouteflika (2002)<sup>104</sup>

### 2.3.1 Political rise of Abdel-Aziz Bouteflika and new educational reforms

Since the end of the Algerian civil war in the late 1990s, the issue of language policy in the education system has remained contentious and controversial. The Islamist civil war was blamed on socio-political discontent towards a stagnating economy, employment discrimination and the failure of the education system to meet the scholastic needs of graduates. Upon the election of current Algerian president Abdel-Aziz Bouteflika in April 1999, the Algerian government began to re-evaluate its education system and its language educational policies.

In a televised address to the nation in 1999, Bouteflika criticized the state of the education system: “The level (of the education system) has reached an intolerable threshold.”<sup>105</sup> Prior to his election, Bouteflika as a presidential candidate had utilized the term “doomed schooling system”<sup>106</sup> numerous times in public to describe the state of the education system.<sup>107</sup> Likewise, in 1992 two months before

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<sup>104</sup> Mohamed Benrabah, *Language Conflict in Algeria: From Colonialism to Post-Independence* (Multilingual Matters). 2013. Page 77.

<sup>105</sup> Le niveau a atteint un seuil intolérable.

<sup>106</sup> “L'école est sinistrée.” The French adjective “sinistré” was also used by Boudiaf as a profound way of communicating to the public the neglected state of the Algerian education system. In French, “sinistré” refers to an object that is broken and severely damaged, as a result of either abuse or neglect. As a proper noun, “sinistré” refers to a victim or casualty of a disastrous event.

<sup>107</sup> Mohamed Benrabah, “Language-In-Education Planning in Algeria: Historical Development and Current Issues”, *Language Policy*. Vol. 6, (2007). Page 228.

his assassination, President Mohamed Boudiaf delivered a short speech expressing similar sentiments about the decline of the Algerian education system:<sup>108</sup>

“Our education system is broken. Our education system produces rejects on the streets, Hittistes without qualification and unemployed graduates. We must consider nothing less than a complete overhaul of our education system. Schools must be a place for the transmission and production of knowledge. They must be placed outside of the spheres of political, partisan, and ideological interests. The future of our children compels us to devote the maximum attention to this task.”<sup>109</sup>

Boudiaf’s and Bouteflika’s call for language reforms resonated with a similar demand within the Algerian population at the time: In 1999, a general survey conducted by central Algerian authorities showed that as many as 75% of Algerians were in favor of teaching scientific subjects in French, as opposed to teaching them in MSA.<sup>110</sup>

The election of Bouteflika in 1999 as president heralded a new era in the realization of these demands for sweeping educational reforms, in attempts to move away from basing language policy on ideology towards one grounded in addressing practical concerns. It also witnessed the government’s commitment towards a stronger form of bilingual education, placing equal pedagogical importance on training students in both Arabic and French. In 1999, one of Bouteflika’s first reforms was to allow public schools to design their own curriculum as they saw fit, which meant that teaching textbooks and teaching materials were no longer

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<sup>108</sup> *Le Conseil Consultatif National*, or the National Advisory Council, was an advisory body to the President of Algeria on matters of national security created on January 14 1992, following the resignation of the previous president, Chadli Bendjedid, on January 11 1992.

<sup>109</sup> “Hittistes” is derived from one of the MSA word for wall, ḥāṭ, and is an Algerian Arabic term referring to young men, often belonging to the urban lower-classes, who are unemployed and spend their spare time leaning against walls on the streets.

<sup>110</sup> B. Djemal, “Réforme de l’école, les islamo-conservateurs accusent”, *Le Matin*, 19 March 2001. Page 3.

controlled by limitations.<sup>111</sup> Another reform was the legalization of private schools, which meant that French private institutions were finally allowed to operate legally after having been shut down for decades due to Arabization laws.<sup>112</sup>

In May 2000, Bouteflika established the Commission Nationale de Réforme du Système Éducatif (CNRSE), an official body tasked with evaluating public schools and recommending reforms to resolve pedagogical issues in the teaching of Arabic and French. One of their first proposals recommended three major reforms: 1) the re-introduction of French as soon as in Grade Two instead of in Grade Three, 2) making the learning of French as a subject mandatory instead of optional in primary school and 3) teaching scientific and technological disciplines in French instead of in Arabic in secondary schools.<sup>113</sup> These reforms were aimed at recognizing the socio-economic importance of French and its perceived capability to facilitate the teaching of scientific discourse that required terminologies absent in MSA.

However, the concerns of Bouteflika on the decline of the quality of the Algerian education system were not groundless: scholastic rates were at an all-time low throughout the 1990s (a comprehensive description of the current Algerian education system is provided in Appendix B).

<b>Table 1: Results of the <i>Baccalauréat</i> (1991-1999)</b>	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Passing rates (%)	19.1	22.62	11.98	17.90	19.43	23.08	26.55	23.43	24.64

<sup>111</sup> Mohamed Benrabah, *Language Conflict in Algeria: From Colonialism to Post-Independence* (Multilingual Matters). 2013. Page 75.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Mohamed Benrabah, "Language-In-Education Planning in Algeria: Historical Development and Current Issues", *Language Policy*. Vol. 6, (2007). Page 227.

As shown in Table 1, throughout the height of the Algerian civil war from 1991 – 1999, percentage rates of students who passed the secondary school exam, the *Baccalauréat*<sup>114</sup>, were at an all-time low, with almost less than ¼ of students passing, and as low as 11.98% in 1993.<sup>115</sup>

<b>Table 2: Results of the <i>Baccalauréat</i> (2000-2005)</b>	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Passing rates (%)	32.9	34.47	32.92	29.57	42.52	37.29

As the civil war gradually dissipated at the start of the new millenium, percentage pass rates slightly improved between 2000 – 2005, as shown in Table 2. Passing rates gradually increased, reaching 42.52% in 2004, an all-time high in fourteen years since the start of the civil war, which could be attributed to Bouteflika's initial reforms in 2000.<sup>116</sup> However, these results were still discouraging: more than half of secondary school students failed in their first attempt to even qualify for university studies.

<b>Table 3: Results of the <i>BEF</i> (2000-2005)</b>	June 2000	June 2001	June 2002	June 2003	June 2004	June 2005
Passing rates (%)	41.41	41.34	37.54	34.99	35.60	41.68

<sup>114</sup> The *Baccalauréat de L'Enseignement Secondaire* is the final secondary school leaving examination taken at the end of secondary education, and passing it grants access to post-secondary and tertiary studies.

<sup>115</sup> Office National des Statistiques de l'Algérie, *Rétrospective Statistique 1962 – 2011: Éducation*, Page 19. Retrieved September 28 2014 from: [http://www.ons.dz/IMG/pdf/CH6-EDUCATION\\_.pdf](http://www.ons.dz/IMG/pdf/CH6-EDUCATION_.pdf).

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.



Table 3 provides percentage rates of students between 2000 – 2005 who passed the *Brevet d'Enseignement Fondamental (BEF)*<sup>117</sup>, the final primary level exam determining eligibility to secondary school. These figures reflect passing rates for students who were taking the BEF for the first time. Despite the fact that these figures showed minor improvements, with passing rates varying between 34% to 42%, the majority of them could not even qualify for advancement into the secondary school level, as failure rates still exceeded half of the primary student population.<sup>118</sup> Those students who failed were required to re-do the grade and take the BEF a second time.

Statistics for scholastic achievement rates in universities also reflected poor passing rates in exams. The Minister of Higher Education announced in November 2005 that 80% of first-year university students in the science and technical fields failed their final examinations, and called for further educational reforms beyond the initial Bouteflika reforms made in 2000.<sup>119</sup> He attributed high failure rates to the lack of linguistic competence in French, asserting that students were unable to utilize French in a complex academic context.<sup>120</sup> He implied that a stronger bilingual Arabic-French policy, where students would be fluent in French as they were in Arabic, would contribute to higher scholastic achievement rates and a better economic future for Algeria.

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<sup>117</sup> The *Brevet d'Enseignement Fondamental* (BEF) is the national basic education certificate examination in Algeria signalling the end of basic primary education at Grade 9 and granting access to the first year of secondary school studies for those who successfully pass.

<sup>118</sup> Office National des Statistiques de l'Algérie, *Résultats des Examens Entre 2000 – 2005*. Retrieved September 28 2014 from: <http://www.ons.dz/RESULTATS.html>.

<sup>119</sup> Mohamed Benrabah, "Language-In-Education Planning in Algeria: Historical Development and Current Issues", *Language Policy*. Vol. 6, (2007). Page 226.

<sup>120</sup> French was preserved as the language of scientific instruction in universities, as it was traditionally seen as the language of science and technology.

### 2.3.2 Challenges in changing Algerian language policies

Boudiaf's and Bouteflika's assessments of the deterioration of the education system were correct: low scholastic achievement rates were due to the failure of language policies – in MSA and French - to meet the linguistic needs of students. However, the main challenge in changing language policies to improve scholastic achievement rates is rooted in the fact that language policy-making in Algeria has been traditionally based on satisfying ideological convictions first, as opposed to addressing the practical needs of the country.

As discussed in Section 2.1, French was introduced in Algeria based on the French colonialist ideology of “civilizing” Algerians. As discussed in Section 2.2, when Algeria gained independence in 1962, ideology again became the main impetus for the Arabization process, in an attempt to rid Algeria of French and completely replace it with MSA. The rhetoric of ideology as a basis for language policy-making is no more evident than in the Algerian Ministry of Education's statement of missions, created in 1962. The ministry's education manifesto declares that “The teaching of Arabic must be developed so that it can be the language of communication in all aspects of life,”<sup>121</sup> thereby installing “Arabic” (which refers to MSA) as the de-facto language of instruction of all subjects except foreign language classes.<sup>122</sup> The manifesto further declares it as a necessary component of Algerian society, stating that “The Arabic language, like Islam, constitutes the

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<sup>121</sup> L'enseignement de la langue arabe doit être développé pour être une langue de communication dans tous les domaines de la vie.

<sup>122</sup> République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire: Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, *Loi D'Orientation*. Page 45. Retrieved October 9 2014 from: <http://www.education.gov.dz/index.php/fr/documentation/loi>

forging of the cultural identity of the Algerian people and an essential element of its national conscience,”<sup>123</sup> and that “it is capable of expressing our Algerian-Maghrebo-Arabo-Mediterranean-African universe, of accessing a universal civilization, and of participating in scientific and technological progress.”<sup>124</sup>

French is not mentioned in the manifesto, although the teaching of foreign languages is referenced, stating that “it must permit (students) to be able to attain a simple understanding of these languages, to know foreign civilizations and cultures.”<sup>125</sup> This is interesting as the importance of French in Algeria lies in its visible presence in Algerian public life today. Many French companies operate in Algeria and require the use of French in conducting business affairs, French is used extensively in tourism, university courses in science and technology are still conducted in French and French exerts a significant presence through television, news reports, radio, newspapers, magazines, films, music and popular media.

The deliberate omission of French in the manifesto and in official Algerian language policy-making, despite its visible presence in Algeria, is significant as it is clear that the marginalization of French and the privileged status of Arabic in Algerian schools are inextricably tied to ideological beliefs on how Algerian identity should be expressed. Due to the historical complications of language hegemony between Arabic and French, Algerian language policy-making has traditionally been based on political calculation and ideology. In recognizing this

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<sup>123</sup> La langue arabe, au même titre que l’Islam, constitue le ferment de l’identité culturelle du peuple algérien et un élément essentiel de sa conscience nationale.

<sup>124</sup> (Il est) capable à la fois d’exprimer notre univers algérien, maghrébin, arabe, méditerranéen, africain, d’accéder à la civilisation universelle et de participer au progrès scientifique et technologique.

<sup>125</sup> L’enseignement des langues étrangères doit leur permettre d’accéder à une documentation simple dans ces langues, à connaître les civilisations et cultures étrangères.

historical pattern in the machinations of Algerian language policy-making, the next chapter attempts to answer the previously-stated research question, through questionnaire results and discursive analysis, in determining how Arabic and French in relation to national identity are perceived in a group of Algerian respondents.

## **CHAPTER THREE:**

### **Methodology & Data Analysis:**

### **Deconstructing Algerian Attitudes Towards Language and Identity**

« My thanks goes to those who offer moral support to Algerian writers writing in Arabic who confront the unarmed the onslaughts of Francophony and its temptations. Glory to Arabic! Glory to our beautiful language! »

- Ahlam Mosteghanemi

« I write in French because France invaded my country and it held such a powerful position that I have to write in French to survive. But through writing in French, I retain have my Arab and Berber roots that are still very much alive. »<sup>126</sup>

- Kateb Yacine

### **3.1 Centrality of Algeria**

The research question is as follows: How have Algeria's Arabic-French language policies in its schools since independence shaped Algerian attitudes regarding the relationship of Arabic and French with national identity? The research question posits the existence of a causal link between language and national identity formation in Algeria: how Arabic and French, as expressed through language educational policies, have affected individual attitudes towards national identity, due to the historical tensions between Arabic and French within the context of decolonization and civil conflict. As Boumediène Berrabah argues, "Being intimately linked to identity, political power and social mobility, language has become a controversial question and a bitter battlefield for competing ideologies and vested interests."<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Hafid Gafaiti, *Voix multiples : Yacine, un homme, une œuvre, un pays*, Laphormic, 1986. TV interview.

<sup>127</sup> Boumediène Berrabah, "Post-Independence Algerian Linguistic Policy," *Research Journal in Organizational Psychology & Educational Studies: Vol. 2, No.5, (2013)*. Page 271.

As the fourth-largest African economy, the second-largest African oil exporter and the largest country in Africa and the Arab world by territorial expanse, Algeria is an influential geopolitical player in contemporary African and Arab politics, with memberships within the African Union, the Arab League and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Algeria is also the largest Francophone country outside of metropolitan France, with an estimated 16 million native speakers of the French language.<sup>128</sup>

Algeria oscillates between three worlds: 1) Western Europe, with its historical ties to France and approximately five million French citizens of Algerian descent, 2) the Arab-Muslim world, to whom it owes religious and linguistic ties and 3) the African Francophone world, with whom Algeria shares geopolitical ties, common linguistic roots and similar colonial histories. Examining national identity in Algeria in light of its geopolitical importance, diverse socio-cultural heritage and unique colonization history thus constitutes a worthwhile research inquiry.

### **3.2 Demographical data**

In December 2014 – January 2015, I traveled to Algiers, Algeria and distributed questionnaires to assess the attitudes towards Arabic and French by young Algerians between 18 – 25 who had completed at least a secondary school education. The complete demographical breakdown of the respondents is provided

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<sup>128</sup> Sénat.fr, *La Mondialisation, une chance pour la francophonie*, Retrieved January 31 2015 from: [http://www.senat.fr/colloques/actes\\_mondialisation\\_francophonie/actes\\_mondialisation\\_francophonie10.html](http://www.senat.fr/colloques/actes_mondialisation_francophonie/actes_mondialisation_francophonie10.html)

in Table 4 in the following page, according to: 1) gender, 2) age, 3) maximum educational attainment and 4) language chosen to answer questionnaire. A total of 121 respondents filled out the distributed questionnaires. Young Algerians between 18 – 25 who had at least completed secondary school were selected for participation due to three principal reasons.

Firstly, in present-day Algeria, the youth population aged under 30 comprises 62% of the population and it is likely that the attitudes of such a large segment of the population will have a significant impact on the nature of language policies and discussions of national identity in the future. Secondly, Algerian youth between 18 - 25 would have gone through at least twelve years in the public education system, after having been exposed to both Arabic and French in various academic and social contexts. Their attitudes will reflect broader societal sentiment with regards to major language shifts, such as Arabization and the recent education reforms under President Bouteflika. Thirdly, the majority of Algerian youth between 18 – 25 years old are pursuing studies in university; this will provide another layer of insight into how language policies progressing into the tertiary education system contribute to attitudes towards national identity.

Based on the captured demographical data, the average respondent is male (78.5%), between the age of 21-24 (69.4%), currently pursuing tertiary studies in a university in Algiers (62.0%) and chooses French as the language to answer the questionnaire (70.2%).

**Table 4: Demographical breakdown (121 respondents in total)**

- a) Gender
- b) Age
- c) Maximum educational attainment
- d) Language chosen to answer questionnaire

Table 4 (a)		Male (%)		Female (%)		Total (%)	
Gender		78.5		21.5		100	

Table 4 (b)		18 (%)	19 (%)	20 (%)	21 (%)	22 (%)	23 (%)	24 (%)	25 (%)	Total (%)
Age		6.6	8.3	9.1	15.7	18.2	19.8	15.7	6.6	100

Table 4 (c)		Completed secondary school (%)		Currently in university (%)		Completed university (%)		Total (%)	
Maximum educational attainment		16.5		62.0		21.5		100	

Table 4 (d)		MSA (%)		French (%)		Total (%)	
Language chosen to answer questionnaire		29.8		70.2		100	



In addition, Algiers was chosen primarily due to its pre-eminent position as the educational and political capital of Algeria, where both Arabic and French are spoken frequently. Students within the Algiers education network also come from a mix of urbanized and rural settings, thereby capturing the wider social realities of Algeria.

### **3.3 Research methodology & questionnaire format**

As discussed in Section 1.1, I use the theoretical framework of “national identity” as a multi-dimensional, invented construct that is created, negotiated, imposed, removed, and re-negotiated depending on prevailing socio-political circumstances. As presented in Chapter 2, the Algerian government, at various points in post-independence Algerian history, was able to invent and impose its own reconstructive, narrowed version of national identity through specific language-in-planning education policies. The questions posed in the surveys investigate attitudes with regards to the implementation of these policies: how Arabic and French, as presented through the education system, were perceived by Algerian students in their own formation of an Algerian national identity, as well as their vision for the future of the two languages within Algerian society.

To analyze attitudes towards Arabic and French, the questionnaire is broken down into three segments, containing various “select-only-one-response” multiple-choice questions; refer to Appendix A for the full questionnaire in MSA and French. Each segment corresponds to a specific component of Algerian national identity based on the theoretical framework established in Section 1.1: 1) the process of

imagining an Algerian political community based on a shared historical narrative, 2) the process of inventing Algerian traditions and 3) the exclusivist process of alterity, or “othering,” that requires the drawing of boundary markers to administer identity exclusivity and force the expulsion of characteristics perceived as “non-Algerian.”

The first section of the questionnaire is titled “Political governance, public administration and statehood” and is composed of six questions aimed at deconstructing how Arabic and French fit into the concept of an “imagined political community” embedded into constructions of Algerian national identity. The second major segment is titled “Culture, religion and memory” and is composed of eight questions targeted at analyzing how Arabic and French fit within each respondent’s notion of what constitutes the cultural, religious and historical components of Algerian national identity. The third major segment is more expansive as it utilizes the broad concept of alterity to analyze how the state-sponsored process of “othering” was used, throughout Algeria’s history, to promote one particular language over another and enforce identity exclusivity. It is thematically divided into four smaller sub-sections: “Attitudes towards bilingualism,” “Knowledge capital and social empowerment,” “Employment and labor markets” and “Science, technology and modernity,” with each sub-section containing five questions. Further explanation on how these sub-sections relate to “othering” is provided in Section 3.6.

### **3.4 Analysis of Section 1: Political governance, public administration and statehood**

Section 1 of the questionnaire was composed of six questions that analyzed how Arabic and French fit into the notion of an imagined Algerian political community vital to the construction of a postcolonial Algerian national identity. The assumption of the existence of an imagined camaraderie between Algerians, strengthened by a sense of a political community who speak the same languages, is a quintessential feature in the construction of Algerian national identity.

The Arabic language is a broad category further divided into MSA and Algerian Arabic, in recognition of their different sociocultural and linguistic importance in Algerian society. These questions attempt to investigate how MSA, Algerian Arabic and French are accommodated within three components related to the maintenance of a united political polity.

Table 5, provided in the following page, shows the breakdown of these language preferences in notions of Algerian political identity. Statements (1) – (4) are dedicated to the language of preference for matters of political leadership, judicial discourse and government employment.

**Table 5: Political governance, public administration and statehood**

	MSA	Algerian Arabic	French	Total
Statement	%	%	%	%
(1) The language of political discourse and debate in Parliament	32.1	12.5	<b>55.4</b>	100
(2) The language of presidential speeches and ministerial addresses to the public	<b>41.8</b>	15.6	<b>42.6</b>	100
(3) The language of the judiciary system (administration of civil and legal matters)	<b>47.2</b>	4.2	<b>48.6</b>	100
(4) The language of public office and government positions	<b>43.3</b>	10.0	<b>46.7</b>	100
(5) The language that best expresses Algeria's political struggle for independence	45.0	<b>53.3</b>	1.7	100
(6) The language of Algeria's national pledge and national anthem	<b>82.5</b>	11.9	5.6	100

At first glance, French appears to be the language of preference for these questions, with a clear majority at 55.4% preferring the language for parliamentary political discourse, while a significant percentage preferred it for presidential speeches and ministerial addresses at 42.6%, judiciary courts at 48.6% and public employment jobs at 46.7%. MSA follows not far behind and is still statistically significant, while Algerian Arabic manages to amass the interest of a small minority. These results are not indicative of a linguistic deficiency for MSA and Algerian Arabic to accommodate expressions of the very same political sentiments in French. Rather, it is necessary to keep in mind that these preferences for the usage of French in political, judicial and bureaucratic domains are simply subjective attitudes on an individual level.

The results of Statements (1) – (4) support the theory that a majority of Algerian youths tend to adopt a utilitarian view of French, perceiving its ease in oral facility and lexical dexterity as a pragmatic alternative for the expression of political sentiments, complex judicial discourse and the facilitation of bureaucratic management. This shift towards French in the political domain can be traced back to the pedagogical shortcomings and the issue of the poor standardization of the Arabization process, in which Algerian students encounter semantic difficulties in expressing complex political discourse using MSA and Algerian Arabic.

Even though all primary and secondary institutions were completely Arabized by 1974, university institutions resisted. In 1973, university degrees in philosophy, literature, sociology, history and various fields of study in the humanities were completely taught in MSA, while degrees in politics, science, technology,

mathematics and engineering remained in French.<sup>129</sup> The maintenance of French in several university domains had its roots in arguments that MSA could not accommodate political, scientific and technological terms in a manner that French could, which sociolinguist Hind Amel Mostari highlights:

“[Arabization] was integral in literature, history and pedagogy; partial in geography, law, journalism, sociology and psychology; non-existent in scientific and technical specialities such as medicine, the hard sciences and engineering, where French had acquired a position of paramount importance since it became an essential and omnipresent tool of teaching. Despite linguists’ efforts to modernise [Modern Standard] Arabic, it remains relatively unable to replace French in such departments, which have strongly resisted Arabisation campaigns.”<sup>130</sup>

As such, French still carries a great amount of prestige as a transmitter of political thought, technological progress and science, a status that has remained largely unchanged in Algeria today, and attitudes towards the failure to completely Arabize university education is reflected in the results for Statements (1) – (4).

It is also worth noting that responses to Statements (1) and (2), with the overwhelming preference for French as a language of discourse for the Algerian political leadership, does not necessarily reflect a nostalgia for the French colonial era or a political rejection of the highly Arabized revolutionary leadership of the FLN. Rather, it reflects, to some extent, the effects of the relaxation of Arabization laws and the educational reforms re-introducing French under the administration of current President Bouteflika in 2000.

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<sup>129</sup> Malika Rebal Maamri, “The Syndrome of the French Language in Algeria,” *International Journal of Arts and Sciences: Vol. 3, No.3, (2009)*. Page 85.

<sup>130</sup> Hind Amel Mostari, “A sociolinguistic perspective on Arabisation and language use in Algeria,” *Language Problems & Language Planning: Vol. 28, No. 1, (2004)*. Page 30.

In addition, Bouteflika is himself a skilled, bilingual orator especially eloquent in French, often using it in public speeches in defiance against Arabization laws banning the usage of French in public domains, and is therefore especially popular among Algerian youths who wish to see a stronger return of French in schools.<sup>131</sup>

Bouteflika also envisioned an efficient education system that would produce highly-skilled, bilingual Algerians fluent in both French and MSA, with an emphasis on the usage of French to cultivate stronger political and diplomatic ties with France and Francophone states. Through the de-politicization of the language issue, Bouteflika's administration was able to implement pragmatic reforms that actually addressed the pedagogical problems of the education system.

Even though the state of the Algerian education system leaves much to be desired, Bouteflika's reforms were revolutionary, prioritizing the pressing socio-economic needs of Algerians over abstract ideological concerns. As such, Bouteflika's reforms and political popularity among Algerian youth can be understood, in this context, to explain how respondents for Statements (1) – (2) came to recognize the utilitarian importance of French in political leadership.

Responses to Statements (5) and (6), which explore language in notions of political statehood and independence, are striking as Arabic appears to be the clear favorite: 53.3% in favor of Algerian Arabic to best express Algeria's political struggle for independence, 82.5% preferring MSA for the composition of national anthems, while French attracts the favor of a scant minority.

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<sup>131</sup> Mohamed Benrabah, *Language Conflict in Algeria: From Colonialism to Post-Independence* (Multilingual Matters). 2013. Page 75.

These statistical results indicate the existence of strong psychological and sociohistorical ties of Arabic (as MSA and Algerian Arabic) to Algerian national identity. While respondents accept that French could be used in various present-day circumstances, the core of Algerian statehood still remains firmly rooted in Arabic, a language upon which the revolutionary FLN had used to build and ensure fierce Algerian pride in its tumultuous history of independence – a conventional psychological response to the socio-historical trauma of French colonization. More specifically, upon making a comparison between MSA and Algerian Arabic in (5) – (6), two conclusions are apparent: literary MSA is preferred to express the Algerian national anthem, while Algerian Arabic is more closely identified with the Algerian struggle for independence.

### 3.5 Analysis of Section 2: Culture, religion and memory

Section 2 of the questionnaire was composed of six questions that analyzed how how Arabic and French fit within each respondent’s notion of what constitutes the cultural and religious components as well as national memory in Algerian identity. Table 6, provided in the following page, shows the breakdown of these language preferences.

Statement	MSA (%)	Algerian Arabic (%)	French (%)	Total (%)
(1) The language that can best express Algerian oral literature in traditional folklore, fables and mythologies	30.7	<b>68.2</b>	1.1	100
(2) The language with the richest cultural heritage that can best express the essence of being Algerian	18.5	<b>80.8</b>	0.7	100



Statements (1) – (2) investigate the notion of a national Algerian culture. Statement (1) investigates how Arabic and French fit into oral traditions through folklore, fables and mythologies. They transmit tales of heroes and warriors wrapped around lessons in morality to form an inseparable part of what Eric Hobsbawm calls “invented traditions,” reinforced through repetition to complement a pre-determined historical narrative of a nation. Results are overwhelmingly in favor of Arabic in general as the core of Algerian oral traditions, with 68.2% for Algerian Arabic and 30.7% for MSA. French garners the favor of a miniscule 1.1%.

Likewise, with Statement (2) about the language with the richest cultural heritage that best articulates the quintessential essence of “Algerianness,” Arabic again wins by a huge margin, with 80.8% favoring Algerian Arabic and 18.5% for MSA and a scant 0.7% in favor of French.

There are two important corollaries that can be derived from these results. Firstly, the clear dichotomy between French and Arabic, in particular the rejection of French as a language carrying Algerian oral traditions and cultural heritage, reflects the ongoing persistence of the socio-cultural trauma of the French language among Algerians. The status of French as the language symbolizing the French legacy of “cultural colonialism” thus makes it culturally and necessarily non-Algerian, despite its position in Algeria as a language of technology and scientific progress. As such, Arabic manifests as the only language of the two that better reflects Algerian cultural heritage.

**Table 6: Culture, religion and memory**

	MSA	Algerian Arabic	French	Total
Statement	%	%	%	%
(1) The language that can best express Algerian oral literature in traditional folklore, fables and mythologies	30.7	<b>68.2</b>	1.1	100
(2) The language with the richest cultural heritage that can best express the essence of being Algerian	18.5	<b>80.8</b>	0.7	100
(3) The language that can best express my religious values and convictions	<b>55.9</b>	42.8	1.3	100
(4) The language that can best express the religious unity of the Islamic community in Algeria	<b>61.7</b>	38.3	0	100
(5) The language that I associate with the triumphs and victories in Algeria's path to independence	20.1	<b>45.8</b>	34.1	100
(6) The language that brings up painful historical memories in Algeria's past with colonization	23.1	0	<b>76.9</b>	100

Secondly, an explanation for the dominance of Algerian Arabic over MSA in both statements is rooted in the socio-linguistic importance of colloquial Algerian Arabic. Again, even though Algerians accept MSA in principle as part of the repertoire of languages they may use in certain situations, such as in the sphere of Islamic education, Algerian Arabic still remains an important language “of the streets,” by virtue of its pre-eminent status as the colloquial dialect capable of expressing the more intimate, informal aspects of the Algerian day-to-day experience. Its inherent lexical diversity, incorporating words of Arabic, French, Spanish and Berber origin, adds to the depth and expansiveness of the language, while its perceived grammatical ease adds to its allure.

It can also be argued that MSA, in its capacity as a literary, formal register of Arabic, transmits the notion of a universalist, pan-Islamic Arabic culture and may seem as something that has been imposed onto Algerians, appearing more foreign and impersonal when compared to Algerian Arabic. Algerian Arabic, in its capacity as a non-standardized, colloquial dialect of Arabic, may transmit a more distinctive, authentically Algerian culture within a unique Algerian Arabic lexical context reflecting the unique socio-linguistic diversity of Algeria. This certainly suggests a certain amount of tension exists between MSA and Algerian Arabic with regards to the notion of an Algerian national culture.

In addition, as a side observation, during the French colonial era there was a flourishing of Algerian Arabic poetry, folk tales and historical narratives, such as that of the famous conquests of legendary Berber general Tariq ibn Ziyad and

various mythological Kabyle warriors.<sup>132</sup> These works were produced in the colloquial form in the first half of the twentieth century, due to the French-mandated censorship of the usage of MSA starting from 1938.<sup>133</sup> Thus, this proliferation of oral traditions in Algerian Arabic, as well as Algerian Arabic's functionality as an oral language, explains in part the preference for Algerian Arabic over MSA as seen in Statements (1) – (2).

Statement	MSA (%)	Algerian Arabic (%)	French (%)	Total (%)
(3) The language that can best express my religious values and convictions	<b>55.9</b>	42.8	1.3	100
(4) The language that can best express the religious unity of the Islamic community in Algeria	<b>61.7</b>	38.3	0	100

Statements (3) – (4) investigate how Arabic and French relate to the conception of religion and results show the dominance of Arabic over French. For the language that expresses Algerians' religious values, MSA is the favorite at 55.9%, Algerian Arabic at 42.8% and French at 1.3%. For the language that expresses the Islamic unity of Algeria's Muslims, referring back to the notion of a religious *ummah*<sup>134</sup> central to understandings of supra-national Islamic unity, MSA dominates at 61.7%, followed by Algerian Arabic at 38.3% and French at 0%.

<sup>132</sup>Aida Bania, *Graying of the Raven: Cultural and Sociopolitical Significance of Algerian Folk Poetry* (Oxford University Press). 2004. Page 25.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> *Ummah* is an Islamic term of Modern Standard Arabic origin that refers to a supra-national, religiously-oriented community of Muslims that transcends traditional ethnic and geographical boundaries.

However, what is interesting is not the unanimous rejection of French as symbols of religious values, but the relative statistical proximity of Algerian Arabic to MSA in (3) and (4). Algerian Arabic still earns the favor of a significant percentage of respondents at 42.8%, as opposed to 55.9% for MSA, in Statement (3). Likewise in Statement (4), Algerian Arabic gains the interest of more than a third of respondents at 38.3%, with MSA at 61.7%. In both cases, Algerian Arabic is within less than 25% statistical distance from MSA. This reflects the ongoing maintenance of the socio-linguistic importance of Algerian Arabic in another domain of public Algerian life: religion. It suggests that despite MSA possessing a monopoly over Algerian Arabic in terms of religious education, Islamic jurisprudence and daily prayer, Algerian Arabic is seen as a carrier of the Sunni strand of Algerian Islam of relatively equal symbolic weight as MSA, in part due to its close phonological and grammatical relation to MSA itself.

In contrast, the statistical dominance of MSA over Algerian Arabic can be interpreted as Algerians making a cognizant differentiation between the two: the fact that Algerian Arabic may not yet categorically substitute MSA in all manners of religious import, as MSA still retains a particular religious importance by virtue of its immutable status as the written language of the Holy Qur'an and the spoken language of the Prophet Muhammad and his *ummah* in sixth and seventh-century Arabia.

Statement	MSA (%)	Algerian Arabic (%)	French (%)	Total (%)
(5) The language that I associate with the triumphs and victories in Algeria's path to independence	20.1	<b>45.8</b>	34.1	100
(6) The language that brings up painful historical memories in Algeria's past with colonization	23.1	0	<b>76.9</b>	100

Statements (5) – (6) investigate how Arabic and French relate to the transmission of Algerian national memory in constructions of its recent historical past with independence and colonization, two pivotal stages in contemporary Algerian history. In Statement (5), investigating national memory of Algerian independence, Algerian Arabic dominates at 45.8%, with French at a 34.1% and MSA trailing behind at 20.1%. The statistical distribution in this statement is interesting as it reflects a certain willingness for the incorporation of both Arabic and French in historical associations with Algerian independence. That both Algerian Arabic and French resonate in expressions of recent Algerian historical memory suggests two things: a still-lingering resonance with French and a subliminal disavowal of MSA in matters of recent historical memory.

Various Algerian intellectuals have suggested that this reluctant acceptance of French and a certain subconscious antipathy to MSA are somewhat interconnected, due to the deep-rootedness of Algeria's unique colonial history – that one language will always exist at the expense of the other in the struggle to determine Algeria's "true" linguistic character. As the distinguished Franco-Algerian writer Assia Djebar discussed in a February 2012 interview with World Policy Journal, the

French language, as an enduring legacy of French cultural colonialism, could only spread within the vacuum left by MSA:

Algeria is somewhat averse to the literary form of Arabic. Because it was a country more closely tied to its French colonizers, so literary Arabic was forced out of the schools by the dominance of the French language.<sup>135</sup>

As for Statement (6) that evokes national memory of French colonization with its mention of “painful historical memories,” French, quite unsurprisingly, is the undisputed winner with 76.9% of respondents, with 23.1% for MSA and 0% for Algerian Arabic. The interesting observation here is not the predictable result for French, as Algerians clearly recognize it as the language of their colonizers, but that MSA has amassed the attention of a considerable 23.1%, almost a quarter of all respondents.

Hence, the questions are: How and why does MSA even evoke “painful historical memories” with regards to colonization, despite its usage and association with liberationist rhetoric during the birth of modern Algerian nationalism in the early twentieth century? Does the phrase “painful historical memories” necessarily relate only to the trauma of French colonization, or can Algerian memory be tied to other events perceived as equally traumatic in Algerian history?

To properly answer this question in its appropriate socio-historical context, it is imperative to draw upon two aspects of Algerian history. Firstly, it is necessary to return to the Arabization process that began in the 1960s. When Arabization was enforced to make MSA the sole official language of Algeria, the majority of

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<sup>135</sup> David Andelman and Charlotte Pudlowski, “L’Imortelle: Une Conversation avec Assia Djebar, Une gardienne de la langue française,” *World Policy Journal: Vol. 29, No. 1, (2012)*. Page 44.

Algerians could neither speak nor write in MSA, French was still widely used and Algerian Arabic was the *lingua franca*. In disregarding the ethno-linguistic diversity of Algeria, several problems quickly emerged.

In the public sphere, there was a rise of pro-Berber sentiments against what was perceived as encroaching Arab influence at the expense of Berber identity and the Tamazight language. In education, pedagogical shortfalls, a shortage of resources and poor standardization resulted in low educational attainment rates. Arabization was initially driven by ideological convictions, but it was ultimately impaired by a widespread failure to address pedagogical issues related to teaching an archaic, literary version of Arabic that Algerians would only encounter if they read the Holy Qur'an and abstract Islamic literature. Even the first Algerian Education Minister, Ahmed Taleb Ibrahimi, admitted the unpreparedness of administrations in meeting the basic requirements of a task as intrinsically complex as Arabization, "The [Arabization process] will not work, but it must be done in any case."<sup>136</sup> The forced conversion to MSA from French and colloquial Algerian Arabic thus explains the subconscious aversion to this literary form of Arabic.

However, can we unequivocally assume that this somewhat subconscious allergy to MSA is entirely rooted in the failures of the Arabization process? A second integral aspect of Algerian society that must be drawn upon goes beyond the French colonial era, and is rooted in ancient historical ideas about Algerian society that are tied to modern conceptions of Algerian identity and nationalism.

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<sup>136</sup> Gilbert Grandguillaume, "Introduction: Comment a-t-on pu en arriver là?" *Les Violences en Algérie* (Paris: Odile Jacob). 1998. Page 20.



Historically, Algeria is a pluralistic country in language, ethnic origin and religion, absorbing influences from Berber, Roman, Phoenician, Jewish, Byzantine, Arab, Ottoman, Turkish and French cultures.<sup>137</sup> “Algerian” is a blanket term denoting geographical origin dating back to the Ottoman Empire, and has only been recently associated with nationality in the 1920s during the emergence of nascent expressions of Algerian nationalism. As such, Algerians understand that the term is not necessarily associated with ethnic origin, and that an “Algerian” may be, for example, Jewish, Arab, Armenian, Circassian, French, Berber or Turkish in ethnic character.

It is therefore necessary to understand that an Algerian who recognizes his Arab historical ancestry from the Arabian Peninsula and the Fertile Crescent may identify himself differently from an Algerian who recognizes his ethnic North African Berber origin but who has been Arabized through historical encounters with universalist Arabo-Islamic culture.

While there is a minority of Arab-Algerians in Algeria who are indeed of ethnic Arab descent, the majority of Algerians today are of ethnic Berber descent who can be more accurately described as Arabized Berbers rather than ethnic Arabs. Failure to make this distinction may lead to the erroneous assumption that religion and language define ethnic origin, in that Islam is synonymous with Arabs and that Muslims who speak Arabic are undoubtedly Arabs, which ignore the cultural and linguistic diversity of Muslims who come from different ethnic origins.

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<sup>137</sup> Mohamed Benrabah, “Language-In-Education Planning in Algeria: Historical Development and Current Issues”, *Language Policy*. Vol. 6, (2007). Page 229.

In recognizing the multi-ethnic nature of Algerian origins, each Algerian's notion of how MSA fits into their notion of Algerian historical memory may therefore vary according to how Arab ethnicity and the Arab question fit into his conception of Algerian identity. Therefore, it is possible that the 23.1% of respondents who selected MSA as the language that represents a painful historical past with colonization may be recognizing their Berber identity and linking MSA, in a non-religious context, with a broader belief in the egregious effects of the Arab dispossession of Berber identity starting with the Arab conquest of North Africa in the seventh century.

This also demonstrates the element of multiplicity and elasticity inherent within the very notion of historical memory, in particular due to the semantic ambiguity of the question. The phrase "painful historical memories" can therefore be interpreted in a number of ways depending of the respondent's unobjective formation of Algerian national identity and history. In addition, the fact that 0% of respondents chose Algerian Arabic suggests the continuing socio-linguistic importance of the dialect in everyday life and its isolation from associations with a painful history.

### **3.6 Analysis of Section 3: Bilingualism, social empowerment, employment and science**

Section 3 of the questionnaire analyzes how respondents react to broader implications of the usage of Arabic and French in Algerian public life. The questions are divided into four sub-categories, with each consisting of two

questions. The four sub-categories are: “Attitudes towards bilingualism in schools,” “Knowledge capital and social empowerment,” “Employment and labor markets” and “Science, technology and modernity.” Table 7, provided in the following page, displays the results of these question.

Each sub-category corresponds to a usage of Arabic and French in a particular domain of public life. The combination of responses offered is slightly different: 1) Arabic only, 2) French only and 3) Arabic and French. The term “Arabic” encompasses both MSA and Algerian Arabic. The methodological rationale in presenting responses in exclusive and inclusive combinations is to identify attitudinal alterity in respondents. Attitudinal alterity in this context refers to when the respondent expresses alterity by selecting one particular language as the only variable they would be willing to accept, while rejecting the other.

The exclusivist responses “Arabic only” and “French only” indicate the presence of attitudinal alterity, in which the respondent believes that one language cannot exist in the presence of the other. On the other hand, the inclusive response “Arabic and French,” while not necessarily implying a complete absence of attitudinal alterity, indicates a certain willingness on the part of the respondent to accommodate and accept the prevalence of both languages in a particular domain of Algerian public life.

**Table 7: Bilingualism, social empowerment, employment and science**

	Arabic* only	French only	Arabic and French	Total
Statement	%	%	%	%
<b>Attitudes towards bilingualism in schools</b>				
(1) I believe the main language(s) of instruction used to teach core subjects in all levels of Algerian schools should be:	8.3	18.2	<b>73.5</b>	100
(2) I believe that Algerian students should be able to speak the following language(s) fluently:	9.9	7.5	<b>82.6</b>	100
<b>Knowledge and social empowerment</b>				
(3) The language(s) that will provide me access to knowledge and information in a wide variety of disciplines is/are:	10.7	33.1	<b>56.2</b>	100
(4) The language(s) that give(s) me a sense of empowerment and will help me achieve social mobility is/are:	29.7	33.1	<b>37.2</b>	100
<b>Employment and labor markets</b>				
(5) The language(s) that will allow me to gain a competitive edge in the Algerian labor market when searching for employment	33.1	27.3	<b>39.7</b>	100
(6) The language(s) that will allow me to gain a competitive edge in the global labor market when searching for employment	10.8	<b>47.9</b>	41.3	100
<b>Science, technology and modernity</b>				
(7) Scientific and technological subjects in universities should be taught in:	3.4	<b>70.2</b>	26.4	100
(8) I believe the language(s) of science and modernity is/are:	16.5	<b>78.5</b>	5.0	100

\* "Arabic" refers to both MSA and Algerian Arabic

<b>Attitudes towards bilingualism in schools</b>	Arabic only (%)	French only (%)	Arabic and French (%)	Total
(1) I believe the main language(s) of instruction used to teach core subjects in all levels of Algerian schools should be:	8.3	18.2	<b>73.5</b>	100
(2) I believe that Algerian students should be able to speak the following language(s) fluently:	9.9	7.5	<b>82.6</b>	100

Arabic is currently the sole language of instruction in primary and secondary schools, while French is taught starting from Grade 4 of primary school as an optional subject. Statements (1) – (2) test attitudes towards bilingualism in education. Results from both statements clearly indicate an overwhelming preference for the inclusive response (bilingualism), indicating compliance in accepting both languages as important aspects of the Algerian education system: 73.5% of respondents favor being taught in both MSA and French in core academic subjects while 82.6% believe that speaking both languages fluently constitutes an important communication skill. Attitudinal alterity through the exclusivist responses (monolingualism) is much lesser. 8.3% wanted MSA as the sole language of academic instruction in schools, while 18.2% preferred only French. 9.9% believed that Algerian students should be fluent only in MSA, while 7.5% favored monolingual fluency in French.

This statistical distribution conveys a clear message: that three out of four respondents favor a strong bilingual education system where Arabic and French merit equal attention and that will allow Algerian students to become fluent in both,

while one out of four favor a monolingual education. These statistics once again underscore the endurance of French in Algeria despite its marginalization during the Arabization era, with a majority favoring a bilingual education and a small minority preferring an all-French monolingual education. These respondents likely view French in isolation from its colonial origins and, having already accepted Arabic as an immutable, sacrosanct ingredient of Algerian life, perceive bilingualism as a utilitarian necessity.

The other minority in favor of a monolingual Arabic education, however, possibly reflects a minor undercurrent of exclusivist pro-Arab sentiment and an expressed desire to tie Algerian identity to the Arabic-speaking world. Nevertheless, the fact remains that support for a strong Arabic-French bilingual education system exists among respondents, which could signify a broader sentiment of dissatisfaction with the shortfalls of the current monolingual Arabic system or indicate an awareness of the potential benefits of Arabic-French bilingualism.

### Knowledge and social empowerment

	Arabic only (%)	French only (%)	Arabic and French (%)	Total
(3) The language(s) that will provide me access to knowledge and information in a wide variety of disciplines is/are:	10.7	33.1	<b>56.2</b>	100
(4) The language(s) that give(s) me a sense of empowerment and will help me achieve social mobility is/are:	29.7	33.1	<b>37.2</b>	100

Statements (3) – (4) test attitudes towards social empowerment, which is the process of acquiring knowledge and harnessing it to achieve social mobility. Each respondent will undoubtedly have different notions on what constitutes social empowerment and the means to achieve it. Nevertheless, the term in its most generic sense provokes the respondent to envision the process of making positive changes to improve the overall quality of life.

Results from Statements (3) – (4) mirror that of Statements (1) – (2), in that a significant percentage of respondents favor mastery of both Arabic and French. This reinforces the deduction made previously: that respondents recognize the potential benefits of Arabic-French bilingualism in the process of self-improvement and self-empowerment.

Firstly, for Statement (3), the majority of respondents at 56.2% favor both languages. This in itself makes utilitarian sense as the combination of both Arabic and French does indeed provide access to a wider variety of sources of knowledge, considering the prevalence of both languages in Algeria. This acknowledgement of the utilitarian value of both languages where the provision of knowledge and information is needed is visible in various spheres of Algerian public life.

For example, Algerian governmental websites are offered in both MSA and French translations, and in some cases, such as in the website for the Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, three languages are offered: MSA, French and English.<sup>138</sup> Most informational and geographical signs in Algeria's major cities are also presented in both Arabic and French, and in certain regions where pro-Berber

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<sup>138</sup> République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire : Ministère des Affaires Étrangères. Retrieved February 20 2015 from: <http://www.mae.gov.dz/default.aspx>.

nationalism is active, such as in the northern region of Kabylie, in an additional language, Tamazight. That MSA and French exist visibly side-by-side in many public domains of Algerian life attests to this subliminal recognition of the utility of both languages in providing the widest breadth of access to information for the general Algerian public.

Secondly, only 37.2% of respondents favor both Arabic and French in helping them achieve a sense of empowerment and social mobility. In turn, 29.7% prefer “Arabic only” in that same regard, compared to a smaller 10.7% for Statement (3).

Why is it that 56.2% agree that the combination of Arabic and French best provides access to knowledge and information, while a lesser majority at 37.2%, a statistical difference of almost 20% from the former, believe that the same combination best empowers them and enables social mobility? Why do more respondents prefer the response “Arabic only” for Statement (4) than in Statement (3)?

A possible explanation can be attributed to the lingering effects of Arabization laws that mandated for the maintenance of MSA in schools, employment and various domains of public life. In this context, some respondents may firmly believe that the singular utility of Arabic - MSA and Algerian Arabic - is sufficient in achieving social mobility and that French is relegated to an extraneous, auxiliary status secondary to Arabic in utilitarian importance.



<b>Employment and labor markets</b>	Arabic only (%)	French only (%)	Arabic and French (%)	Total
(5) The language(s) that will allow me to gain a competitive edge in the Algerian labor market when searching for employment	33.1	27.3	<b>39.7</b>	100
(6) The language(s) that will allow me to gain a competitive edge in the global labor market when searching for employment	10.8	<b>47.9</b>	41.3	100

Statements (5) - (6) test attitudes towards the economic issue of employment in domestic and global labor markets. In Statement (5), the majority of respondents at 39.7% believe that Arabic and French provide them a competitive edge in the Algerian employment sector. This could reflect a desire for a more even-handed bilingual policy in determining job competency, as opposed to having a single language predominate in the labor market, and could possibly have its roots in the poor standardization of Arabization in the Algerian education system.

In the 1980s, the disproportionate effects of Arabization had led to a stark discrepancy between official language policy and actual socio-linguistic realities in Algeria. When graduates from Arabic-speaking public institutions searched for employment in the private sector, they encountered difficulties as there was a tacit industrial preference for graduates from French-speaking institutions. French was seen as more prestigious and desirable in private sector employees, due to the large number of French companies operating in Algeria that had predominantly French-

speaking managements.<sup>139</sup> On the other hand, graduates from French-speaking institutions found it difficult to find jobs in the public sector, due to Arabization laws banning the usage of French in government jobs and strict entry requirements demanding high proficiency levels in Arabic for employment. This discordance could explain why 39.7% respondents in Statement (5) consider having proficiencies in both Arabic and French in their linguistic arsenal as beneficial in conferring them a competitive edge in the domestic labor market.

In Statement (6), the majority of respondents at 47.9% favor “French only” as the language that will singularly confer to them a more competitive edge in the global labor market, with both “Arabic and French” close behind at 41.3% of respondents. These results suggest, once again, that French is perceived as a language firmly connected to Europe and the economies of the non-Algerian world. That the French language is able to hold its own and garner the favor of 47.9% of respondents in this question attests to the recognition of its economic importance and its appeal in global labor markets, despite its continued marginalization in Algeria.

<b>Science, technology and modernity</b>	Arabic only (%)	French only (%)	Arabic and French (%)	Total
(7) Scientific and technological subjects in universities should be taught in:	3.4	<b>70.2</b>	26.4	100
(8) I believe the language(s) of science and modernity is/are:	16.5	<b>78.5</b>	5.0	100

<sup>139</sup> Craig A. Sirles, “Politics and Arabization: The Evolution of Postindependence North Africa,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language: Vol. 137, No. 1, (1999)*. Page 123.

Statements (7) – (8) test attitudes towards the position of Arabic and French in science, technology and modernity. For both statements, clear attitudinal alterity is present in the overwhelming preference for French: 70.2% of respondents favor “French only” as the language of scientific and technological subjects in universities, while 78.5% believe French as the only language of the two that best represents scientific progress and modernity.

Again, this explicit preference for French demonstrates a clear recognition of the utilitarian value of the language in expressing modern scientific and technological terms. It explains why French is still maintained as the premier language of scientific instruction in many Algerian universities, resulting in the split between scientific and technological fields taught exclusively in French and all others in Arabic. Indeed, the current Algerian public university system still maintains this irregular, hybridized system of producing “monolingual” graduates in selected areas of expertise, with marginal political efforts to reconcile the linguistic dichotomy and practically no legislation in place to protect graduates from employment discrimination. This hybridized system produces generations of monolingual young Algerians with limited opportunities in pursuing interdisciplinary career paths in a labor market torn between two divergent languages. The pedagogical shortfalls and the poor standardization of Algerian language-in-planning policies thus led to a drop in the quality of teaching, poor scholastic achievement rates and employment discrimination post-graduation.

### **3.7 Analysis of language-in-planning policies in re-making Algerian national identity**

Successive Algerian governments had, for various socio-cultural reasons, attempted to re-make Algerian identity through strict Arabization policies, intending for the entrenchment of Arabic and the dispossession of French. However, as seen from the results of the questionnaire, there is no clear winner, as neither Arabic nor French are interchangeable. Part of this is attributed, as discussed before, to the lingering effects of French due to colonization, and part of it is due to the failure of the Arabization process to properly standardize language policies in the education system. To better understand how this came about, it is therefore necessary to return back to the manner in which successive Algerian governments implemented language-in-planning policies to re-make Algerian national identity.

Upon Algerian independence in 1962, embracing Arabic as the national language of Algeria was seen by the FLN leadership as an essential nation-building step that Algeria could not compromise on. President Houari Boumediène underlined this when he declared in 1965: “Without the recovery of this essential, important element that is our national language, our efforts will remain in vain, our personality incomplete and our entity a body without a soul.”<sup>140</sup>

It is essential to emphasize that Arabization in the Algerian socio-cultural context does not mean political Islamization, which refers to the imposition of Islamic dogma as a basis for concrete political governance. From the onset of Arabization in 1963, Arabic and Islam were promoted by the FLN as linguistic and

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<sup>140</sup> Arthur Doucy and Francis Monheim, *Les révolutions algériennes* (Paris: Fayard). 1971. Page 214.

cultural variables that existed independently from the religious and political domain. They were largely presented as anti-colonialist, national symbols of unity that would allow Algeria to distance itself from France and re-define itself in a postcolonial world.<sup>141</sup>

In June 1962, a month before Algerian independence, the FLN declared: “The Algerian Revolution is above all to return to Arabic – the very expression of the cultural values of our country – its dignity and its efficacy as a language of civilization.”<sup>142</sup> Arabic was presented by the Algerian leadership from the beginning as a language of culture, resistance, independence, liberation and emancipation.<sup>143</sup> By embracing Arabic, Algeria would not necessarily become an Islamic theocracy; rather, it symbolized an act of moral and cultural triumph against French cultural values and a valiant rejection of assimilationist colonial policies - a singular act of national unity necessary in a time of political volatility and civil strife.

The following example serves to highlight why respondents of the questionnaire appear indecisive over the role of Arabic and French in Algerian society: Over the course of Arabization between 1963 – 2001, the Algerian government itself seemed to be trapped within a cycle of political indecisiveness, caught between trying to appease hardline pro-Arabization advocates and introducing occasional reforms aimed at maintaining some form of link to an increasingly influential Francophone

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<sup>141</sup> Hind Amel Mostari, “A sociolinguistic perspective on Arabisation and language use in Algeria,” *Language Problems & Language Planning: Vol. 28, No. 1, (2004)*. Page 41.

<sup>142</sup> David C. Gordon, *The French Language and National Identity* (The Hague: Mouton). 1978. Page 149.

<sup>143</sup> William R. Beer and James Jacob, *Language Policy and National Unity* (Rowman and Littlefield Publishers). 1985. Page 148-149.

market economy. In the late 1980s, due to pressure from Algerians who desired more frequent contact with the French language, laws limiting the importation of French publications were laxed. Within a span of two years between 1988 – 1990, the consumption of French publications by the Algerian public increased by as much as 50% and publications of French newspapers had to be increased two-fold to meet with the growing demand.<sup>144</sup> However, large demonstrations erupted in 1990 at the Université des Sciences et de la Technologie at Bab Ezzouar, where pro-Arabization students demanded for the removal of French and the immediate Arabization of all university curriculum.<sup>145</sup> The Algerian government amended the law the same year and once again restricted the distribution of French publications to pacify the protesters.

Despite these whimsical reforms and the economic impracticality of a purely MSA-speaking workforce in a region surrounded by Europe and Francophone African countries, Algerian governments had nonetheless remained, in principle, committed to Arabization. Therein lies the issue with Algerian language planning in general: The Algerian approach to language policy is purely and strictly ideological, propelled more by capricious populist sentiments than by pragmatic concerns. More broadly, it is driven primarily by an ideological need to cultivate an Arabo-Algerian identity to realize a pre-conceived vision of a united, monolingual Algeria, as opposed to the need to address socio-economic realities. As such, the dichotomy between Arabic and French as seen in the results of the

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<sup>144</sup> Craig A. Sirles, "Politics and Arabization: The Evolution of Postindependence North Africa," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language: Vol. 137, No. 1, (1999)*. Page 123.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*: Page 124.

questionnaire clearly demonstrates how poor language planning policies may affect attitudes towards language by youths generations later.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

In summary, the theoretical framework discussed in Section 1.1 established three components that make up Algerian national identity. The first component is the presence of a political community, as proposed by Benedict Anderson, and the first section of the questionnaire, *Political governance, public administration and statehood*, employs Anderson's theory to investigate how Arabic and French fit into notions of a united Algerian political community. The second component is the presence of invented traditions and a constructed common culture, as proposed by Eric Hobsbawm. The second section of the questionnaire, *Culture, religion and memory*, utilizes Hobsbawm's theory to examine how Arabic and French fit into invented Algerian traditions and folklore and issues of religion and memory. The third component is the presence of exclusivist alterity, the process of preserving a particular characteristic and excluding all others as foreign in order to create a particular form of identity, which is a philosophical theory proposed by Emmanuel Lévinas. The third section of the questionnaire, *Bilingualism, social empowerment, employment and science*, uses Lévinas' theory to analyze how respondents exhibit alterity in fitting Arabic and French in various spheres of Algerian public life.

The results of the questionnaire, based on this comprehensive theoretical framework, make clear that transmitting a uniform vision of national identity through language policies is a complex task, especially when French, Modern

Standard Arabic (MSA) and Algerian Arabic each hold different utilitarian importance and evoke different visions of an Algerian national identity.

The French language scores poorly in issues of culture, religion and memory in Section 2 of the questionnaire. In particular, French is the dominant language that brings up painful memories of Algeria's historical past, suggesting a still lingering effect of the trauma of French colonization. However, the resurgence of French in political life, issues of bilingualism in education, economic affairs, science and technology in Sections 1 and 3 of the questionnaire reveals that respondents tend to imagine French within non-religious, non-cultural domains when confronted with issues involving Algeria's potential for future success, which constitute important aspects of Algerian identity. 73.5% of respondents wanted a bilingual Arabic-French language policy in schools, with both used concurrently as main languages of academic instruction, and there is also an overwhelming preference for the inclusion of French as a language of the Algerian political leadership. There is an interesting dichotomy here: French is likely to be associated with politics, science, technology, modernity and educational progress, and it could hold potential in unlocking Algeria's future economic success. Yet, behind this façade it conceals the trauma of colonization and a tendency to perceive French as something foreign that has been imposed onto Algerians, incompatible with Algerian culture and Islam.

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), the literary, formal register of Arabic, and Algerian Arabic, the non-standardized, colloquial dialect of Arabic spoken in Algeria, both fare poorly in issues of bilingualism, social empowerment, economic



progress, science and technology in Section 3 of the questionnaire, and rather conventionally in Section 1 with issues of political leadership. However, their resurgence in Section 2 of the questionnaire reveals where respondents prize MSA and Algerian Arabic the most: in matters of culture, religion and memory that also constitute an inseparable part of Algerian identity.

There are, however, several interesting differences in preferences between MSA and Algerian Arabic in notions of Algerian culture, religion and historical memory. MSA possesses limited social usage, yet it is enforced in schools as the language of academic instruction and is expected to be the sole language of daily communication. In Section 2 of the questionnaire, MSA is the preferred language for evoking religious unity and the expression of Islamic values, suggesting that it transmits a universalist, pan-Islamic form of identity. As such, it may encounter resistance from Algerians who perceive it as a foreign entity, as close to a quarter of respondents also associate MSA with “painful historical memories,” that is only fit to express universal religious unity but cannot authentically represent the distinctiveness and specificity of Algerian identity.

On the other hand, Algerian Arabic is regarded as the language that retains the richest cultural heritage of Algeria, best capable of representing the quintessential essence of Algerian culture, literature and folklore, as well as the language of Algerian independence. This suggests that Algerian Arabic, more so than MSA, is capable of expressing the more intimate, informal aspects of the Algerian day-to-day experience. It suggests that Algerian Arabic, in its capacity as a non-standardized, colloquial dialect of Arabic, may transmit a more distinctive,

authentically Algerian culture, as it is a colloquial melange of Arabic, French, Spanish and Berber that reflects the true socio-linguistic diversity and history of Algeria.

The dichotomy between Algerian Arabic and MSA shows that there exists an important point of tension between MSA and Algerian Arabic with regards to the notion of an Algerian culture, historical memory and religion: the universalist, pan-Islamic identity evoked by MSA versus the more authentically Algerian identity evoked by Algerian Arabic. This suggests that Algerians may view themselves primarily as an Arabic-speaking society distinct and separate from the rest of the Arabic-speaking world, and that Algerians may not identify as ethnic Arabs but rather as Arabized Berbers who happen to be Arabic-speaking Muslims. Perhaps more accurately, given the polycultural history of Algeria, Algerians can be better described as a multilingual, multi-dimensional society of various influences, such as from French, Berber, Turkish, Arab and Greek cultures. MSA may fit into conceptions of religious unity and in formal writing, but in order to express the intricacies of Algerian daily life and authentic Algerian culture, Algerian Arabic, a reflection of the diverse socio-linguistic lineage of Algeria, is required.

The indecisiveness in attitudes towards MSA, Algerian Arabic and French suggests the perpetuity of the conflict between language politics and Algerian identity, exacerbated further by a lack of consensus on the linguistic character of Algerian language education policies. These conclusions are especially telling in one regard: That respondents are unable to reconcile these languages completely, and that MSA, Algerian Arabic and French cannot completely replace one another.

This suggests a subconscious recognition of multiplicity in Algerian identity and a need to acknowledge the value of these languages, particularly for an official recognition of Algerian Arabic given its social importance, when formulating language policies. Further research is certainly needed to build upon the work that this thesis has established, to assess more deeply how language policies affect attitudes of successive generations of Algerians towards national identity.

This discordance has left a noticeable impact on Algerian society today: an asymmetrical distribution of oral and literacy rates in Arabic and French, in which successive generations of Algerians each speak, write and read Arabic and French with disproportionate levels of proficiency. Algerian writer Djamila Saadi-Mokrane called this “the Algerian linguicide” lamenting that language should define and strengthen, not cripple, the Algerian identity.<sup>146</sup> It is a reminder that the national identity questions that emerged in 1962, “Should Algerians be French, Berbers, Arabs, Middle Eastern, Francophone, African or Muslim in character? What language and culture should define the Algerian person?” were still relevant and remained unresolved in Algeria today.

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<sup>146</sup> Djamila Saadi-Mokrane, *The Algerian Linguicide* (New York: Cornell University Press). 2002. Page 67.

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*APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE*

## What Are Your Views on the Role of Arabic and French in the Formation of an Algerian National Identity?

A Survey by Amir Aziz

For a senior thesis project for the Croft Institute for International Studies and the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College at the University of Mississippi  
(All responses will remain anonymous)

Gender: Male / Female

Age:

Maximum educational attainment: (please circle one)

- a) Completed secondary school
- b) Currently in university
- c) Completed university

### ***Section 1***

On the role of Arabic and French in political governance, public administration and statehood:

**Please tick one only**

MSA

Algerian  
Arabic

French

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| (1) The language of political discourse and debate in Parliament                     |  |
| (2) The language of presidential speeches and ministerial addresses to the public    |  |
| (3) The language of the judiciary system (administration of civil and legal matters) |  |
| (4) The language of public office and government positions                           |  |
| (5) The language that best expresses Algeria's political struggle for independence   |  |
| (6) The language of Algeria's national pledge and national anthem                    |  |

**Section 2**On the role of Arabic and French in culture, religion and memory:**Please tick one only**MSA   Algerian   French  
Arabic

(1) The language that can best express Algerian oral literature in traditional folklore, fables and mythologies

(2) The language with the richest cultural heritage that can best express the essence of being Algerian

(3) The language that can best express my religious values and convictions

(4) The language that can best express the religious unity of the Islamic community in Algeria

(5) The language that I associate with the triumphs and victories in Algeria's path to independence

(6) The language that brings up painful historical memories in Algeria's past with colonization

**Section 3**

On the role of Arabic and French in issues of bilingualism, social empowerment, employment and science:

*Note: "Arabic" in this section refers to both MSA and Algerian Arabic*

**Please tick one only**

Arabic only	French only	Arabic and French
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**Attitudes towards bilingualism in schools**

(1) I believe the main language(s) of instruction used to teach core subjects in all levels of Algerian schools should be:

(2) I believe that Algerian students should be able to speak the following language(s) fluently:

**Knowledge and social empowerment**

(3) The language(s) that will provide me access to knowledge and information in a wide variety of disciplines is/are:

(4) The language(s) that give(s) me a sense of empowerment and will help me achieve social mobility is/are:

**Employment and labor markets**

(5) The language(s) that will allow me to gain a competitive edge in the Algerian labor market when searching for employment

(6) The language(s) that will allow me to gain a competitive edge in the global labor market when searching for employment

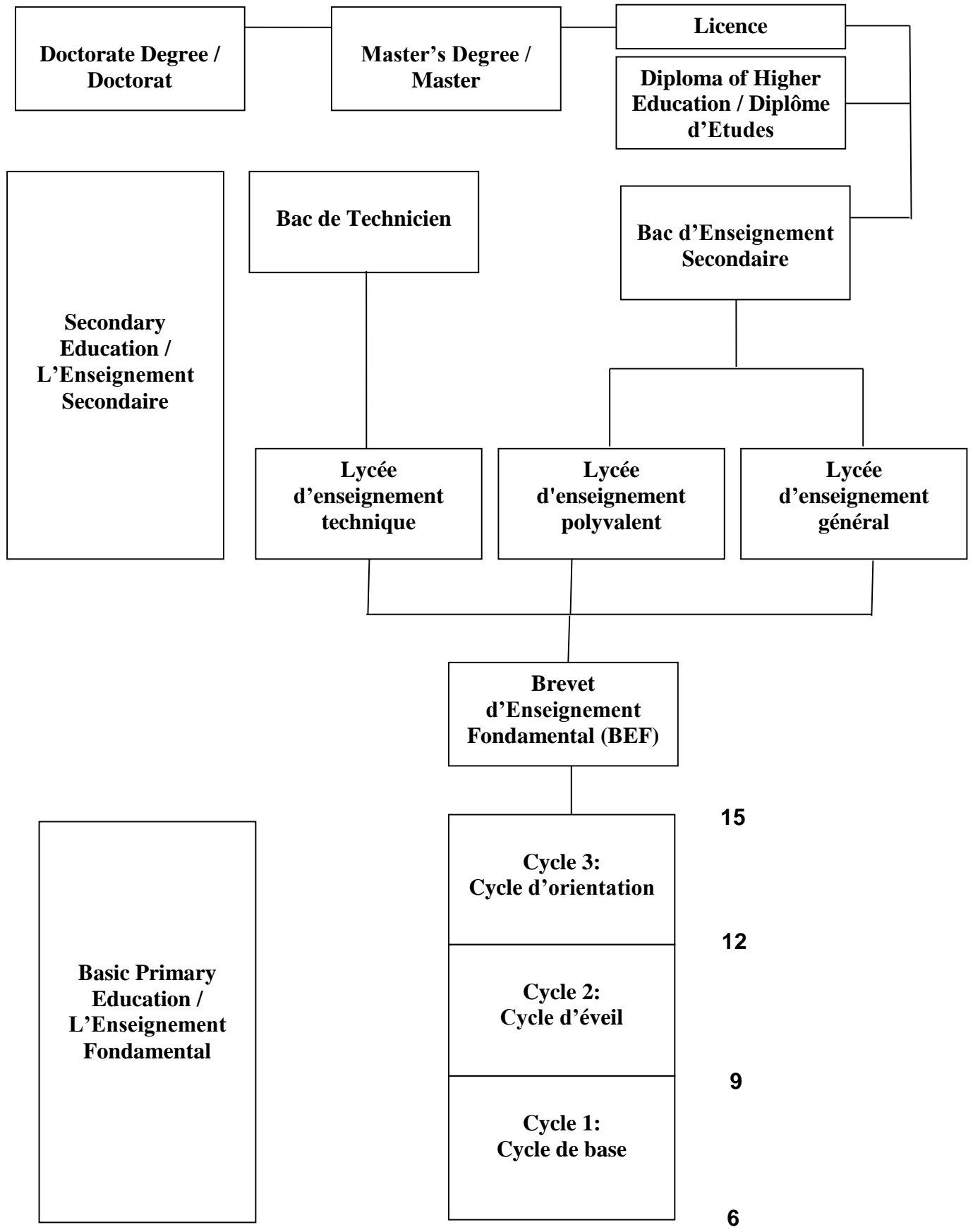
**Science, technology and modernity**

(7) Scientific and technological subjects in universities should be taught in:

(8) I believe the language(s) of science and modernity is/are:


**- Thank you for your participation in the questionnaire -**

*APPENDIX B: STRUCTURE OF THE ALGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM*



## APPENDIX B: STRUCTURE OF THE ALGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

### Description of the current Algerian education system (as of January 2015)

The current structure of Algerian schooling is based on the French educational system, and is divided into three levels: nine years of basic primary education (*L'Enseignement Fondamental*), three years of secondary education (*L'Enseignement Secondaire*), and higher education in universities (*L'Enseignement Supérieur*).<sup>147</sup> The Ministry of National Education is charged with all matters at the primary and secondary level: it coordinates national educational programs, determines syllabus content of subjects and pedagogical issues, and controls recruitment and training of teachers.<sup>148</sup> The Ministry of Higher Education (*Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur*) is charged with the management of all public tertiary institutions. Both ministries collectively exert educational control over all matters of education throughout all forty-eight *wilayas* in Algeria.<sup>149</sup>

The first nine years comprise the basic primary education phase, which is mandatory for all Algerian children aged between 6 - 15, and is divided into three main cycles that lasts three years each: *cycle de base* (Grade 1 – Grade 3), *cycle*

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<sup>147</sup> République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire: Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, *Loi D'Orientation*. Page 44. Retrieved October 9 2014 from: <http://www.education.gov.dz/index.php/fr/documentation/loi>

<sup>148</sup> République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire: Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, *Missions de la Direction de l'Éducation*. Retrieved October 7 2014 from: <http://www.education.gov.dz/index.php/fr/directions-de-leducation/missions>.

<sup>149</sup> In the Algerian context, *wilaya* refers to an administrative division or province within Algeria that is governed by a local administrative authority. Each *wilaya* is headed by a *Wali*, a Governor who is chosen by the Algerian president. The word *wilaya* is derived from an Arabic word with the same meaning.

*d'éveil* (Grade 4 – Grade 6) and *cycle d'orientation* (Grade 7 – Grade 9).<sup>150</sup> The first two cycles, *de base* and *d'éveil*, are taught in primary schools (*écoles primaires*) while the third cycle, *d'orientation*, is taught in middle schools (*écoles complémentaires*). Throughout basic primary education, students take as many as 27 hours per week of classes. Examples of subjects taught are mathematics, Islamic studies, MSA as a language, social studies, art, music, physical education, and natural sciences. MSA is the only language of instruction used to teach primary school subjects, and the teaching of MSA as a subject is a mandatory component. French is, however, offered as a first foreign language at 5 hours per week starting from Grade 4 during the second primary cycle. At the end of basic education at Grade 9, students need to pass the national education examination to obtain the *Brevet d'Enseignement Fondamental* (BEF), which confers access to the first year of secondary education.

The next three years of secondary education, which begins at age 15-16, are divided into two types of establishments. Students are streamed into either general secondary institutions (*lycees d'enseignement général*) or technical secondary institutions (*lycées d'enseignement technique*), depending on their academic results in the BEF.<sup>151</sup> The general stream concentrates on natural and hard sciences, humanities and literature, foreign languages and religious studies, while the

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<sup>150</sup> République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire: Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, *Loi D'Oriantation*. Page 47-48. Retrieved October 9 2014 from: <http://www.education.gov.dz/index.php/fr/documentation/loi>.

<sup>151</sup> République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire: Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, *Loi D'Oriantation*. Page 49. Retrieved October 9 2014 from: <http://www.education.gov.dz/index.php/fr/documentation/loi>.



technical stream focuses on electronics, engineering, mechanics, and accounting.<sup>152</sup> In general, the general stream prepares students for further education in universities, while the technical stream prepares students for technical careers following graduation.

MSA is the language of instruction in all subjects, and the teaching of MSA as a course in itself, much like in primary school, is mandatory, while French is available only as a first foreign language.<sup>153</sup> Students in the general stream who specialize in science, technology, and mathematics usually take additional French language classes to train them for tertiary education where scientific and mathematical fields are taught in French. At the end of the third year, students take the *Baccalauréat* exam to determine eligibility to tertiary institutions. General stream students receive the *Bac d'Enseignement Secondaire*, which allows access to universities, while technical stream students obtain the *Bac de Technicien*, which gives access to higher technical schools.

Higher education in Algeria is a combination of universities, teachers' colleges, national institutes for higher education, and higher technical schools. MSA is the language of instruction in the fields of humanities, arts and literature, leading to the *Licence*, while French is the language of instruction in scientific and technological fields. Traditionally, institutions follow either a shorter 3 year track or a longer 4 - 5 year track, which depends on the field of study and is based on the French

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<sup>152</sup> République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire: Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, *Le Processus Éducatif*. Retrieved October 9 2014 from : <http://www.education.gov.dz/index.php/fr/documentation/syst-educ-alg/131>.

<sup>153</sup> République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire: Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, *Le Processus Éducatif*. Retrieved October 9 2014 from : <http://www.education.gov.dz/index.php/fr/documentation/syst-educ-alg/131>.

education system. In the shorter 3 year track, students obtain the *Diplôme d'Etudes Universitaires Appliquées* (DEUA) which typically does not grant access to further studies. Within 4 year programs, students can choose between courses that lead to the *Licence* or the *Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures* (Diploma of Higher Education).<sup>154</sup> The *Licence* is obtained in humanities, arts, and literature, while the *Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures* is obtained in scientific and technological fields.<sup>155</sup> Within five year programs, students follow specialized programs that lead to a variety of *Diplômes* depending on the field of study.

In 2004, the Ministry of Education implemented reforms that introduced a new framework for obtaining degrees called *Licence-Master-Doctorat* (LMD). The three-tier LMD system is based on an educational system that had been recently implemented in France in 2002, and allowed students to pursue undergraduate degrees (*Licence*), masters degrees, and doctoral degrees successively, for a total of 9 years leading to a Doctoral degree.<sup>156</sup> Currently, as of 2015, LMD reforms are still in the preliminary phase and have only been implemented in several universities.

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<sup>154</sup> République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire: Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, *Le Système Classique*. Retrieved October 9 2014 from: <https://www.mesrs.dz/la-reforme>.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire: Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, *Le système LMD*. Retrieved October 9 2014 from: <https://www.mesrs.dz/le-systeme-lmd>