

Diglossia, Bilingualism, and Language Planning in Algeria: Implications for the Use and Prestige of Modern Standard Arabic

الازدواجية اللغوية والثنائية اللغوية والتخطيط اللغوي في الجزائر:
انعكاساتها على استعمال العربية الفصحى الحديثة ومكانتها

Diglossie, bilinguisme et planification linguistique en Algérie :
implications pour l'usage et le prestige de l'arabe standard moderne

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Abstract

This article re-examines the Algerian linguistic situation by disentangling three notions that are frequently confused in public and sometimes academic discourse: diglossia, bilingualism, and multilingual language planning. It argues that Algeria cannot be adequately described through a simple opposition between Arabic and French, nor through a purely diglossic model limited to Modern Standard Arabic and Algerian Darija. Rather, the Algerian linguistic field is structured by several historically sedimented layers: Arabic diglossia, the official and pedagogical recognition of Tamazight, the long-lasting institutional capital of French, the growing symbolic and utilitarian role of English, and the expansion of hybrid digital writing practices. Methodologically, the study adopts a documentary, critical, and analytical approach, drawing on sociolinguistics, language-in-education policy, and postcolonial language planning. The analysis shows that Modern Standard Arabic retains major symbolic, constitutional, educational, and cultural legitimacy, yet its effective circulation remains constrained by differentiated domains of use, uneven literacy outcomes, disciplinary language gaps, private-school stratification, and the persistence of French in scientific and professional sectors. The article therefore rejects both monolingual reductionism and uncritical linguistic externalization. It concludes by proposing an additive multilingual policy capable of strengthening high-level Arabic literacy, recognizing learners' existing repertoires, consolidating Tamazight, and sequencing access to foreign languages without reproducing social inequality or weakening Arabic's intellectual functions.

Keywords

Algeria, diglossia, bilingualism, Modern Standard Arabic, Darija, Tamazight, French, language planning, additive multilingualism

الملخص

يعيد هذا المقال فحص الوضع اللغوي في الجزائر من خلال التمييز بين الازدواجية اللغوية، والثنائية اللغوية، والتخطيط اللغوي في سياق التعدد. ويبين أن الحالة الجزائرية لا تُختزل في التقابل بين العربية والفرنسية أو بين العربية الفصحى والدارجة، بل تتشكل من طبقات متداخلة تضم الأمازيغية، واستمرار الحضور المؤسسي للفرنسية، وصعود الإنجليزية، وانتشار الكتابات الرقمية الهجينة. ويعتمد البحث مقارنة وثائقية نقدية تستند إلى علم اللغة الاجتماعي وسياسات اللغة والتخطيط اللغوي في السياقات ما بعد

الاستعمارية. وتظهر النتائج أن العربية الفصحى تحتفظ بمشروعية دستورية وتعليمية وثقافية قوية، غير أن استعمالها يتأثر بتفاوت الكفايات ومجالات التداول، وصعوبات اللغة العلمية، واستمرار الفرنسية في قطاعات مهنية وعلمية. ويخلص المقال إلى ضرورة تبني سياسة تعددية إضافية تعزز وظائف العربية الفكرية والمعرفية، وتعترف بموارد المتعلمين اللغوية، وتنظم الانفتاح على اللغات الأجنبية. الكلمات المفتاحية

الازدواجية اللغوية، العربية الفصحى الحديثة، الدارجة، الأمازيغية، الفرنسية،

Résumé

Cet article réexamine la situation linguistique algérienne en distinguant trois notions fréquemment confondues dans le discours public et parfois dans les usages académiques : la diglossie, le bilinguisme et la planification linguistique plurilingue. Il soutient que l'Algérie ne peut être décrite ni par une simple opposition entre l'arabe et le français ni par un modèle exclusivement diglossique, limité au couple arabe standard moderne/darija algérienne. Le champ linguistique algérien est, au contraire, structuré par plusieurs couches historiquement sédimentées : la diglossie arabe, la reconnaissance officielle et pédagogique du tamazight, le capital institutionnel durable du français, le rôle symbolique et utilitaire croissant de l'anglais, ainsi que l'expansion des écritures numériques hybrides. Sur le plan méthodologique, l'étude adopte une démarche documentaire, critique et analytique, articulant la sociolinguistique, les politiques linguistiques éducatives et la planification postcoloniale. L'analyse montre que l'arabe standard moderne conserve une forte légitimité symbolique, constitutionnelle, scolaire et culturelle, mais que sa circulation effective demeure contrainte par la différenciation des domaines d'usage, les inégalités de littératie, les écarts de langue disciplinaire, la stratification scolaire privée et la persistance du français dans des secteurs scientifiques et professionnels. L'article plaide ainsi pour un plurilinguisme additif consolidant l'arabe, reconnaissant les répertoires des apprenants et organisant l'accès aux langues étrangères sans affaiblir les fonctions intellectuelles de l'arabe.

Mots-clés

Algérie, diglossie, bilinguisme, arabe standard moderne, darija, tamazight, français, planification linguistique, plurilinguisme additif

Introduction

Language is not merely an instrument of communication. In every historically constituted community, it is also a medium of memory, a form of symbolic affiliation, a vehicle of school knowledge, and a social resource unequally distributed across groups and institutions. In Algeria, this general sociolinguistic principle acquires particular intensity because the linguistic field has been shaped by several successive historical forces: precolonial Arabic and Amazigh cultural continuities, Islamic scholarly traditions, French colonial domination, post-independence Arabization policies, the institutional recognition of Tamazight, the social persistence of French, and, more recently, the growing visibility of English in educational and technological debates. The result is not a simple bilingual situation but a stratified linguistic order in which languages and varieties do not occupy the same domains, carry the same legitimacy, or provide the same access to social mobility.

The debate is often simplified. In political discourse, it may be reduced to a conflict between Arabic and French, between authenticity and foreignness, or between national identity and globalization. In everyday discussions, it may be represented as a tension between the school language and the language of ordinary life. In both cases, the analytical complexity of the situation is weakened. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Algerian Darija, Tamazight in its varieties, French, and increasingly English coexist in Algeria, but their coexistence is not symmetrical. Each language or variety is associated with specific values, spaces, practices, and imagined futures. MSA remains the formal language of schooling, official discourse, literary production, religious culture, and a large part of the Arab public sphere. Darija is the dominant language of ordinary oral interaction and informal social proximity. Tamazight is a national and official language whose institutional incorporation remains uneven. French continues to operate as a language of science, administration, medicine, engineering, business, and elite schooling. English is increasingly invested with the prestige of global scientific and technological circulation.

This article starts from the observation that the previous formulation of the problem under the broad label of “linguistic duality” needs conceptual refinement. The term can be useful if it designates the coexistence of different linguistic systems within the same social space, but it becomes scientifically insufficient when it conflates diglossia, bilingualism, multilingualism, code-switching, and language policy. In the Algerian case, the relationship between MSA and Darija is primarily diglossic because it concerns functionally distributed varieties of Arabic. The relationship between Arabic and French is better understood through bilingualism, language contact, colonial history, and unequal linguistic capital. The place of Tamazight introduces a further dimension of national plurality and

recognition. The recent expansion of English adds another layer, connected to global knowledge economies rather than to colonial memory alone.

The guiding question of this study is therefore the following: how do diglossia, bilingualism, and language planning interact in Algeria, and what are their implications for the use, transmission, and prestige of Modern Standard Arabic? This main question implies several subsidiary questions. What is the difference between diglossia and bilingualism in the Algerian context? How does the MSA/Darija relationship affect school literacy and formal expression? How does the persistence of French in strategic domains influence the functional reach of Arabic? How can Algeria develop foreign-language competence without reproducing subtractive bilingualism or weakening Arabic as a language of knowledge? Finally, how can language policy reconcile national cohesion, social equity, and multilingual openness?

The importance of the topic lies in its location at the intersection of language, identity, education, and social justice. A language policy cannot be evaluated only by its symbolic declarations. It must also be assessed through actual literacy outcomes, access to scientific knowledge, teacher training, curricular coherence, the distribution of languages across public and private schooling, and the capacity of learners to move from everyday repertoires to academic registers. The central argument defended here is that strengthening MSA does not require denying Algeria's multilingual reality. On the contrary, Arabic can be strengthened only through an additive model that consolidates high-level literacy, recognizes learners' linguistic repertoires, improves disciplinary terminology, and organizes access to foreign languages in a sequenced and equitable manner.

1. Conceptual and Methodological Foundations

1.1. Terminological and Theoretical Framework

A rigorous analysis must begin by clarifying the concepts through which the Algerian situation is described. The original concern with "linguistic duality" points to a real issue: Algeria is marked by the coexistence of more than one linguistic code, and this coexistence has consequences for identity, schooling, social mobility, and the status of Arabic. Yet the term "duality" remains too broad unless it is located within a more precise conceptual system. In sociolinguistics, at least four levels must be distinguished: language as a symbolic and communicative system; diglossia as the functional distribution of varieties; bilingualism as the use of two languages or linguistic systems by individuals or groups; and multilingualism as a social ecology involving several languages with different degrees of institutionalization.

Language may be defined, following a classical functional conception, as a system of vocal and graphic signs through which a community represents experience, transmits knowledge, and organizes social relations. This definition is

compatible with older Arab linguistic reflections, including the emphasis placed by Ibn Jinnī on language as the sounds by which each community expresses its purposes. It is also compatible with modern sociolinguistics, which refuses to treat language as a purely abstract system detached from its users. A language is a structure, but it is also a practice, a history, a symbolic market, and a mode of belonging. In Bourdieu's terms, languages and varieties circulate with unequal value because institutions confer legitimacy on some forms of speech more than on others.

Diglossia, in the classic formulation of Ferguson (1959), describes a situation in which two varieties of the same language are functionally differentiated. A high variety is used in education, administration, religion, literature, formal speeches, and written public discourse; a low variety is used in everyday oral communication, family interaction, humor, intimacy, and informal local exchanges. This model is particularly relevant to Arabic-speaking societies because formal Arabic and spoken Arabic varieties are not distributed randomly. They correspond to distinct domains and levels of legitimacy. In Algeria, MSA performs the high functions, while Algerian Darija performs the low and informal functions. However, the Algerian situation should not be reduced to a rigid binary. Speakers often move along a continuum, producing intermediate forms, school-influenced speech, formalized Darija, or MSA marked by local features.

Fishman (1967) added a decisive distinction by showing that bilingualism and diglossia do not necessarily coincide. Bilingualism concerns competence and use in two languages, whether at the level of the individual or the community. Diglossia concerns the social allocation of functions. A society may be bilingual without diglossia, diglossic without widespread bilingualism, or both bilingual and diglossic. This distinction is essential for Algeria. The MSA/Darija relation is not identical to the Arabic/French relation. The first involves varieties within Arabic, whereas the second involves two historically and institutionally differentiated languages. Confusing these relations leads to distorted diagnoses: the difficulty of academic Arabic cannot be explained solely by French, just as the persistence of French cannot be explained solely by Arabic diglossia.

Bilingualism itself must be understood in a contemporary, non-deficit perspective. Grosjean (1989) famously warned that the bilingual is not "two monolinguals in one person." Bilingual speakers mobilize repertoires according to domains, tasks, interlocutors, social expectations, and communicative purposes. This approach is crucial in Algeria, where many speakers combine Darija, MSA, French, Tamazight, and sometimes English in differentiated ways. Code-switching and lexical borrowing should not be interpreted automatically as corruption or linguistic failure. They may function as resources of identity, efficiency, humor, expertise, or group belonging. The scientific question is not whether mixing exists; it is how it is socially distributed, whether it reinforces inequa-

lity, and how schooling can transform heterogeneous repertoires into advanced literacy.

Multilingualism designates the broader ecology in which several languages coexist within a society. In the Algerian case, it includes Arabic diglossia, Tamazight pluralities, French postcolonial capital, and English globalization. This ecology is hierarchical. Not all languages provide the same institutional access. Not all speakers acquire the same repertoires under the same conditions. A student in an urban private school with strong French and English exposure does not inhabit the same linguistic opportunity structure as a student in a rural public school with weaker foreign-language resources. For this reason, language policy must be analyzed together with social stratification.

1.2. Methodological Orientation

The present article is a documentary and analytical contribution rather than a field survey. It is based on a critical reading of sociolinguistic, educational, and language-policy literature on Algeria, combined with a conceptual reorganization of the categories used to discuss the status of Arabic. This methodological choice is justified by the nature of the problem. The issue is not only empirical, although empirical research is indispensable; it is also conceptual. If the terms used to describe the situation are imprecise, subsequent recommendations become fragile.

The article therefore proceeds through three complementary operations. First, it clarifies the theoretical categories of diglossia, bilingualism, multilingualism, linguistic capital, and additive language planning. Second, it reconstructs the historical and institutional background that explains why French, Arabic, Tamazight, and English occupy different positions in contemporary Algeria. Third, it evaluates the implications of this configuration for MSA, especially in schooling, scientific discourse, administration, private education, media, and digital communication.

The limits of the study must be explicitly stated. Since it does not present new questionnaire data, classroom observations, or statistical measurements of language competence, it cannot claim to quantify actual proficiency levels among Algerian learners. Its contribution is instead synthetic and interpretive: it proposes a clearer framework for future empirical investigation and for more coherent educational decision-making. A subsequent empirical study could examine, for example, how students move from Darija to MSA in writing tasks, how scientific terminology is mastered in Arabic and foreign languages, how private-school curricula shape linguistic inequality, or how digital writing practices influence formal literacy.

2. Historical and Contemporary Configuration of the Algerian Linguistic Field

2.1. Historical and Institutional Genesis

The contemporary Algerian linguistic field cannot be understood without the colonial rupture. French colonization did not merely introduce a new language into an already multilingual society. It reorganized the symbolic hierarchy of languages by installing French as a language of administration, schooling, law, economic power, and social advancement. Arabic was not eliminated from society, religion, memory, or cultural transmission, but it was marginalized in many institutional domains, especially those connected to modern state administration and scientific knowledge. This produced a durable asymmetry: after independence, Arabic possessed immense symbolic legitimacy, whereas French retained a significant portion of institutional and technical capital.

Post-independence Arabization was therefore not a simple linguistic preference. It was conceived as a policy of national reconstruction after a long process of colonial dispossession. Its objective was to restore Arabic to public centrality, to reconnect the state with the cultural memory of the majority, and to give national independence a linguistic form. In this sense, Arabization had a reparative and sovereign dimension. It sought to make Arabic not only a language of identity, but also a language of schooling, administration, and knowledge.

However, language planning never operates on neutral ground. The French language had already been embedded in educational systems, scientific documentation, medical training, engineering, legal practices, and professional networks. Arabization advanced unevenly across domains. It was more visible in primary and secondary schooling and in many humanities and social-science disciplines than in scientific, technical, and medical fields. This unevenness created a structural gap: many students completed substantial parts of their schooling in Arabic and then encountered French or, increasingly, English in specialized higher education, scientific documentation, or professional environments. The question is not only ideological; it is pedagogical and institutional. A language can be official without being fully equipped in all disciplinary domains.

The recognition of Tamazight adds a further layer to the analysis. Algeria is not an Arabic-French binary space. Tamazight and its varieties belong to the historical depth of the country, and their official recognition has transformed the symbolic grammar of national identity. This recognition challenges any monolingual representation of Algeria while also raising practical questions of standardization, teacher training, curriculum design, and regional implementation. The place of MSA must therefore be defended not against Tamazight, but within a broader framework of national linguistic plurality.

The more recent rise of English also modifies the situation. English is increasingly associated with science, technology, international publication, global mobility, and digital culture. It is often perceived as less historically burdened than French, even when its global dominance raises other issues. Its expansion can be interpreted both as a strategy of internationalization and as a reconfiguration of the postcolonial language hierarchy. Yet replacing French dependency with English dependency would not solve the central problem if Arabic remains insufficiently developed as a language of advanced literacy and scientific production. The fundamental issue is not which external language dominates; it is whether national education produces strong, transferable, and equitable linguistic competence.

2.2. French, English, and the Stratification of Linguistic Capital

The position of French in Algeria must be analyzed with precision. French is not an official language, yet it retains considerable practical power in several domains. It appears in administration, medicine, engineering, business, higher education, technical documentation, advertising, media, and elite schooling. Its value is not only linguistic; it is social. It can function as a marker of urbanity, educational privilege, professional access, and transnational mobility. This explains why a language may be politically contested while remaining socially useful.

The original manuscript rightly identified a tension between the public promotion of Arabic and the continued prestige of French in specific sectors. This tension should not be framed solely as a moral opposition between patriotic Arabic and alienating French, because such a framing oversimplifies actual practices. Many Algerians value Arabic as a language of identity and legitimacy while also valuing French for access to studies, professional networks, and scientific documentation. Belmihou's work on attitudes in Algeria confirms that language values are not mutually exclusive; they are often distributed according to domain, aspiration, and perceived utility.

Nevertheless, the unequal distribution of French competence can reproduce social stratification. Private institutions that intensively cultivate French or foreign-language curricula may provide their students with additional symbolic capital, while public-school students may experience abrupt transitions when university disciplines or professional environments require foreign-language competence not sufficiently developed in earlier schooling. The issue is therefore not the mere existence of French, but the social organization of access to high-value multilingualism. If multilingual competence becomes the privilege of elite institutions, language policy becomes an instrument of inequality.

English is now increasingly associated with scientific internationalization, digital resources, and global professional mobility. It may reduce exclusive dependence on French, but it does not automatically solve the educational problem.

An abrupt shift from French to English in scientific fields, without adequate teacher preparation, terminology development, and curricular sequencing, risks reproducing the same structural problem under a different external language. The objective should not be to substitute one dependency for another. It should be to build a coherent system in which Arabic remains capable of intellectual and disciplinary expression, while foreign languages provide access to international knowledge.

This point is decisive for the status of MSA. Arabic will not be strengthened by symbolic declarations alone. It must be strengthened through high-quality textbooks, teacher training, academic writing, scientific terminology, translation programs, digital resources, and research publication. A language of identity must also become a language of epistemic production. Otherwise, learners may perceive a divide between the language of national legitimacy and the languages of professional opportunity.

2.3. Digital Hybridization and the New Domains of Writing

The original article emphasized the role of globalization and communication media in the emergence of hybrid linguistic practices. This observation should be retained, but it must be reformulated with greater analytical balance. Social media have indeed expanded written forms of Darija, Romanized Arabic, Arabic-French code-switching, emojis, abbreviations, phonetic spellings, and multilingual fragments. These practices may appear unstable from the perspective of formal writing norms, but they respond to communicative needs: speed, intimacy, group identity, humor, immediacy, and indexical positioning.

It would be scientifically excessive to claim that digital hybridity simply “threatens” the purity of MSA. The more precise claim is that digital practices redistribute writing functions. Informal digital writing does not serve the same purpose as academic prose, legal writing, school essays, or literary Arabic. It does not automatically destroy formal competence, but it can become problematic if learners are not taught register awareness. The pedagogical task is therefore to help students understand when and why a given variety is appropriate, how to shift from informal digital writing to formal MSA, and how to preserve accuracy in academic and institutional contexts.

Digital hybridity can even be used pedagogically. Teachers may compare a Darija social-media utterance with its MSA equivalent, identify lexical borrowing, analyze code-switching, and transform informal statements into formal argumentative paragraphs. Such exercises do not legitimize informality in all contexts; they build metalinguistic awareness. In this sense, the digital sphere should not be treated only as a zone of linguistic decline. It is also a laboratory in which language change, identity, and literacy practices become visible.

3. Arabic Diglossia, Educational Mediation, and the Status of Modern Standard Arabic

3.1. Modern Standard Arabic and Algerian Darija: Structure, Function, and Educational Mediation

The distinction between MSA and Algerian Darija is central to the article because it preserves one of the strongest elements of the original argument while giving it a more rigorous sociolinguistic formulation. MSA is the standardized, codified, transnationally intelligible variety used in formal writing, schooling, official discourse, broadcast news, religious instruction, literature, and academic communication. Darija is the everyday spoken variety through which most Algerians conduct ordinary interaction, family life, peer communication, humor, spontaneous narration, and much informal digital exchange. The two varieties are connected, but they are not interchangeable in all contexts.

At the phonological level, MSA is oriented toward a standardized system taught through schooling and associated with formal pronunciation norms. Darija presents regional variation and includes phonetic developments that may merge, shift, or simplify sounds relative to formal Arabic norms. At the lexical level, MSA maintains a standardized vocabulary capable of absorbing modern terminology through derivation, borrowing, and institutional coinage. Darija contains inherited Arabic elements alongside Amazigh, Turkish, Spanish, French, and other lexical layers. At the morphosyntactic level, MSA preserves more explicit inflection, agreement patterns, and formal syntactic structures, while Darija tends toward reduced inflectional marking, different negation patterns, clitic variation, and flexible oral syntax.

These differences do not mean that Darija is a defective form of Arabic. A scientifically acceptable analysis must avoid stigmatizing the everyday language of speakers. Darija has its own internal organization, expressive capacity, poetic and humorous resources, and social functions. The pedagogical problem arises when schooling presupposes an immediate transition from oral Darija to formal MSA without sufficient mediation. Many learners do not fail because they lack intelligence or because the home language is an obstacle in itself. They struggle when the school does not explicitly teach how to move from an oral repertoire to formal literacy, from everyday narration to argumentative prose, and from familiar vocabulary to disciplinary language.

The following table summarizes the principal contrasts. It does not establish a hierarchy of worth; it identifies functional differences that educational policy must take into account.

Table 1. Main functional and structural contrasts between Modern Standard Arabic and Algerian Darija

Dimension	Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)	Algerian Darija
Status and legitimacy	Formal, standardized, transnationally intelligible variety; official, educational, religious, literary, and academic legitimacy.	Everyday spoken variety; strong social proximity, affective value, humor, oral narration, and informal solidarity.
Domains of use	Schooling, administration, media news, religious discourse, legal writing, academic prose, formal speeches.	Family interaction, peer communication, informal media, advertising, popular culture, social networks, spontaneous conversation.
Phonology	Normatively stabilized through school and media pronunciation models.	Regionally variable; includes local phonetic developments and contact-induced features.
Lexicon	Codified vocabulary, specialized terminology, classical and modern registers.	Arabic core enriched by Amazigh, French, Turkish, Spanish, and local innovations.
Morphology and syntax	More explicit inflection and agreement; formal syntactic organization; higher written normativity.	Reduced or reorganized inflection; oral syntax; clitics and negation patterns differing from MSA.
Pedagogical implication	Requires systematic literacy training, disciplinary vocabulary, and formal writing practice.	Can serve as a bridge for comprehension, comparison, explanation, and metalinguistic awareness if pedagogically mediated.

3.2. Implications for the Use and Prestige of Modern Standard Arabic

MSA retains a central place in Algeria, but its status must be analyzed through several distinct dimensions. First, it has symbolic legitimacy: it is associated with national identity, Arab-Islamic cultural memory, constitutional recognition, schooling, religious heritage, and participation in a broader Arab intellectual sphere. Second, it has institutional legitimacy: it is the language of many state documents, formal education, media discourse, and official ceremonies. Third, it has educational legitimacy: it is the principal language through which formal literacy is established for large numbers of pupils. Yet these legitimacies do not automatically produce strong operational competence in all domains.

The effective use of MSA depends on literacy quality. A student may be exposed to Arabic throughout schooling without acquiring advanced academic writing, disciplinary vocabulary, argumentative organization, or scientific expression. The problem is not the language itself; it is the conditions under which the language is taught and used. If Arabic is taught as a subject but not sufficiently

developed as a medium of precise disciplinary thought, its prestige may remain symbolic rather than operational. Conversely, when Arabic is used in rigorous scientific explanation, in research writing, in technical translation, and in intellectually demanding prose, its functional prestige increases.

A second implication concerns the transition between home repertoires and school Arabic. Many pupils enter school with Darija or Tamazight as primary oral repertoires. If MSA is introduced as a distant and purely normative code, learners may experience it as external to their lived language. If, however, teachers construct bridges through comparison, reformulation, oral-to-written transformation, and explicit register instruction, MSA can become a progressively appropriated language of literacy. Mother-tongue based and repertoire-sensitive approaches do not mean abandoning MSA. They mean creating pathways toward it.

A third implication concerns scientific and technological domains. The original article called for the teaching of scientific subjects in Arabic and for the development of bilingual terminology. This recommendation remains important, but it must be formulated in a non-isolationist way. Arabic scientific instruction requires terminological standardization, high-quality didactic materials, teacher preparation, and access to international literature through translation and foreign-language training. Teaching science in Arabic cannot mean closing access to French or English sources. It should mean giving learners the conceptual foundations in a language they master while progressively equipping them to consult foreign-language sources.

A fourth implication concerns private education. If private schools organize privileged access to French or other foreign languages while public schools struggle to produce comparable competence, the language question becomes a question of justice. Monitoring private curricula and harmonizing national standards are legitimate policy concerns, but regulation should not be reduced to prohibition. The aim should be to ensure that all pupils acquire strong Arabic literacy and equitable access to foreign languages, rather than creating parallel linguistic tracks associated with class position.

4. From Subtractive Bilingualism to Additive Language Planning

4.1. Challenges and Risks Associated with Subtractive Bilingualism

The challenges identified by the original manuscript should be retained because they point to real tensions. However, they require a more nuanced theoretical formulation. Bilingualism itself is not a danger. Numerous studies have shown that bilingual and multilingual competence can be cognitively, educationally, and socially beneficial when it is developed under additive conditions. The problem is

subtractive bilingualism: a configuration in which the acquisition of a prestigious language weakens the development, institutional value, or social legitimacy of the national or first language.

The first risk is the symbolic displacement of Arabic. When access to science, professional promotion, elite schooling, or administrative efficiency appears structurally tied to French or English, Arabic may be confined to identity, religion, and formal proclamation. Such confinement produces a split between the language of belonging and the language of opportunity. Over time, this split can weaken the perceived ability of Arabic to function as a language of modern knowledge.

The second risk is educational discontinuity. Learners may study in Arabic at one level, encounter French or English materials at another, and be evaluated in a disciplinary language for which they have not been adequately prepared. This discontinuity does not demonstrate the insufficiency of Arabic; it demonstrates the insufficiency of curricular planning. A coherent policy should anticipate transitions and prepare students for them through terminology, bilingual glossaries, reading strategies, and explicit academic-language instruction.

The third risk is social fragmentation. If languages become associated with different social classes, school types, or urban/rural divides, linguistic differences become social borders. Students from privileged backgrounds may accumulate Arabic, French, and English as complementary resources, while others may receive weaker instruction in all three. The consequence is not true multilingualism but stratified multilingualism.

The fourth risk concerns identity discourse itself. A purely defensive approach may represent foreign languages as threats in themselves. Such a position can produce symbolic reassurance but limited educational effectiveness. A more robust policy should distinguish between foreign-language competence and foreign-language domination. Competence in French or English can be valuable; domination occurs when these languages monopolize access to knowledge and mobility while Arabic remains under-equipped.

4.2. Benefits of Additive Multilingualism and Repertoire-Based Pedagogy

The benefits section of the original article should not be removed; it should be strengthened. Diglossia and multilingualism can be resources if they are organized pedagogically and institutionally. Algerian learners already possess complex repertoires. The task of schooling is not to erase these repertoires, but to transform them into literacy, reflection, and controlled register mobility.

First, a repertoire-based pedagogy can develop metalinguistic awareness. Comparing Darija and MSA enables learners to notice differences in morphology, vocabulary, syntax, register, and discourse organization. Such comparison

can make formal Arabic more accessible. It can also prevent the stigmatization of everyday speech by showing that each variety has functions and norms.

Second, strong Arabic literacy can support foreign-language learning. Cummins' interdependence hypothesis suggests that cognitive-academic skills developed in one language can transfer to another when schooling is well designed. This means that consolidating Arabic is not opposed to learning French or English. On the contrary, a student who masters reading, argumentation, abstraction, and disciplinary vocabulary in Arabic is better prepared to acquire comparable skills in additional languages.

Third, multilingual competence can expand access to knowledge without requiring linguistic dependency. Arabic can be the language of conceptual foundation and national intellectual production; French and English can function as languages of documentation, comparison, research circulation, and international communication. The essential condition is that foreign languages be added to Arabic rather than used to replace it.

Fourth, Tamazight can be integrated into a national framework that recognizes plurality without fragmenting citizenship. Its presence invites Algeria to move beyond a single-language ideology and to design curricula that acknowledge the actual linguistic histories of learners. Recognition of Tamazight does not weaken Arabic if both are located within a coherent model of national multilingualism.

Finally, digital practices can be converted into pedagogical material. Rather than merely condemning hybrid writing, teachers can use it to train students in register conversion: from informal chat to formal Arabic, from borrowed lexical items to standardized terminology, from oral narrative to written exposition. This approach strengthens MSA because it teaches students to control variation rather than simply prohibiting it.

Table 2. Risks of subtractive bilingualism and corresponding policy responses

Risk identified	Scientific reformulation	Educational or policy response
Foreign language replaces national language in high-value domains.	The issue is subtractive bilingualism and unequal linguistic capital, not bilingualism itself.	Maintain Arabic as a language of literacy and knowledge while teaching French and English as additional resources.
Schooling creates two linguistic tracks.	Private and public sectors may distribute multilingual competence unequally.	Common national standards for Arabic literacy; equitable access to high-quality foreign-language teaching.
Scientific subjects depend on foreign languages.	Disciplinary language requires infrastructure, terminology, materials, and trained teachers.	Develop Arabic scientific resources, bilingual glossaries, translation programs, and staged access to foreign documentation.

Risk identified	Scientific reformulation	Educational or policy response
Early foreign-language learning burdens pupils.	Early exposure is not harmful in itself; risk arises from poor sequencing, subtractive methods, or weak L1 literacy.	Sequence instruction according to teacher capacity, learner readiness, and literacy goals; protect strong foundational literacy.
Digital hybridity weakens formal writing.	Digital writing redistributes registers; it becomes problematic when register awareness is not taught.	Use digital language as material for reformulation, comparison, and transition toward formal MSA.

4.3. Toward a Balanced Language Policy for Algeria

A balanced language policy should reject two symmetrical simplifications. The first is monolingual reductionism, which imagines that one language can cover all symbolic, educational, scientific, and international functions without carefully organized mediation. The second is uncritical externalization, which assumes that modernization requires dependence on a dominant foreign language. Both positions are inadequate. Algeria needs a layered and additive multilingual policy.

The first principle is the consolidation of high-level MSA literacy. This requires more than grammar instruction. It requires extensive reading, academic writing, oral formal expression, disciplinary vocabulary, argumentative training, and exposure to high-quality texts. Arabic should be taught not only as heritage, but as an intellectual instrument.

The second principle is pedagogical mediation between repertoires. Darija and Tamazight should not be treated as enemies of school Arabic. They can be used strategically in explanation, comparison, and transition, especially in the early stages of learning. The objective remains mastery of MSA, but the path toward mastery must begin from the linguistic resources learners actually possess.

The third principle is disciplinary development in Arabic. Scientific and technical Arabic must be supported by terminology commissions, updated textbooks, translation programs, digital glossaries, teacher training, and research publication. Without this infrastructure, calls for Arabicization remain declarative.

The fourth principle is sequenced access to foreign languages. French and English should be taught as valuable languages of communication, documentation, and international mobility, but their introduction and use as media of instruction must be aligned with learners' developmental readiness, teacher qualifications, and curriculum coherence. The question is not whether foreign languages should be learned, but how they should be integrated without undermining Arabic literacy or deepening inequality.

The fifth principle is equity across school sectors. Public and private institutions should be required to meet common standards in Arabic literacy while also

providing fair access to foreign-language competence. A system in which elite schools produce additive multilingualism and ordinary schools produce fragile monolingualism would be socially unjust and educationally unstable.

The sixth principle is continuous evaluation. Language policy should be assessed through data: reading levels, writing quality, scientific terminology acquisition, transition outcomes between school and university, teacher preparedness, and learners' attitudes toward Arabic, Tamazight, French, and English. Without evaluation, language planning remains ideological rather than evidence-based.

Conclusion

This article has argued that the Algerian linguistic situation cannot be adequately described by a single label. It is at once diglossic, bilingual, multilingual, postcolonial, and institutionally stratified. The relation between MSA and Darija belongs to the logic of Arabic diglossia; the relation between Arabic and French belongs to the history of colonization, bilingualism, unequal linguistic capital, and language-in-education planning; the recognition of Tamazight introduces a necessary dimension of national plurality; and the growing role of English reconfigures the relationship between language, science, and globalization.

The scientific contribution of the article lies in relocating the problem. The central question is not whether Algeria should be Arabic-speaking or multilingual in an abstract sense. Algeria is already multilingual. The decisive question is how linguistic resources are distributed, legitimized, taught, and converted into academic, scientific, and professional competence. MSA remains a language of major symbolic and institutional legitimacy, but it must also be strengthened as a language of high-level literacy, scientific explanation, academic writing, and digital knowledge production. Its future depends less on proclamation than on infrastructure: teacher training, terminology, research, translation, writing pedagogy, curriculum coherence, and equitable access.

The study also shows that bilingualism is not intrinsically harmful. What weakens Arabic is not the learning of French or English as such, but subtractive arrangements in which foreign languages monopolize knowledge and mobility while Arabic is left underdeveloped in advanced domains. Conversely, additive multilingualism can strengthen both national cohesion and international openness. Such a policy would consolidate Arabic, recognize Tamazight, use learners' repertoires as bridges, and introduce foreign languages through carefully sequenced curricula.

The limits of this article are linked to its documentary and analytical method. It does not measure language proficiency empirically, compare school sectors statistically, or observe classroom practices directly. These limits open several perspectives for future research: longitudinal studies on the acquisition of academic Arabic; comparative analyses of public and private schools; corpus-based studies of digital Darija and MSA register conversion; investigations into scientific ter-

minology learning; and surveys of attitudes toward Arabic, Tamazight, French, and English among different age groups and regions.

In final terms, the Algerian language question should not be framed as a struggle between purity and openness. It should be framed as a problem of justice, literacy, and intellectual sovereignty. A strong Arabic does not require a weak multilingualism; it requires a well-planned multilingualism. The future of MSA in Algeria will depend on the country's ability to make Arabic a language of identity and of knowledge, while ensuring that foreign languages enlarge horizons without reproducing dependency or social division.

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