

Algerian Multilingualism among First-year Master Students in Constantine 1 English Department as an Example of Language Contact Context

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Abstract:

For the sake of knowing the causes and results of language contact and rivalry in Algeria, this paper is interested in the development and the contact of Berber, Arabic, French and English. In addition, it focuses on how these languages influence one another and cause changes on each other in one of the academic contexts. It also focuses on the different mechanisms of language change. For that, an observational evaluation of the developmental stages in the teaching of translation for first-year Master students of English is used as a method because translation is the best area where different languages meet and influence one another. As a result, multitude of languages are used among the chosen population. Although the use of these languages is different from one student to another, they meet in one spot, which is the translation process.

Keywords: Language contact, multilingualism, Algeria, translation, First year Master students.

1. Introduction

Since its independence in 1962, Algeria has known a problem, which is the huge number of languages that existed. First, there was Tamazight with its dialectal forms. Second, there was Arabic with its three forms, which are classical Arabic, Standard Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic. Third, there was French, which enjoyed a specific status at that time as being the first foreign language taught in all study stages, starting with primary school and ending with higher education, where it has been used as a medium of instruction and

especially in official documents. For English, it was neither known, nor used at that time. However currently, it is exceeding every other language as the dominant language in the world and as the language of science and technology. In fact, the great spread of English throughout the country and in educational systems (middle and secondary schools), has led to considering it the second foreign language after French. This status of the English language in Algeria turned out to be a threat to the existence of the French language, and hence conflict between the two languages happened. The conflict is referred to as 'language rivalry', which resulted in the intent of replacing French with English because it is more dominant at the world level. This concept may be better understood when referring to educational institutions.

This study aims to shed some light on the result of language contact in general and what happens to people in such situations in particular. It also tries to investigate different mechanisms of language change through an evaluation of the developmental stages in the teaching of translation for first-year Master students of English because translation is the best area where different languages may influence one another.

The current research addresses the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of first year Master students of English towards the languages they know when they translate?
2. What languages do students use in their discussions in translation sessions?
3. Could the English language, being the language of science and technology in the era of globalisation, be the dominant one in translation classes?

To answer the aforementioned questions, it is hypothesised that: First year Master students of Linguistics and Applied Languages mainly use English and Arabic because they are both source and target languages in different situations.

1. Languages' Contact

Language contact means when two or more languages meet together or come into contact. According to Weinreich (1953, p. 1) "two or more languages are said to be in contact if they are used alternatively by the same persons." In situations of language contact,

many sociolinguistic phenomena emerge between people and in social communities. Gramley (2012) claims that when languages come into contact, this is considered as a source of alternative pronunciations, grammatical structures, and vocabulary. In fact, when languages contact each other for a long period, this generally leads to bilingualism or multilingualism. In addition, language contact may be the reason behind languages affecting one another because of the dynamic nature of spoken languages. In reality, language contact results from different life activities, such as politics, economics, society, immigration, colonisation and globalisation.

In Algeria, for example, languages, like dialectal Algerian Arabic or Berber and French have come into contact because of the long occupation of Algeria by French colonisation. This led to the emergence of sociolinguistic phenomena such as bilingualism, Diagglossia and code switching, which makes the country a bilingual, multilingual and a diglossic one (Adder & Bagui, 2020).

1.1. Bilingualism

When languages come into contact, one of the most important sociolinguistic phenomena comes into existence; this latter is known as bilingualism. Bilingualism applies to two different languages, whatever their status is, co-existing. Having more than two languages is known as trilingualism; however, having more than three languages is known as multilingualism. Different scholars have introduced many definitions about bilingualism. On the one hand, Bloomfield (1933, p. 56) defines bilingualism as “native-like control of two languages”. This implies that bilingualism is the mastery of two languages even if the speaker of these languages is not a native one. On the other hand, Haugen (1953, p. 6) considers a bilingual the speaker who produces “complete and meaningful utterances in other languages.” Using two languages while interacting occurs regularly in different contexts and many circumstances, such as politics, economics, tourism and religion because speakers may use two languages if not more. Weinreich (1953, p.1) says that bilingualism is “the practice of alternately using two languages.” According to Hamers and Blanc (2000, p.6), bilingualism is “the use of two languages fluently as a native speaker or a person who has the capacity to perform two languages orally and daily and with mastery.” This means that when a speaker uses two languages, while communicating, s/he is considered a bilingual. In

other words, a bilingual speaker is the one who has the ability to produce significant speech in two different languages.

Algeria is a bilingual country where both societal and individual bilingualism are used. A good example of societal bilingualism in Algeria is the use of modern standard Arabic, which has a high status, side by side with Algerian Arabic, which is used in casual situations and everyday interactions. At the same time, French is used in formal and informal situations, as it is the first foreign language that is known to be prestigious. Individual bilingualism is also known in Algeria; it is the speaker's ability to use two different linguistic systems when s/he interacts with others in society (Hanin, 2016).

1.2.Diglossia

Diglossia is a specific kind of bilingualism. It applies to the co-existence of two varieties of the same language; the standard one is high while the dialect is low. There is a delimitation between the two varieties especially in form. A good example of diglossic countries are the Arab world countries; they all have a variety, which is the standard form of the Arabic language; and the spoken form, which is known as the dialectal Arabic. Actually, the Greek scholars Roidis and Yaniss (1828) firstly used the term "diglossia" to describe the state of using two varieties of the same language, Katharevousa and Demotiki, in modern Greece (Boyer, 1996). After that, Ferguson (1959) defined diglossia as using two related or non-related linguistic systems, which are used in different situations and to meet different purposes, within a speech community. The high variety, which enjoys a high prestigious status, is taught in schools, and is used in formal situations, like literary, administrative, educational and religious speech. It also has linguistic, grammatical and pronunciation rules; on the contrary, the low variety, which is colloquial, is used in in daily life social interactions and conversations. It has less complex grammatical and pronunciation rules as it is simply acquired at home since the early stage of childhood. Moreover, it is a 'corrupt' form of the H variety because it does not obey the same rules of the high form of the language.

In the Algerian linguistic situation, diglossia is present because a number of languages, whether standard or colloquial, is used. First, there is classical Arabic with its varieties, such as Standard Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic and Algerian Arabic, which is spoken by the

majority of the population. Second, there is Tamazight (Berber) with its varieties, which are Kabyle, Chaoui, Mozabite, and Tergui. Third, French is used in different contexts. Therefore, Classical Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, and Tamazight are high forms of languages as they are used in formal situations, whether spoken or written, such as administration and education. However, Algerian Arabic, Kabyle, Shaouia, Mzab, and Tamashek are low varieties and used in informal situations such as daily conversations. In contrast, French plays both roles (high and low) because it is used in formal situations, like schools and educational institutions; and in informal situations, such as casual and social conversations (Hanini, 2016).

1.3.Code Switching

Code switching is the use of two or more languages alternatively when conversing. According to Bloomfield (1933) and pioneers in the field of sociolinguistics, code switching and related phenomena were considered as deviant bilingual behaviours that are not worth the study. In addition, there are those who even considered it as a form of incompetence, as the speaker who does not master the languages is the one who switches the code while conversing (Hamers & Blanc, 1989). After that, code switching has become recognised as a phenomenon worth to investigate by scholars, such as Haugen (1950, p. 211), Weinreich (1953, p. 45) and Gardner (1995, p. 68). For Haugen (1950, p. 211), code switching is “people’s ability to move between languages and dialects”; for Weinreich (1953, p. 45), code switching is “the practice of shifting between two languages,” and for Gardner (1995, p. 68), it is “the use of several languages or dialects in the same conversation or sentence by bilingual people.” The three definitions of code switching have almost the same meaning with some specificities between for one rather than the others. In fact, code switching is of three types: inter-sentential (when the speaker switches between sentences, clauses and phrases), intra-sentential (when the speaker switches between languages within the same sentence or clause) and extra-sentential (when a speaker uses a saying or a phrase from one language within a sentence that is spoken in another) (Muysken, 1987, p. 118).

In Algeria; due to many factors, such as bilingualism, contact of languages, long period of colonialism and past cultures that occupied the country; code switching occurs in many situations all over the country and between sentences, phrases and clauses. In other

words, code switching is depicted to occur mostly between Modern Standard Arabic, Algerian Arabic, and French as the first foreign language. Educated bilingual Algerians mainly use code switching, which is known as an Arabic-Algerian nature. Literate monolinguals use a few French words in their speech in addition to the Algerian Arabic (Adder & Bagui, 2020).

2. Languages' Status in Algeria

2.1. Arabic

Arabic was first linguistically known in Algeria after the Arab-Islamic conquests, which occurred in the eighth and eleventh centuries as an expansion of Islam. Actually, it is the language of Quran and the prophet, which is inseparable from Islam. All Muslims in the world share this language. In addition, it is the language of science and culture. Decades after, two types of the Arabic language were used: Classical Arabic/Modern Standard Arabic and Algerian Arabic that is spoken. This made all Arab countries diglossic ones because they all have the high variety, which is standard Arabic and the low variety, which is the dialectal form of the same language (Allaoua, 1990).

Standard Arabic is the standardised variety of Arabic used in formal situations for written and spoken purposes (Ghoul, 2015); it is one of the official languages in the country, and the first language in Algerian Schools (Benyounes, 2017). In fact, there are two forms of standard Arabic: Classical Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic. Classical Arabic is a form of Arabic used all over the world by Muslims for religious practices either at home or in the mosque. It is the highly standardised form of the Arabic language. It was taught in quranic schools during the French colonisation (Allaoua, 1990). Modern Standard Arabic is a simplified and modern version of Classical Arabic. It emerged during the nineteenth century due to the additions and modifications of foreign terms as an adaptation of Classical Arabic to the needs of modern life. It is used in journalism, political speeches, multimedia and administration (Mokhtar, 2018), and taught in schools. It is the national and the official language of Algeria, and has been so since the independence. Algerian Arabic, also known as “al-‘āmmiyya”, i.e., the colloquial variety, is said to derive from standard Arabic. It is the native language of the majority of Algerians that is used in everyday situations. It has a great number of dialects whether rural, urban or Bedouin (Temmam, 2021).

2.2.Berber

Berber, which is also known as Tamazight, is the language of the first inhabitants of North Africa. According to Mazouni (1969), the term “Berber” derived from the Greek means the first people who inhabited North Africa. It has important language sub-family that consists of various branches. It is composed of different language varieties. These latter are spoken by native minority in Algeria. They are known to be four: 'Tamashek', which is the language of the Tuareg in the South of Algeria, near the borders of Niger; the Mozabites and Chaouis, who speak 'Mzab' and 'Shawia' respectively (These varieties are known locally as 'Tamzabit' and 'Tachawit'); and Kabylis, who speak 'Kabyle', which is a variety known locally as 'Takbaylit' (Benrabah, 2005, p. 403). Tamazight has never been recognised as a national language in any North African country; however, in Algeria, it has been proclaimed a national language in the Algerian constitution in 2002 and was recognised as an official language on February 2016. Nowadays, it is taught in many berberophone cities in schools and universities.

In fact, all Berber varieties do not have a written form, except for 'Tamashek' spoken by the Touareg, which has a written form called 'Tifinagh' represented in symbols, and used to preserve Tamazight traditions and culture. In addition, some obstacles, like varieties within the language and the writing system, deprive attempts of Berber standardisation (Ghoul, 2013).

2.3.French

The French language was imposed on Algerians as an official first language during French colonisation, which lasted 130 years. On the contrary, Arabic was given the status of an optional foreign language. Currently, and from a linguistic perspective, French is the first foreign language in Algeria, but has no official status. From a political viewpoint, however, it is in all governmental institutions, used in public services, such as commerce, health and education. In spite the fact that French is officially marginalised, it is considered to be an official language in the social mind of Algerians with over eighteen million speakers, which represent 33% of the population who can speak and write French fluently (Achour, 2019). According to Calvet (1974, p. 119), “Statistically, Algeria is the most francophone country among the old colonies”. It is taught as a compulsory subject from third year in primary school to university, though it is not

mentioned in the Algerian constitution as a national or an official language (Achour, 2019). This shows that French plays an important role and has a prominent influence in the Algerian society.

2.4.English

The existence of English in Algeria was not welcome immediately after the independence in 1962 because of fear of Western imperialism, which could be similar to that of French. In the 1980's, Algerians were engaged in foreign training and technology transfer that is when English started to spread compared to previously. Then, the UK and US withdrew because of crises that the country knew. At that time, English was only taught in schools. In 1990's, there was an attempt to replace French by English in primary schools, yet this did not work because most parents opted for French for their kids (Belmihoub, 2017). In 1995, Algeria shifted economically by opening the door wide open to learning foreign languages to deal in the market, and English took the lead. Reforms to introduce the English language in the educational system have been made in 2000 and 2005 respectively as the government encouraged the learning of English as the first language in the world and a sign of growth and development (Sahraoui, 2020).

Nowadays, English is known as the language used for “wild communication” (Arab, 2015) because it is used in communication though it is neither official nor national language. In fact, all people, in all fields, learn it because it is the language of technological advancement. It is the second language in the country after French. English has also become essential to boost the opportunities of Algerians to be employed in the field of hydrocarbons in the Sahara by foreign companies (Benrabah, 2019).

3. Language Rivalry in Algeria

Language rivalry, wars, or conflict mean when two languages rival in a community. This happens mostly in colonised countries where some languages are perceived to have a higher status compared to the others. Language rivalry occurs in bilingual countries where speakers use more than one language (Benrabah, 2013). In fact, language conflict or rivalry happens when two dominating languages, either politically or academically, clash, which result in sociological, political or economic issues.

In Algeria, there is rivalry between some languages, mainly French and English. French is the language of the coloniser and the one that has been used by the government in official domains since the independence of the country in 1962. In addition, a great number of the population, who are competent in using French, speak it fluently. In contrast, English started to gain a good position and a high status long ago because countries that have been colonised by France want to lose contact with the coloniser. English is becoming a dominant language in many fields, such as economy, industry and social media. It is the first language in the world that is why it is dominating bit by bit and spreading in ancient colonies of France, where French's prestige as the language of development has fallen off.

4. Languages in the Algerian Educational System

Algerian schooling is composed of five levels. These latter are preparatory, primary, middle school, secondary school and higher education.

4.1. Primary School

Education is free, obligatory, and it is the right of every pupil beginning at the age of six. In primary school, the period of studies is five years, and to move to the middle school, pupils have to pass an exam called 'Primary School Examination'. According to Bellalem (2008), the languages that are taught in this phase are both classical Arabic and French. Arabic is taught since the first grade, while French is taught at the third grade of the primary cycle as the first foreign language.

4.2. Middle School

In middle school, the period of studies is five years, and pupils have to pass a national exam labelled 'BEM', i.e., Middle School Certificate to go to secondary school. According to Temmam (2021), in this phase, the language that is mostly used is Arabic; all subjects are taught in Arabic. However, French is taught as the first foreign language, and English is taught as the second foreign language starting from the sixth grade.

4.3. Secondary School

In secondary school, also known as high school, pupils are trained for one year in three main specialities. These latter are mainly

the literary stream, the scientific stream and the technology stream. In the literary stream, pupils are supposed to have studies in humanities and social sciences. In the scientific stream, pupils study biology, math, physics, and chemistry. However, in the technology stream, pupils study applied technology. Pupils have to pass the Baccalaureate exam to move on to higher education. As far as the languages use in secondary school, Arabic takes the lead by being the first language that is used for instruction. Then, French and English are taught to all pupils of all specialities with reduced number of hours in some streams and extended hours in the literary stream (Bellalem, 2008).

4.4.Higher Education

In tertiary education, the Arabic language is the dominating one in literary fields, such as Human and Social sciences; on the contrary, French dominates in scientific fields, like Science, Technology, Engineering and Medicine. In all the fields, whether literary or scientific, English is taught as an independent compulsory subject once a week and since first year (Temmam, 2021). Apart from that, Arabic, French and English are studied as standing-alone specialities.

5. Research Method

Translation is taught at the English Department in Frères Mentouri Constantine 1 University to first year Master students (Linguistics and Applied Language Studies). Each session, students are given a text to translate, whether from English into Arabic or vice-versa. The choice of source and target languages, i.e., the language to translate from and the language to translate into, was imposed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. The reason behind that is the fact that students are studying English and they have learnt Arabic since childhood. Therefore, they master these languages compared to French that they lost contact with since their first year at the university. This is the students' third year of studying translation. Moreover, at this level, translation as a subject is called "Linguistics and Translation" and has theoretical and practical nature. In the theoretical session of translation, students tackle some basic concepts in translation studies such as, the theory of equivalence among scholars of the West, the history of translation in the Arab world during the different dynasties, Al-Jahidh theories of translation, translation quality assessment and the use of ICTs as means to help in the translation of texts. In practice, students deal with different text-

types via the use of some previously suggested and taught methods and procedures of translation to succeed in rendering a text into the target language. The texts are supposed to escalate from general to specialised, and from the beginning of the year until its end. They range from scientific, medical, social, and psychological to legal, literary, poetic and religious. Sometimes, students are asked to translate the texts from Arabic into English; other times, they translate from English into Arabic.

5.1.Population and Sampling

The current study's population is first year Master students specialised in Linguistics and Applied Language Studies. The whole population is composed of 120 students. The sample is one third of the whole population, and it is selected randomly. It consists of forty (40) students chosen from first year Master English classes at the Department of Arts and the English Language in the University of Frères Mentouri Constantine 1. The reason behind choosing these students in particular is that they studied and practised translation for a given period, three years. Therefore, they are regarded to be the appropriate sample for this research as translation is the best area to check how languages are used in the process of rendering source texts to target languages and in different context.

5.2.Tool of Research

The tool that has been used in the research to gather information is observation; the researcher was a participant observer because she is the teacher of the translation subject. In addition, she monitors the classes when students were translating the activities that they were assigned. Moreover, she noticed attentively what languages students use when observing them in the process of translating different types of texts. During the observation process, the researcher prepared a checklist on the mostly used form of language in the discussions of students when they work in groups. This checklist is composed of statements, such as the students who use French are mainly females, the students who use colloquial Algerian Arabic are basically males and some females, students shift from Algerian Arabic to English and Standard Arabic when the teacher starts correcting the activity, and students use colloquial Algerian Arabic in informal situations.

The observation took a whole year in order to meet the research objectives, and to check whether students change their behaviour, or use languages differently at the end of the year compared to its beginning. The course was delivered by giving students a text to translate from English into Arabic or vice versa. After dictating the text, the teacher asks them to make groups of four to discuss the process of translation. In other words, what method to use, the equivalents of technical words, and time management. After that, students are supposed to use their dictionaries to find equivalents for keywords and difficult words. The intent behind observing students while translating different texts is to check whether students change their methods of translating which may affect the languages they use when interacting. In fact, there was an expectation of the use of code-switching among students and in their conversations.

6. Results and Discussion

When observing students translating different types of texts, the researcher noticed that some statements were right, others were wrong, and there were some phenomena that were discovered and noticed during the process of investigation.

Concerning the statement that says ‘The students who use French are mainly females’, it was right to some extent because there were some female students who wanted the subject of translation to deal with French and English instead of Arabic and English. The reason behind that is their incompetence in the Arabic language or their limited knowledge; they always tend to point out the fact of ‘not mastering Standard Arabic.’

As far as the statement that says, ‘The students who use colloquial Algerian Arabic are basically males and some females’, it was totally right, as most students use Algerian Arabic in informal situations, such as group discussions, when addressing one another and in their conversations. Sometimes, they even use some words in Algerian Arabic when talking to the teacher as a matter of an unconscious act. As a result, almost all students use Algerian Arabic when they discuss the translation of a text whatever its type is.

For the statement that says ‘Students shift from Algerian Arabic to English and Standard Arabic when the teacher starts correcting the activity’, it was right. This is done after the group discussions are over, when the students are asked to provide their

answers, or when they discuss their translations with the teacher. This is due to the nature of the translation subject, which deals with both Arabic and English, either as source texts, or as target ones.

The statement that says ‘Students use colloquial Algerian Arabic in informal situations’ it is also right; it has been observed that students use colloquial Algerian Arabic. In fact, a few of them use English when they interact. The reason behind using colloquial Algerian Arabic may be to feel more comfortable and to avoid misunderstandings. Those who use English as a medium of communication in group discussions are the excellent students, and maybe they want to develop their English by using it in every kind of conversation, with those who understand it.

At last, the statement that says ‘Students switch the code between the three languages Arabic, French and English or the two languages Arabic and English’, it is not totally right because what was noticed during the observation was different. Students use Algerian Arabic mostly especially with their classmates. They shift to other languages, such as English and Standard Arabic when they address the teacher or participate. There are those who shift to French, especially when talking to the teacher by considering it a prestigious language. A few ones use some words from other languages such as Spanish, Italian, and German, especially when the teacher mentions some proverbs in other languages to explain the lesson.

To sum up, the languages that students use in their group discussions in class are mainly Algerian Arabic, in addition to Standard Arabic, French, and English. This is mainly due to knowing some French, studying English as a field and knowing Standard Arabic, which is the first language they studied in childhood. In fact, this portrays the phenomenon of bilingualism in its finest picture. In addition, the aforementioned languages merge unconsciously in the interactions of students, in class. In fact, they use code switching consciously or unconsciously to express themselves with their classmates or with their teacher. Code switching happens between Algerian Arabic, Standard Arabic and English, which alternate in one conversation between students. Moreover, French either is always present both as a linguistic system and a language that students shift to as educated bilingual and multilingual Algerians because it is the nature of Algerian Arabic to mix the dialect with some French words.

Conclusion

In short, multitude of languages are used in the English Department, Frères Mentouri-Constantine 1 University among first year Master students specialised in Linguistics and Applied Language Studies. Although the use of these languages is different from one student to another, they meet in one spot, which is the translation process. In addition, the students represent educated bilingual Algerians who master at least two languages. Therefore, a mixture between Algerian Arabic, Standard Arabic French and English is inevitable in this context. The manner these languages are used depends on the situation, whether formal or informal. This results in the use of the low variety, which is colloquial Arabic, with its different accents of the Eastern region of Algeria, in informal situations. Moreover, there is use of English and Standard Arabic in formal situations. These two represent the high variety; English is used because it is the language of the speciality, so it is compulsory for the students to use it, and it is either the source language or the target language. Standard Arabic, however, is used either as a source or as target language only. On the contrary, French is used in very little situations because English dominates in the speciality. French is sometimes used in the students' discussions or as a medium between the students and the teacher (those who address the teacher using some French).

The main concern of the current research has been the use of languages in the university by students in the translation subject. It dealt with the students of first year Master degree as they represent a good example of speakers of different languages. The research was carried out in Frères Mentouri Constantine 1 University, Department of Arts and the English Language. This study may open doors for other researches to study the linguistic situation of different speech communities in Algeria. It dealt with one of the situations when languages come into contact, which is a sample of the university community. The study addressed the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of first year Master students of English towards the languages they know when they translate?
2. What languages do students use in their discussions in translation sessions?
3. Could the English language, being the language of science and technology in the era of globalisation, be the dominant one in translation classes?

In addition, the study suggested the following hypothesis to answer the previously mentioned questions: First year Master students of Linguistics and Applied Languages mainly use English and Arabic because they are both source and target languages in different situations. So the hypothesis is partially confirmed as first year Master students use Arabic and English in formal situations. It is partially rejected because students use some French and Algerian Arabic in some situations, like informal interactions.

For further future research, it is suggested for teachers to investigate similar or different linguistic speech communities in order to check what languages are used in other Algerian regions. Doing so, this may result in knowing what the dominant languages in the Algerian territory are, and if they do affect one another in a context that is different from the one we dealt with. To be aware of the sociolinguistic situation among different social categories, it would be relevant and necessary to undertake further researches, which deal with the use of Berber, Arabic, French and English and even other languages in other disciplines, and contexts where Arabic and French, are the dominating languages.

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