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Published in the USA
 International Journal of Media and Information Literacy
 Issued since 2005
 E-ISSN 2500-106X
 2023. 8(1): 74-85

DOI: 10.13187/ijmil.2023.1.74
<https://ijmil.cherkasgu.press>



The Role of Social Networking Sites in Transforming the Algerian Society: From a Francophone to an Anglophone Society

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Abstract

Algeria is characterized by Arabic-French bilingualism for more than six decades due to the historical factor. However, with the emergence of social media that relies more on English as a worldwide language and its abusive use by Algerian teenagers who are willing to build international relations with foreigners in the virtual setting, the use of the French language has decreased though it is the first official foreign language. Therefore, the current paper aims at investigating the impact of social media on increasing English and decreasing French, the fact that causes a sociolinguistic adjustment. To do that, mixed method research using online observation as the first research tool in addition to an online questionnaire and an interview through the Zoom platform were employed. The participants of the study were 112 Algerian teenagers for the online questionnaire and 10 interviewees. The final findings demonstrated that Algerian teenagers showed positive attitudes towards English language use and developing their skills through social media due to its global value. Moreover, English has even the potential to substitute the French language.

Keywords: Algerian teenagers, English language, French language, social media, sociolinguistics.

1. Introduction

Algeria is culturally and linguistically a diverse North African country because many codes and varieties display in the country due to historical and socio-cultural factors since the country was considered to be an interest of many invaders like the Turkish, Spanish, and French settlements, which have left certainly a great impact on its linguistic situation. However, actually, there are three essential languages: Arabic is the first official language of the country which is divided into two categories, Algerian Arabic (AA) that is a variety of classical Arabic, it is a form of a wide range of mutually intelligible geographical dialects restricted to informal contexts and used spontaneously by Algerian speakers in everyday communications and the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) or Classical Arabic (CA) which is used in formal situations. Second, French is the first foreign language taught in schools since the third year of the primary educational phase. Third, English is the second foreign language, mainly related only to educational settings or the teaching and learning processes.

In spite of the existence of these three languages, Algeria is characterized by Arabic-French bilingualism. The French language has been deeply rooted in Algerian society as a consequence of French colonization. In Algeria, French is highly used by the old generation because they were taught in French schools; French is officially considered a foreign language active in Algeria (Queffélec, 2002). Yet, with the emergence of new technologies, mainly social media, Algerian

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social media handlers' attention, particularly teenagers, has shifted from the dependency on French to English since it is the first international language that unifies people from different cultures and linguistic backgrounds. English is actually regarded as the language of progress; all the technological devices are western products that boost the dependency on this vital language.

To this end, the current paper tries to investigate the role of social networking sites, mainly the recent media applications in shifting Algerian teenagers' attention from learning the French language to emphasizing the acquisition of English that imposed and is still imposing itself as a worldwide language. In other words, the study attempts to analyse the Algerian linguistic adjustment in relation to social media since the latter has highly influenced its users.

The focus of the study is based on the following research questions:

- To what extent can social media affect Algerian teenagers' first foreign language (French)?
- Why do Algerian teenagers, mainly social media users, prefer English rather than French?

Based on these questions, we hypothesized:

- Algerian teenagers are digital natives, they are addicted to social media which relies more on English as the language that unifies nations and cultures. Hence, Algerian society is witnessing a transitional linguistic phase.

- French plays an important role in Algeria mainly among the elder generation; hence, it cannot be substituted by another foreign language due to the historical factor. Nevertheless, Algerian teenagers are attached to their digital screens and they imitate all that they see, therefore, they are more interested in acquiring English because it is a key to international interactions and gives them more opportunities. Social networking sites have updated Algerian teenagers linguistically.

2. Materials and methods

The current research is primarily concerned with examining and measuring the role of social networking sites, particularly recent media applications, in shifting the attention of Algerian teenagers from Arabic and/or French use to English use. The methodology adopted in this research combines a quantitative and qualitative approach. The researchers have attempted to use eclectic methods to collect and analyze data from different sources to present a thorough understanding of the research problem. The researchers have applied a descriptive research approach using online observation since linguistic adjustment was noticed; switching from using Arabic and/or French to using English. The causal-comparative research of the quantitative approach focused on the relationship between the cause and effect of social media networking sites and their influence on social media users. The qualitative approach aims to explore teenagers' experiences to understand the causes of such linguistic change.

The research is purely netnographic research or called web-based research in which participants were addressed online, relying on online observation, online questionnaire, and online interview. Netnographic research as explained by R.V. Kozinets, is an online research that refers to the various related online methods that have been adapted to explore how communities and cultures are shaped through computer-mediated social communication. This type of research offers an opportunity to focus on new facets of social life (Kozinets, 2019).

Data were collected during June 2022. Online observation urges this investigation as the primary impetus that has yielded to conduct this study. The researchers employed the snowball technique in which they posted and asked participants to distribute the questionnaire in Facebook groups in order to cover a wide range of participants. However, the semi-structured interview was conducted through the exploitation of the zoom application.

The population of this study represents the community of Algerian teenagers who utilize social media networking sites. The key criterion for selecting participants was their ability to communicate via social media networking sites in their daily lives. The sample randomly recruited 112 social media users for the online questionnaire who represent a particular category from the population because this category is considered to reflect the entire with reference to the attributes under consideration. Among these, 10 users volunteered to undertake the semi-structured interview to expand and enrich the qualitative findings.

The sample of this study is formed of 74 (66.1 %) females and 38 (33.9 %) males with different age scales: between 15 to 18 years (7.1 %), between 18 to 21 years (32.1 %), and above 21 years (60.7 %). The number of female participants exceeds the number of male participants. The low engagement of male users in participating in the study was noticed and remarked as one of the

limitations despite the researchers' attempts to achieve gender balance among participants. In terms of family background, 102 (91.1 %) are urban; yet only 10 (8.9 %) came from rural areas. As for educational credentials, 8 (7.1 %) have secondary level, while 104 (92.9 %) hold higher degrees.

The research collected data qualitatively and quantitatively. The instruments used to gather data are online observation, online questionnaire, and online semi-structured interview. These instruments were purposely employed to gather as much pertinent data as possible to ensure the accuracy and objectivity of the findings; thus, addressing the research questions and confirming the research hypothesis.

Online Observation; online observation is one of the tools that offer data that cannot be gained from a questionnaire or an interview. In this research, online observation served as the first impetus for inquiry. Based on an observation checklist, researchers have noticed the behavior of Algerian teenagers and attempted to provide an in-depth description as far as the linguistic adjustment; shift from Arabic and/or French use to English use.

Online Questionnaire; to examine the role of social media networking sites in building an Anglophone community in Algeria, an online questionnaire was designed to grab the behaviors of Algerian teenagers regarding the use of the English language. The questionnaire's items were set up to be appropriate to address the research questions of this study and thus to give insights into the respondents' feelings, preferences, motives, interests, and choices.

The questionnaire consists of three parts; part A attempts to depict the participants' demographic information (Age, gender, family background, and level of education). Part B tries to present the background information about the sample (social media use, time spent on social media, language use, etc). Last but not least; part C includes 10 items that can be measured based on a 5-point Likert scale: 'Strongly Agree', 'Agree', 'Undecided', 'Disagree', and 'Strongly Disagree'. The last part was divided into two sections; among them, 6 items were set to measure the respondents' perception of language use while using social media, and the other 4 items measured the respondents' perceptions of English and Arabic and/or French on social media.

The questionnaire was offered to a panel of two sociolinguistic experts for validation. After making the improvements recommended by the panel, it was then piloted with three respondents from the population other than the sample. Therefore, the final questionnaire underwent a number of adjustments. The reliability statistics of the questionnaire are displayed in [Table 1](#). It was measured based on Cronbach's Alpha and the overall reliability coefficient of 0.71 revealed its acceptance.

Table 1. The reliability statistics of the questionnaire

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach Alpha	N of Items
,710	10

Online Semi-structured Interview; five questions served as the basis for the semi-structured interview. Participants were given the opportunity to respond freely to open-ended questions. The open-ended questions allowed and encouraged respondents to reflect on their motives and to express what language they prefer for social media communication. The researchers pre-tested the format with three sociolinguistics experts. This process of pre-testing allowed researchers to reflect on the interview questions and determine the typical time needed to complete them. Hence, a few minor changes to particular questions were made in order to achieve greater clarity.

The starting point of this study was the online observation, in which researchers attempted to describe the Algerian linguistic adjustments in relation to social media as the latter significantly influenced its users. The researchers distributed the designed questionnaire on social media platforms via Google Forms format, notably in Facebook groups that include a high number of teenagers from different regions in Algeria and with a mix of academic backgrounds and experiences. This may help collect data in a shorter period and provide convenient access to the questionnaire and data for both participants and researchers. The online link was: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSccSee6ggRT633GeN-olqCgX8MLedUqgEpwAq6rags-K7Ip_g/viewform?usp=sf_link

For the interview, the teenagers who volunteered to participate in the interview were randomly selected and invited to a zoom meeting. All interviewees would be asked the same set of

questions, yet given the opportunity to lead the discussion and share their opinions and views on related aspects of interest as they arise in the context of the interview. Interviewees also received by e-mail; copies of interview questions, schedule, additional information on the topic of the study, and the procedures of conducting the interview. The average time each participant took was about 10 to 15 minutes. In the process of getting data through the interview, the researchers recorded all the conversations face-to-face during the zoom meeting session. Of the interviews, seven were conducted in English, while three were conducted in Arabic at the request of the participants. Despite the fact that these three interviewees claimed to communicate in English on social media sites to some extent, they found it easier and more comfortable for them to share their opinions and thoughts in Arabic.

The quantitative data ensuing from the questionnaire were processed and entered into the computer for analysis. The data were processed by coding the responses to enable significant analysis with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) using descriptive statistics through frequency and percentage. The qualitative data resulting from the semi-structured interviews required the imposition of a conceptual framework, which necessitated data coding, themes generation, weighting, contrasting, comparing, and data interpretation. The researchers examined interview transcripts to identify and elaborate concepts and themes and then coded the interview data according to these themes.

3. Discussion

The North African Maghreb nations are regarded, for more than one century, as Arabic-French bilingual countries due to the French colonialism, Algeria is no exception. In this regard, an official report stated in 1849: “The most important thing that must be taken care of above all is to strive to make French a common and general language among Algerians” (Hafid, Zahra, 2022). French was a symbol of both colonialism and mobility, while Standard Arabic represented Islamisation, de-colonisation, and nation-building (Jacob, 2020). Besides, French was referred to the status of a foreign language but remained the preferred working language in government and urban society. Accordingly, students who obtained an education in Arabic without proficiency in French had fewer prospects in the job market (Le Roux, 2017). Therefore, French remains in the leading position, owing to its historical background though a lot of efforts have been made by the Government to encourage the use and learning of English (Faiza, 2022).

In this regard, Language is a basic social need, its study without reference to the surrounding social factors leads to the omission of one of its complex and interesting aspects. De Saussure (Saussure, 1989) made a comprehensible theoretical framework to describe language in four dichotomies, the most important one, in this study, is “the diachronic study of language” which is defined as the study of language from time to time, it represents the historical evolution of language in all its features of change. Thus, language is not fixed; it is dynamic, acquired and modified constantly according to the reality transformations, it gains new features and cancels others.

On the other side, in the current period of digitalization, people can hardly escape from what is called social media in which the users come from various walks of life. Through social media people can communicate with each other, and share stories (Farlina et al., 2022). The development of the global information space and information technologies creates new conditions for the personality to form and socialize. The citizen of the 21st century interacts with media information every second. “People come in contact with media constantly throughout their daily lives. Being continuously bombarded with messages, the media has a powerful and tremendous influence on their thought processes as individuals and as a worldwide society” (Kayal, 2019). In other words, Social media is a significant part of person's everyday life (Chauhan, 2020).

New technologies have become one of the most influential activities in societies in general and adolescents in particular, they contribute to changing language, i.e., when teenagers receive and follow content in a particular foreign language; it may be a factor of social change. Therefore, English in Algeria has come to be regarded as synonymous with modernization and the idealized lifestyle. It serves as a way for people, mainly teenagers, to convey linguistic sophistication, elite group and modern life consistent with that portrayed in American movies and television shows (Belmihoub, 2018). Undoubtedly, English occupies a unique place as it is the language that is so extensively used and so firmly established as a dominant global language in the above mentioned fields (Parupalli, 2019). Therefore, English is the most important language in the world, it is considered a global language accepted and adopted by native and non-native speakers, people all

over the world consider English as a universal language used everywhere and understood in foreign countries (Faiza, 2022).

We must consider that today several applications (apps) are being designed for all kinds of uses (Arturo, Ester, 2021). Therefore, Social networking sites rest a refuge for Algerian teenagers, they are considerably involved because they can express their views with full freedom and establish social relations that they cannot make in a realistic environment. Hence, they express their ideas and views in the form of virtual online status and posts shared with their friends and follower or group/individual discussions with limited audiences. We have observed that the majority of online content and publications are in English even medical content creators or influencers though the medical studies in Algeria are in French. As a result, we noticed that English is no more restricted to educational or virtual settings, its use extends to real discussions, particularly among teenagers; they have borrowed some English words and expressions and included them in their usual linguistic repertoire such as: story, movie, song, fashion, like, share, comment, profile, update, style, video call, send, report, block, seen, tag, etc. Hence, we deduce that English has become an impressive language widely used in virtual and even real settings owing to the construction of international ties and contacts between teenagers. According to Ramaswami, Sarraf, and Haydon (Ramaswami et al., 2012), Algerian English use in online spaces shows that they extensively use English with other Algerians too because they consider French just a consequence of a long period of colonization and they are welcoming English for the reason that it represents science and technology. The spread of English aims to unify people around the world. It is a good idea to accept other cultures and to be more tolerant (Faiza, 2022).

In the light of this sociolinguistic change taking place in Algeria due to social media, it is significant to investigate the status of the English language in the former French colony of Algeria because social media has turned the scales and crossed boundaries; it is one of the factors that contribute to the modification or development of language.

On the other hand, it is important to define social media since it is a key concept in the present study and plays a principal role in increasing the use of the English language in Algeria among teenagers. Social media, social networking sites, or new technologies are used interchangeably in the present paper, they denote the platforms where all digital users with internet access can share content, and express opinions about a topic, and where communication and interaction process intensely take place without any time or place limitation (Gündüz, 2017).

It refers to the various forms of media content such as photos, videos, pictures, information, and tags that are created by users and publically available online in addition to communities of individuals sharing and communicating ideas and having a sense of unity using the digital networks and digital records (Ahlqvist et al., 2008). This means that social networking sites are used for socializing; they allow people to participate in conversations and online dialogues without being face-to-face with others. Furthermore, social media has made the world sociable and has facilitated the movement of concepts, items, and texts between cultures and nations.

Nowadays, Algerian users of English seem to have found a space for expressing themselves in English through many kinds of internet communication because the English language is a universal language used to inform, interact, educate and entertain on social media platforms. Linguists attest that the English language has adapted incredibly well, swiftly and easily to change, especially on social media (Ahlqvist et al., 2008). In the same vein, social media today is a bottom-up platform for Algerian English users to reach a higher level of fluency (Belmihoub, 2018). The advent of social media places offers a platform for Algerian youths to express themselves in English with foreigners and become users of this language in an unpredictable fashion. Moreover, English is used in online settings to accommodate and make speech comprehensible, according to Vettorel (Vettorel, 2014) the English language has maintained the status of today's lingua franca, it is the language of opening many doors of success which is closely tied to the ability to speak English.

Hereafter, we can conclude that the spread and use of English among individuals, in general, is summarized in Berns's idea who stated that "there is a much greater understanding of the spread, functions, and status of English and its users in the international context, previous research has focused primarily on the inner and outer circles, in addition to the expanding circle" (Berns, 2005). In relation to the current study, the inner circle is the intrinsic motivation or ability to acquire and use the language, whereas the outsider circle is the instrument that the motivated person uses in the process of acquiring and learning English as a foreign language. Berns (Berns, 2005) emphasizes the idea of the expanding circle which is building international relations through

social media (outsider circle) to increase and improve the English language used by people (the inner circle).

4. Results

Table 2. The background information of the participants

Background Information	Description	Respondents	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you use social media for communication?	Yes	110	98.2
	No	2	1.8
How many hours do you spend on social media?	(a) At most 30 minutes	6	5.4
	(b) Between 30 min to 1 hour	22	19.6
	(c) Between 1 hour to 3 hours	28	25
	(d) Between 3 hours to 5 hours	28	25
	(e) More than 5 hours	28	25
You use social media primarily for?	(a) Downloading music / video	34	30.4
	(b) Posting photos	38	33.9
	(c) Chatting	74	66.1
	(d) Educational purpose	82	73.3
	(e) other	14	25.2
What is your mobile's language?	(a) Arabic	6	5.4
	(b) French	32	28.6
	(c) English	74	66.1
Which of these three languages do you commonly use for written communication on social media?	(a) Arabic	64	57.1
	(b) French	40	35.7
	(c) English	8	7.1
Which of these three languages do you commonly use for spoken communication on social media?	(a) Arabic	76	67.9
	(b) French	4	3.6
	(c) English	32	28.6
Do you depend on translation to understand English on social media?	Yes	34	30.4
	No	78	69.6

Table 2 displays the result of the background information of the population in this examination. As far as the use of social media for communication is concerned, Table 2 reveals that almost all participants 110 (98.2 %) use social media networking sites for communication. Out of 112 respondents, 6 (5.4 %) spend thirty minutes per day on social media, 22 (19.6 %) spend between thirty minutes to one hour, 28 (25 %) spend from one to three hours a day, while 28 (25 %) spend between three to five hours on social media, and 28 (25 %) spend more than five hours in a day using social media networking sites. We can notice that there is a disparity between the obtained results with regard to the time spent on social media use. Most interestingly, 82 (73.3 %) of respondents use social media for educational purposes, followed by 74 (66.1 %) for the aim of chatting, yet 38 (33.9 %) for posting photos and 34 (30.4 %) use social media to download music and videos, the rest of respondents 14 (25.5 %) stated other purposes for social media use such as; gaming, watching movies, checking the news, etc. As far as the mobile language is

concerned, the findings show that the highest percentage was for the English language with 74 (66.1 %), followed by the French language with 32 (28.6 %), and the least number of respondents with 6 (5.4 %) stated that they set their mobiles on the Arabic language. With regard to the language they commonly use for written communication on social media, surprisingly, 8 (7.1 %) of the respondents use the English language, while 64 (57.1 %) mainly use the Arabic language, and 40 (35.7 %) use the French language for written communication on social media. In terms of the language they commonly use for spoken communication on social media, only 4 (3.6 %) of respondents use French, while 32 (28.6 %) use English, and the majority of participants 76 (67.9 %) use Arabic for spoken communication on social media. In addition to the above characteristics, among the 112 participants, 78 (69.6 %) claimed that they do not depend on translation to understand English while using social media networking sites, whereas 34(30.4 %) confirmed the necessity of translating both the spoken and written communication on social media.

Table 3. The respondents' perception of the use of language while using social media

Item	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
While using social media, I like to use the English language.	30.35	64.28	3.57	1.78	0	1.7679	.60003
I read social media messages in English because I can understand and respond easily.	33.92	53.57	8.9	3.57	0	1.8214	.73784
I rely on translating English content on social media because it is difficult to understand messages in English	7.14	19.64	33.92	26.78	12.5	3.1786	1.10864
I acquired new English vocabulary through using social media.	46.42	50	0	3.57	0	1.6071	.67593
I use English because it is accessible to me on social media.	28.57	60.71	10.71	0	0	1.8214	.60351
I write in Arabic on social media because I am Arabian and it is easier.	28.57	37.5	23.21	8.9	1.78	2.1786	1.00641

This section reports the overall perceptions of Algerian teenagers regarding language use while using social media networking sites. As shown in [Table 3](#) above, 30.35 % and 64.28 % of respondents strongly agreed and agreed on the first item “While using social media, I like to use the English language” and only 1.78 % disagreed, the mean score of which is 1.7670 (SD = .60003). It is understood that most of the students responded quite positively because they prefer English use rather than using another language.

A total of 33.92 % and 53.57 % of respondents positively confirmed their views on the fact “I read social media messages in English because I can understand and respond easily” and only 3.57 % of respondents disagreed, the mean score of which is 1.8214 (SD = .73784). This implies that respondents believe that they feel comfortable with English use on social media.

Meanwhile, in the case of “relying on translating English content on social media because it is difficult to understand messages in English”, respondents differ in their views, 12.5 % and 26.78 % strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively, yet 7.14 % and 19.64 % strongly agreed and agreed. Among these 33.92 % were not sure about their views. This item scored the highest mean which is 3.1786 with SD = 1.10864. This implies that there is not much need for translation to help teenagers understand the English language while using social media.

Interestingly, the majority of respondents hold positive attitudes toward the acquisition of new English vocabulary through social media use with 46.62 % strongly agreed and 50 % agreed. The mean score of the fourth item was 1.6071 (SD = .67593). It means that besides using social media as a tool for communication with their friends and relatives, a good number of respondents learned new things, gained knowledge, and acquired new English vocabulary.

As shown in [Table 4](#) the results reveal that the assertion “I use English because it is accessible to me on social media” is most supported by participants, with a mean value of 1.8214 (SD =

.60351) about 28.57 % strongly agreed and 60.71 % agreed, and no respondent declined the statement which proves the strong belief of the participants towards the accessibility of English on social media networking sites. This implies that as far as Algerian teenagers are concerned, the English language is more accessible on social media than the Arabic language. Furthermore, it shows that the respondents find it easier with English than Arabic even though Arabic is their first language.

The findings show that many students write in Arabic on social media because they are Arabian and they have easy access to it. This is the reason why 28.57 % and 37.5 % of respondents strongly agreed and agreed on the sixth item, with a mean score of 2.1786 (SD = 1.00641). This implies that the respondents use Arabic because they do not have problems or language difficulties as it is their mother tongue. Moreover, they believe that the use of Arabic may be restricted to Arabian speakers only.

Table 4. The respondents' perception of English and Arabic and/or French on social media

Item	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
I feel comfortable when I write in English on social media because it is widely spoken across the globe.	28.57	60.71	10.71	0	0	1.8214	.60351
I do not feel comfortable when I use Arabic and/or French on social media because it is not spoken by all.	7.14	23.21	33.92	26.78	8.92	3.0804	1.07501
I think using Arabic and/or French language on social media is restricted and limited to only Arabian and/or French.	16.07	39.28	32.14	10.71	1.78	2.4286	.94644
I do not speak Arabic and/or French because it has become an old-fashioned language.	23.21	21.42	30.35	17.85	7.14	2.6429	1.22185

This section reports the Algerian teenagers' perceptions of English and Arabic and/or French on social media networking sites. In the perception section of the study on "if respondents feel comfortable when they write in English on social media platforms because it is widely spoken across the globe", about 28.57 % of the respondents strongly agree with about 60.71 % of the participants also agree with about 10.71 % of respondents are undecided. It is most supported by participants, with a mean value of 1.8214 (SD = .60351). This shows that the majority feel comfortable when they use the English language, with an insignificant percentage disagreeing.

As shown in Table 4, respondents differ in their views and firmly conflicted the orientation: "I do not feel comfortable when I use Arabic and/or French on social media because it is not spoken by all" reveals that about 7.14 % of the respondents strongly agree with the statement, 23.21 % agreed, about 26.78 % of the respondents disagree and 8.92 % strongly disagreed, with 33.92 % were neutral about their view with a mean value of 3.0804 (SD = 1.07501). This implies that the English language is more accessible on social media than Arabic and or French languages.

Finding out to know if respondents think Arabic and/or French language on social media is restricted and limited to only Arabian and/or French, more than half of the respondents 16.07 % and 39.28 % strongly agreed and agreed with the assertion, respectively. While 10.71 % and 1.78 % disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, with a mean value of 2.4286 (SD = .94644). This shows that Algerian teenagers find it easier with English than in Arabic and/or French even though Arabic is their mother tongue.

Responding to the item "I do not speak French and/or Arabic because it has become an old-fashioned language", findings revealed that 7.14 % and 17.85 % of respondents do speak Arabic and/or French, and a total of 23.21 % and 21.42 % claim that they do not speak Arabic and/or French because it has become an old-fashioned language, yet a significant proportion 30.35 % of respondents are undecided on the matter, the mean score of which is 2.6429 (SD = 1.22185).

This section analyses the findings of the interview, knowing that ten persons, who were Algerian social media users, participated in the interview through the ZOOM meeting.

Q1. In response to the first question: “Which language do you use in your virtual interactions: Arabic/French/English?” six applicants use English in their virtual interactions and the remaining four participants use both languages, English and Arabic.

Q2. The second question was: Why do you use English rather than Arabic and/or French:

- English is the language of science and technology.
- Worldwide language.
- Future purposes: finding a job/ traveling.

Participants’ answers to this question were analyzed as follows: one applicant use the English language for the three mentioned reasons or suggestions provided by the researchers. On the hand, six interviewees use English because it is a global language and two others use it for future purposes such as: finding a job in international companies and traveling to other countries.

Q3. The third question was: “In your opinion, the French language will be substituted by English? Why?”

Seven interviewees think that English as a global language has the power to substitute French in Algeria, however, three participants do not share the same opinion because the status of French has historical and political dimensions. The following lines bring some justified opinions of the participants:

- Yes, it will, we can see how English impacts the whole world.
- It can be substituted by English because we, as a digital generation, are recommending that language.
- Yes, and thank god we are a step closer to that because they will study English in primary schools.
- No, I don't believe in substituting one language with another because the status of any language is politically determined.
- I doubt it because it has political dimensions otherwise it would be substituted due to the importance of language as a lingua franca.

Q4. Based on your online presence and exposure to English on social media, do you use English words and expressions in your everyday interactions?

We had ten participants, and all of them use English words and expressions in both their virtual and everyday interactions.

Q5. How can social media contribute to improving your English language level?

Participants’ answers are different depending on their willingness to learn and improve their English level and since the virtual world is not standardized and restricted, each person has his/her own method; here are some applicants’ responses:

- Join an English-language learning group.
- Follow organizations, companies, and teachers who share language advice.
- Connect with native English speakers.
- Finding instructional English pages for different levels.
- Following American and British celebrities.

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of social networking sites, primarily recent media applications, in shifting Algerian teenagers’ interest from learning the French language to emphasizing the acquisition of English that has been entrenched and is still imposing itself as a worldwide language. As declared earlier, this research has two major instruments for examination; the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview.

If teenagers, who build the future generation, envision the acquisition of a new language as a positive stance; it signifies their desire to open up to the contemporary world. Recently, English is deemed a universal language that has been embraced and adopted by both native and non-native speakers. According to Faiza (Faiza, 2022) English is considered a widespread language used by people all over the world and understood by a plethora of foreign countries. Likewise, she added, English is a global language, the language of technology, modernity, and intercultural communication. Al Arif (Arif, 2019) asserts that it is crucial for teenagers to acquire English as it builds communication, thus expediting interaction with the world.

The findings of the first part of the questionnaire show that Algerian teenagers spend a considerable amount of time every day using social media networking sites including Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Messenger, Telegram, etc. These results were in

agreement with the previous study conducted by M.-A. Sim and A.-M. Pop (Sim, Pop, 2014), in which she claimed that social media is one of the prominent platforms used by people of all ages and levels. Furthermore, participants also emphasized that using social media enabled them to practice and improve their English language skills as they could use it for educational purposes, posting photos, downloading music and videos, playing games, watching movies, checking the news, etc. Additionally, social media could assist them to make discussions, interactions, and both spoken and written communication as demonstrated by (Habibi et al., 2018).

Algerian teenagers prefer to use English instead of another language, as well as they feel comfortable speaking and writing in English on social media. This means that while society does not want to introduce or adopt a new language of value; it does want to replace a foreign language with another language; therefore, English has gained a decent position in the Algerian context. The aforementioned claim was against the findings of a study, revealing that users preferred regional language instead of English; hence, recommending that with only an attempt to learn, an individual can use social media to acquire and learn a language (Köksal, Ulum, 2019). Ouahmiche, on the other hand, shared a contrasting perspective by describing the linguistic situation in Algeria (Beddiat, 2017); he declared that the influence and spread of the English language is evidently perceptible. That is to say, after French, a huge section of Algerian society prefers English as a second language considering it a vital foreign language to be taught.

The main questions in the questionnaire indicated that students' perceptions of English use were favorable since they could understand and respond in English due to its accessibility to a wide range of social media users. Thus, the emergence of social media networking sites offers a platform for Algerian teenagers to express themselves in English so that applying it in a globalized world. The findings of the study also reflected that the use of social media networking sites benefit teenagers to acquire and apply new vocabulary. In other words, social media is a significant resource for learning English and gaining related knowledge. Similarly, the results of this study concur with those of earlier studies, which highlight the beneficial role of social networks in language learning in general (Jafari, Chalak, 2016) and second/foreign vocabulary in particular (Dehghan et al., 2017).

English becomes the language that unifies people living and coming from diverse parts of the globe. Bhatia and Ritchie (Bhat, Ritchie, 2013) describe the competition between languages, stating that in this sphere, English has virtually dethroned its rival languages, such as French and Arabic, and is still spreading dynamically, making it the language of globalization. While Ramaswami et al. found that Algerians seek to use English to communicate with individuals around the world. As more people realize the value of English and how it may improve their lives, the number of people who speak it increases year after year. He accredited the ongoing influence of the French language to the Algerian government's reluctance to transform the country from a centralized communist economy to a globalized one (Ramaswami et al., 2012).

Several studies have reported the tendency toward the swift increase of using English in preference to Arabic/French for public uses. Studies have discussed the technological requirements of Arabic/French as being a barrier to improving the availability of English-based knowledge in the networked environment in general (Ali et al., 2003). Other studies refer to the issue of Arabic/French being under-represented on social media networks. For instance, Ali et al. (Ali et al., 2003) argues that the recent low level of Arabic online presence does not reflect its value as a learning tool. The case study reveals that since the Algerian government does not ban the French language from almost all fields; hence, this policy barred Algeria from opening up to the world, mainly to the Anglophone world, which has become a brand of the modern world. Oakes and Saunders (Oakes, Saunders, 2008) emphasizes the necessity of acquiring English in comparison to French as it has long been considered the language of scientific prestige and fashion. Nonetheless, prestige alone is insufficient; technology and science are more essential.

The following section discusses the findings of the interview, at the end of the whole process; the data obtained will be compared with the theoretical framework.

To start with, the answers to the first question reveal that English is the most used language by Algerian social media users followed by Arabic and sometimes used simultaneously depending on the person they are interacting with. Yet, French is neglected. Second, the interviewees of this study, who represent Algerian teenagers, use only English because it is the global language for two main reasons, the first one is that social media users may interact with foreigners, therefore,

they need to share a common language that facilitates their communication, it means that English is used as a lingua franca in the digital settings.

The second reason is that it brings many opportunities and opens many doors. Third, the majority of the answers demonstrate that English will substitute French in Algeria, especially with the new decision of teaching English in the Algerian primary schools this academic year (2022–2023). Then, according to Algerian social media users, the use of the English language is no more related only to the virtual setting, they have included some English words and expressions in their everyday conversations because they are highly influenced by the content and language they follow. Finally, social media plays an important role in learning and improving its handlers' level because they follow American and British content creators. Moreover, they join English learning groups and follow English teachers who share their knowledge and language advice mainly related to spelling and pronunciation in addition to connecting with native English speakers.

To sum up, the interview's findings are similar to the different previous studies mentioned in the theoretical part though the researchers' aims were different because in the current study the researchers explore the effect of the virtual non-standardized world on the Algerian sociolinguistics situation. To be more accurate, the effect of English language use in the virtual setting on building an Algerian Anglophone society in spite of the important role that the French language plays in Algeria. The results reveal that English is the most used language by Algerian teenagers in their virtual interactions, besides; its use extends to their usual communication. In other words, English is instilling and imposing itself in Algeria.

5. Conclusion

This paper seeks to investigate the Algerian linguistic adjustment in relation to social media networking sites since the latter has highly influenced Algerian teenagers. Algerian teenagers have been digital natives addicted to social media networking sites as they are attached to their digital screens and reproduce everything they see. As a result, they were more interested in acquiring the English language because it is the key to international interactions and life opportunities. Consequently, social networking sites have updated a transitional linguistic phase among Algerian teenagers. Ultimately, the future of French in Algeria depends on the future of English as a worldwide language. Due to the spread of social media networking sites, Algerian teenagers are no longer influenced by the French language since they are now eager to speak and write the global language; hence, decreasing the use of French language in their daily lives and communicating in English.

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