

Zahia Flih

University of Pannonia, Hungary

PATTERNS OF LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AMONG ALGERIAN-ARABIC SPEAKERS IN FRANCE

Abstract. For a very long time, France's language policy has considered French as the only language of the republic, ignoring any other languages spoken across the country. In such a situation, immigrant minorities are most likely to experience significant challenges in preserving their heritage language. This paper addresses language maintenance and shift among the Algerian minority group in France, which represents the largest immigrant group with 12.7% of the total number of foreigners living in the country. It seeks to compare three generations by examining their language proficiency, language use, and language attitude in order to gauge the degree to which each generation is maintaining the heritage language. It also seeks to determine whether participants' language proficiency and use are associated with their length of residence in the host country, age at immigration, and language attitudes. To reach these goals, a questionnaire was administered to the target population, together with interviews recorded with a smaller group in each generation. Based on the questionnaire data from 187 participants, the Kruskal-Wallis test revealed significant differences between the three generations in their self-reported proficiency and use of Arabic and French languages, which may be an indication of a gradual shift towards French. The interviews conducted with 11 participants suggested that the reasons behind such a shift are related to: prior exposure to the French language before migration, lack of exposure to the Arabic language, and experiences of discrimination and marginalization. The correlation between the extralinguistic variables and language proficiency has shown no relationship between participants' length of residence and their level of proficiency in the Arabic language. However, age at immigration and attitude have positively and significantly correlated to participants' Arabic language proficiency.

Keywords: Algerian minority group in France; immigrant minorities; language attitude; language maintenance and shift; language proficiency; language use.

Introduction

"France is the paradigmatic case for strong ideology and management", highlights Spolsky (2004, p. 63) in his discussion about the preservation of the French identity over the centuries. Indeed, the promotion and acceptance of the "one state, one nation, one language" principle has been pervasive among the majority of the French populace since the 17th century (Judge, 2000). Nevertheless, minority languages have demonstrated resilience despite these overarching principles (Spolsky, 2004).

When it comes to immigrant minorities, a long-term language contact is likely to affect or reshape the language use, choice and practices of bilingual speakers who are constantly exposed to the language of the new environment. As such, it will most probably lead to various linguistic outcomes, including language maintenance and language shift (LMLS). The majority of LMLS studies describe situations in which speakers of Language A move to a country where Language B is spoken by the majority of the population and due to the interaction of several factors (such as frequency of language use and attitudes), speakers of Language A will move on the LMLS continuum (see Hyltenstam & Stroud, 1996). However, cases where speakers of Language A had already gained experience with the culture and language of the new environment before moving to the country are rarely discussed. Colonial migrants from such special group usually (but not always) have some proficiency in the language of the host country. They are familiar with some cultural elements and hold (negative or positive) attitudes towards these elements. Immigration to France from former colonies, such as Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria has been very intensive since the 20th century (Sekher, 2010). So, several generations (first, second, and third) of immigrant minority groups can be found in the country. The question arises whether language shift is accelerated by the fact that most of these migrants speak French and thus assimilation is faster or negative attitudes towards the former colonial language promote language maintenance. The present study focuses on the phenomena of language maintenance and shift among Algerian-Arabic speakers living in France. It seeks to compare three generations by examining different aspects (e.g. language proficiency, language use in daily life, attitudes towards bilingualism) to gauge the degree to which each generation maintains the heritage language. It also seeks to determine whether participants' language proficiency and use are associated with their length of residence in the host country, age at immigration, and language attitudes. Results from this study are expected to bring about a better understanding of the factors inducing change in language maintenance patterns among the Algerian community in France, whose case remains largely under-researched.

Language Maintenance and Shift

Migration contributes to language interaction that may lead eventually to language change. Therefore, immigrant minorities face many challenges as they find it difficult to decide whether to keep using their heritage language or shift towards the majority language of the host community (Borland, 2005). While some immigrants are eager to maintain their heritage language and transfer it to younger generations, others choose to adopt and use the majority language to achieve social acceptance and integration within the society (Adserà & Pytliková, 2016).

According to Fishman (1972), language maintenance takes place when a community agrees to continue speaking its heritage language for several generations, and when a community replaces its heritage language by another more powerful language, the phenomenon of language shift is to occur. In general, language shift takes three to four generations (Saltarelli & Gonzo, 1977). The first generation has a strong dominance of their primary language. They may be able to speak the majority language as well, but they generally prefer to use their primary language, especially at home. The second generation (i.e. the children of the first generation) is typically bilingual, speaking both the heritage language and the majority language. However, this does not change the fact that many of them prefer to use the majority language even in their communication with their immigrant parents (Lopez, 1996). The third generation (i.e. the children of the second generation) has a strong command of the majority language. They grow up usually with very limited knowledge of the heritage language and, therefore, they only use the majority language in different contact situations. The rate and speed of language shift usually depend on the norms of the language and the speech community in question. In some cases, the process of shift is gradual, across several generations. In other cases, however, it is rapid, taking place within one generation (Grenoble, 2013).

Research on immigrant minorities has attempted to identify several factors that can influence the process of LMLS. These include age at immigration, length of residence, in addition to a number of other social and individual factors, such as language attitudes.

Previous studies (e.g. Romaine, 1995) have shown that early bilinguals are able to fully develop two language systems and gain proficiency in both languages. However, as they grow older, they may come to heavily rely on one language, in most cases the majority language. Conversely, late bilinguals will take longer to acquire the language of the new territory which will make them use their heritage language more frequently, at least in the initial stages of settlement (Pauwels, 2016). This pattern is less likely to result in language shift compared to the one mentioned earlier (Clyne, 1991). In fact, the previous situation does not apply to cases where immigrants are exposed to the host country language prior migration. For example, in a study investigating cultural and linguistic adaptation of Vietnamese Catholic immigrants in Australia and France, Tran (2018) states that due to colonial ties, many Vietnamese respondents had already acquired a moderate level of French proficiency before arriving in France. The results show a lower level of Vietnamese maintenance among first-generation participants in France compared to their counterparts in Australia who were not as proficient in their host language at arrival. As such, previous level of proficiency in the majority language may serve to constrain the effects of age at immigration and accelerate language shift.

The length of residence (LOR) in the host country was also found to be important in the process of LMLS. Some previous studies (e.g. Kouritzin, 1999) suggest that language shift does not occur abruptly but takes time. In other words, those who have been in the host country for a long period of time will most likely express themselves in the majority language, which eventually can lead to language attrition. Some researchers (e.g. Bergmann et al., 2016; Schoofs, 2013) have argued that longer LOR is associated negatively with L1 and positively with L2 proficiency. For example, in a study conducted on Palestinian and Jordanian immigrants in New Zealand, it was revealed that those who had been in New Zealand for less than 10 years were more proficient in Arabic than those who had been in New Zealand for more than 10 years (Dagamseh, 2020). However, Schmid (2002), in her pioneering study on first language attrition among German Jews in Anglophone countries, found that although many respondents spent decades away from their home country, their German proficiency remains largely intact. Such a result has been

confirmed repeatedly in the field of language attrition research (e.g. Gnitiev & Bányi, 2022). This underplays the role that LOR occupies, especially if immigration transpires after the first language has been fully acquired (for an overview see Bylund, 2019).

Another factor influencing LMLS is language choice and use. Having social networks¹ that require the use of the majority language will impact immigrant bilinguals' linguistic behaviour and their language choice patterns (see Stoessel, 2002). First-generation speakers tend to maintain relations with members of their own heritage community, which acts as a deterrent to language shift. On the contrary, second- and third-generation speakers lean towards establishing ties with members of the host community. Consequently, the likelihood of heritage language maintenance decreases. Hulsen et al. (2002) conducted a study on the role of social networks in the language processing and shift of three generations of Dutch immigrants in New Zealand. The findings indicate that an intergenerational decrease in L1 contact in immigrants' social networks correlates with a shift to the majority language.

Positive and negative attitudes towards both the heritage and the majority language can also influence LMLS. A positive attitude towards a language is likely to increase its use in a variety of domains which leads eventually to its maintenance (Holmes, 2001). On the other hand, a negative attitude will most often result in language shift as speakers, in such a situation, perceive their heritage language insignificant and impractical to use in a society dominated by another language (Isphording, 2015). This goes hand in hand with what was found by Dweik (1980) in his study on the Lebanese and the Yemenite communities in New York. The findings showed a significant correlation between positive or negative attitudes and LMLS. According to Dweik, first-generation Yemenite speakers were able to maintain their Arabic because of the positive attitudes they hold towards that language. In contrast, second- and third-generation Lebanese speakers have shifted to English because of their negative attitudes. Zhang and Slaughter-Defoe (2009)

¹ In sociolinguistic terms, a social network is composed of a community of language users who are in regular contact with one another. This can be applied to such social groups as family, friends, or neighbours. Analysing these social networks has been found to be useful in explaining why some immigrant communities maintain their home languages while others fail (Milroy, 1987).

investigated language maintenance among Chinese immigrant families in the United States and found that due to their positive attitude towards their mother tongue, the first generation exerts massive efforts to maintain and transmit it to the next generations. Such efforts, however, are partially resisted by the second generation who view the heritage language as inadequate in their daily lives. Furthermore, Hatoss (2003) studied identity formation, cross-cultural attitudes, and language maintenance among Hungarian migrants in Queensland, Australia. The results suggest that the attitude towards the heritage language plays a vital role in the success or failure of intergenerational language maintenance.

The Algerian Immigrant Context in France

For over a century, Algerian immigration to France marked a significant chapter in the history of both nations. Upon French colonisation of Algeria in 1830, north to south movement was the norm as millions of French settlers took over vast domains of fertile Algerian lands (Arfi, 2008). This seizure resulted in an impoverished Algerian population and led to the first waves of south to north labour migration in the 1900s. Algerian labour migrants used to speak basic French for the sake of work, and Arabic or Tamazight for the sake of intragroup communication. As long as they maintained the boundaries between the work and home domains, their primary languages were preserved (Abu-Haidar, 1994).

However, it was not until the period of the *Trente Glorieuses* (thirty years of fast economic growth in France after WWII, from 1946 to 1972) that an influx of immigrants surged, leading to a massive increase in the Algerian population. According to official statistics published by INSEE (Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques), the number of Algerian immigrants jumped from 22,000 in 1946 to over 350,000 at the end of the Algerian War of Independence. Moreover, the Evian agreements (*les accords d'Evian*) upon Algeria's independence in 1962 paved the way for the movement and settlement of millions of Algerians in the following decades (Adler, 1977).

Algerian communities in France used to live in close-knit groups, fostering a sense of familiarity and shared identity (Zemmour & Alghazo,

2023). They used to speak Arabic or Tamazight in their homes, and this has undoubtedly helped in strengthening children's ties with their Algerian roots from birth. During their early years, children of Algerian immigrants are likely to acquire the heritage language and use it when communicating with their parents. However, when they start expanding their social networks, the need for French (which is used in a variety of domains) will be more than that for Arabic or Tamazight (which is often limited to the home). In that case, children are likely to shift towards French as they grow older, leaving behind their heritage language (Abu-Haidar, 1994).

In a visit to the University of Tlemcen, Algeria, in 2015, Bernard Emié, the then French ambassador in Algeria, declared that the number of people with Algerian ties in France approaches 7 million. However, the French authorities insist that it does not exceed 3 million. According to recent statistics², France is home to at least 2.6 million Algerian immigrants, constituting the largest immigrant community in the country.

In spite of such significant numbers, studies regarding the phenomena of LMLS among Algerians in France remain largely scarce, which makes it a severely under-researched area of study about one of the largest immigrant minorities in continental Europe. In that regard, different elements of the aforementioned phenomena, such as language choice, language proficiency, language attitude, as well as culture and identity, remain unexplored. This raises numerous questions, not only about the linguistic status of the Algerian community in France but also about their affiliations and standpoints on social as well as cultural issues.

One of the studies conducted on Algerians living in France was by Abu-Haidar (1994) addressing the topic of language loyalty among Algerian immigrants' children. In response to a few studies (e.g. Billiez, 1985) claiming that the speech of young people of Maghrebi descent is dominated by French instead of Arabic or Tamazight in practically all domains, Abu-Haidar shows that Algerian-Arabic is still used by second-generation immigrants.

In another study, Medjedoub (2015) investigated language choice among the Algerian immigrant community in France. The findings indicate that

² See <https://observatoire-immigration.fr/limmigration-des-algeriens/>

although the use of Arabic is still relevant in various domains by first- and second-generation immigrants, third-generation immigrants exhibit a strong shift towards French. The reasons behind such a shift are: 1) the negative attitudes they hold towards Arabic; 2) disuse of Arabic at home; 3) parents' higher educational level.

Based on an overview of studies, Arfi (2008) claims that the Algerian community in France is undergoing a linguistic shift towards French. She provided different reasons that prevented Arabic language transmission in the community. The most important of which was the familiarity of the majority of Algerian immigrants with French before migrating to France. This assumption and the scarcity of studies among colonial migrants served a strong motivator for the present empirical research.

Methodology

This study investigates Arabic³ language maintenance and shift in three generations of Algerian immigrants in France. It aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there any difference between first, second and third generations regarding their language proficiency, use, and attitudes?
2. To what extent extralinguistic factors (e. g. LOR, age at immigration, attitudes) are associated with the degree of intragenerational and transgenerational language shift (decreased language proficiency in the L1)?

In the current study, first-generation immigrants are those who were born and raised in Algeria then moved to France as adults. The second generation includes two types of immigrants: those who were born in France to at least an Algerian immigrant parent and those who were born in Algeria then moved to France as children, prior to the age of six. Third-generation

³ In this study, 'Arabic' is used to refer to both the dialect (Algerian-Arabic or Dardja) and the standard language (Standard Arabic). When asking participants about their oral skills in the Arabic language, answers would be relevant to the dialect. However, when asking about their literacy skills, it becomes a matter of Standard Arabic.

immigrants are the grandchildren of first-generation immigrants, typically born and raised in France.

Participants

The present research is based on data collected from 187 participants, 82 of whom are females whereas 105 are males. As a result of the snowball approach, participants living in different areas of France could be reached; however, the majority are settled in cities such as Metz, Grenoble, and Paris. Based on the answers, they were divided into three groups: first-generation ($n = 128$), second-generation ($n = 38$), and third-generation ($n = 21$). All first-generation participants were born in Algeria, while 94.7% of the second generation was born in France and 5.3% was born in Algeria and had left the country before the age of six. All third-generation participants were born in France. Table 1 presents participants' characteristics, in terms of their gender, age, age at immigration, LOR, and educational level.

Table 1

Participants' Characteristics

| | 1st generation (n= 128) | | 2nd generation (n= 38) | | 3rd generation (n= 21) | |
|---------------------------------------|---|------|--|------|--|------|
| Gender (N) | Female | Male | Female | male | Female | Male |
| | 52 | 76 | 20 | 18 | 10 | 11 |
| Age (years) | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| | 33 | 14 | 34 | 12 | 18 | 4 |
| Age at immigration (years) | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| | 23.4 | 6.9 | - | - | - | - |
| LOR (years) | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | Mean | SD |
| | 10 | 11.7 | - | - | - | - |
| Education (%) | | | | | | |
| Less than high school | 15.6 | | 10.5 | | 14.3 | |
| High school | 14.8 | | 52.6 | | 47.6 | |
| Vocational school | | | 5.3 | | | |
| Bachelor | 19.6 | | 26.3 | | 33.3 | |
| Master | 44.5 | | 5.3 | | 4.8 | |
| PhD | 5.5 | | | | | |

Note. LOR = length of residence.

Interviews were conducted with 11 participants, including 5 females and 6 males who had previously completed the questionnaire. Most interviewees belonged to the first generation. All of them were born in Algeria and then migrated to France for the purpose of study, work or marriage, and their age ranges from 29 to 58 years. Only 3 participants were second-generation, born and raised in France, with ages ranging from 23 to 49 years. Third-generation participants were not volunteering for the interview. However, considering the fact that most interviewees are married, data about second- and third-generation children's language proficiency, use and attitude can be still accessible through their parents.

Data Collection Instruments

The present study used a questionnaire that was divided into five main sections with a total of 77 questions. The first section was designed to elicit information on the demographic background of the participants, i.e., age, sex, country of birth, nationality, education, profession, generation, etc. In the second section, participants were asked to report on the degree of proficiency in four skills in both Arabic and French languages. Participants' level of proficiency was measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). The third section aimed to examine what language participants prefer to use when communicating with different people in different contexts. In this section, they were asked to choose a value on a five-point Likert scale — ranging from 1 (only Arabic) to 5 (only French) — for the amount of language use in six domains: family, friends, mosque, work, school, clubs and organizations. The fourth section was designed to elicit information about participants' attitudes towards the Arabic and French languages. The answers for this section were measured on a five-point Likert scale (from 1 being 'strongly disagree' to 5 being 'strongly agree'), which allowed respondents to indicate their views on maintaining their heritage language. Finally, the items in the fifth section were designed to discover patterns of code-switching among the Algerian community in France. The reliability scores for the language proficiency, language use, and language attitude scales range between 0.77 (acceptable) and 0.83 (good). All details are provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Reliability of the Language Proficiency, Language Use, and Language Attitude Scales

| Scale | Number of items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Language proficiency | 8 | 0.83 |
| Language use in domains | 17 | 0.77 |
| Language attitude | 14 | 0.77 |

Most of the questions in the questionnaire are considered fundamental in the field of language maintenance and shift and are therefore adapted from similar studies (see Dagamseh, 2020) which used questionnaires with different Arab populations in various contexts. However, several other items were developed by the researcher in order to suit the specific characteristics of the Algerian community in France.

Semi-structured interviews were also used in this study for the purpose of elaborating and expanding on the answers received from the questionnaire. The interview provides the opportunity to observe participants' linguistic practices and skills in a more comprehensive way, which might explain their language choices and practices.

Procedure

Participants were contacted using the snowballing technique. They were asked to fill the questionnaire in the language of their choice (37 participants chose to answer the Arabic version of the questionnaire, while 150 preferred to answer the French version), and it took them approximately twenty minutes to complete. Since participation in the questionnaire was voluntary, it was taken as consent for their data to be used for the purpose of this research.

The aim of the interview was to elaborate on participants' previous responses to the questionnaire. Eleven Interviewees were given the opportunity to ask questions before the interview. They were informed that they would be recorded during the process. They were also informed that their language performance would not be assessed or evaluated and that they were

free to answer the interview questions in the language of their choice (Arabic or French). Interviews usually lasted between fifteen and forty-five minutes, and took place through personal meetings in public settings, as well as through social media platforms.

Analysis

SPSS was used to analyse all the quantitative data collected through questionnaires. Kruskal-Wallis is a non-parametric test that is used to determine if there are statistically significant differences between the three groups. Follow-up Mann-Whitney test is another non-parametric test that can be applied in the case of group comparisons for examining unique pairs.

Results

Questionnaire Results

Language Proficiency

The Kruskal-Wallis test is used in order to understand whether participants' level of proficiency in both Arabic and French, measured on a five-point scale (1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good, 4 = very good, 5 = excellent), differed based on generation. The results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in Arabic language proficiency ($\chi^2 = 74.39$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.05$) and French language proficiency ($\chi^2 = 36.25$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.05$) between first-, second- and third-generation bilinguals. While second- and third-generation bilinguals have a lower proficiency in Arabic ($M = 2.5$; 2 respectively) than first-generation bilinguals ($M = 4.1$), they reported higher proficiency with excellent scores in French ($M = 4.7$; 4.9 respectively) compared to first-generation bilinguals ($M = 3.9$) (cf. Table 3). This suggests that there is a significant decrease in the overall Arabic proficiency and a significant increase in the overall French proficiency from generation to generation.

Table 3

Arabic and French Language Proficiency across Generations

| Language proficiency | Arabic | | | | | | French | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|----|----------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|----------------------|----|----------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| | 1 st gen. | | 2 nd gen. | | 3 rd gen. | | 1 st gen. | | 2 nd gen. | | 3 rd gen. | |
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| Language proficiency | 4.1 | 1 | 2.5 | 1.1 | 2 | 0.7 | 3.9 | 1 | 4.7 | 0.7 | 4.9 | 0.4 |

Figure 1

Self-reported Arabic and French Proficiency in the Four Skills

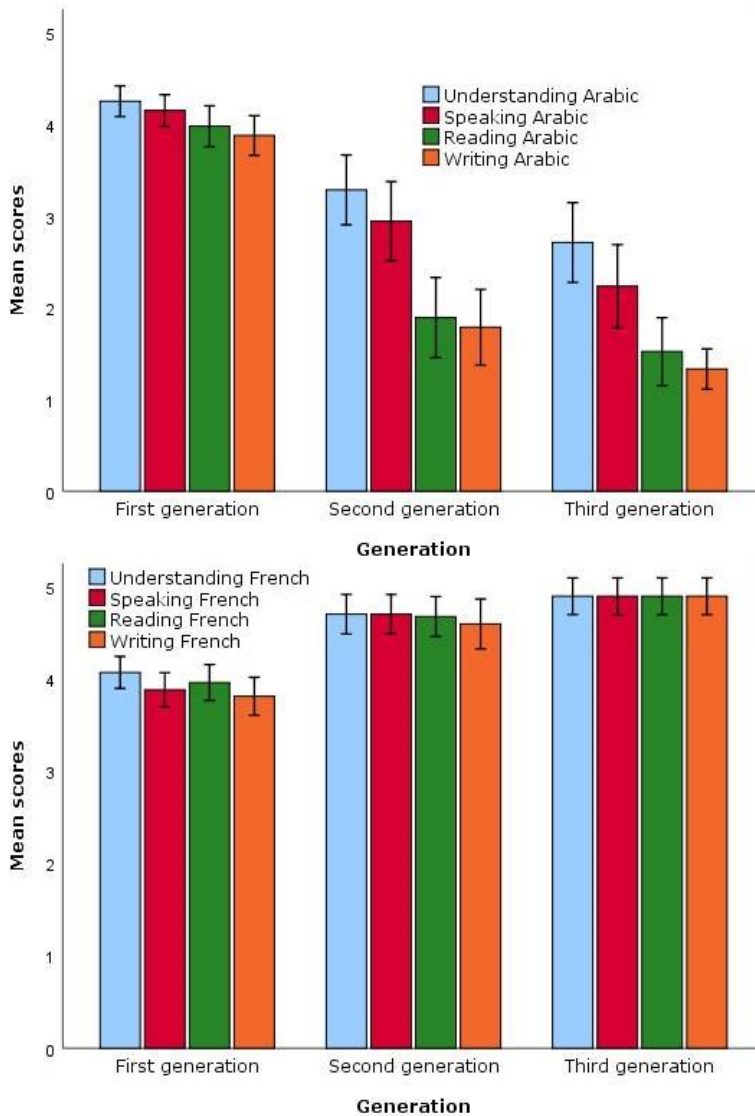


Figure 1 shows a clear difference in the Arabic and French language proficiency among different generation groups. First-generation participants reported no difficulties in understanding, speaking, reading, and writing Arabic compared to second- and third-generation participants who showed lower proficiency in the four skills, especially in their literacy skills. However, with regard to the French language skills, second- and third-generation participants reported themselves to be more proficient than first-generation participants.

Language Use and Choice

In addition to language proficiency, the questionnaire elicited information about participants' language use in six domains: family, friends, mosque, work, school, clubs and organizations.

The Kruskal-Wallis test showed that there is a statistically significant difference between the three generations in their overall daily language use ($\chi^2 = 65.37$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.05$), with a mean rank score of 72.73 for first generation, 131.59 for second generation and 155.64 for third generation. Follow-up Mann-Whitney U test revealed significant differences in self-reported daily language use between first- and second-generation bilinguals ($U = 838$, $p < 0.05$), and between first- and third-generation bilinguals ($U = 214$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 4 presents the mean scores for the frequency of use of Arabic and French among three generations of Algerian-Arabic speakers in France. With regard to language use at home, the data suggest that Arabic is mostly used by first-generation bilinguals ($M = 2.27$). Second-generation bilinguals seem to either mix both Arabic and French or use more French than Arabic ($M = 3.69$) depending on to whom they are speaking in the family including parents, partners/spouses, siblings, and children. Third-generation bilinguals seem to use French more frequently than both first- and second-generation bilinguals ($M = 4.45$). Note that the amount of Arabic and French used at home can vary among first-, second- and third-generation bilinguals based on the composition, language background, preferences, and attitudes within the family.

The use of the heritage language in the friendship domain is most likely related to older speakers of the immigrant group (first-generation). In general, older speakers make greater use of the heritage language than younger speakers (second- and third-generation). Unlike second- and third-generation bilinguals who reported using more French in their interaction with their Arab friends in France ($M = 3.96; 4.40$), first-generation bilinguals seem to use both Arabic and French when communicating with their friends even through social media platforms ($M = 2.99$).

Concerning language use in the mosque, it appears that Arabic is the most used language among the three generations, with very small differences ($M = 2.21; 2.29; 2.48$ respectively). These results suggest that the religious domain holds an important role in helping the Algerian minority group to maintain and appreciate their Arabic language by connecting them to the Islamic religion.

The results on language use in other domains show that all participants use a great deal of French in the context of work ($M = 4.30; 4.73; 4.92$), considering it the required language. In schools dedicated to teaching Arabic to second- and third-generation immigrants, participants seem to use both Arabic and French in their process of learning ($M = 3.14; 3.55$). While all participants report using both Arabic and French in clubs and organizations, it becomes evident that the French language use increases progressively from one generation to the other ($M = 3.10; 3.86; 4$).

Table 4

Self-reported Language Use Across Generations

| | 1 st gen. | | 2 nd gen. | | 3 rd gen. | |
|---------------------|----------------------|-----|----------------------|------|----------------------|------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| Family | 2.27 | .95 | 3.69 | .92 | 4.45 | .76 |
| Friends | 2.99 | .84 | 3.96 | .78 | 4.40 | .59 |
| Mosque | 2.21 | .73 | 2.29 | .95 | 2.48 | .86 |
| Work | 4.31 | .96 | 4.73 | .71 | 4.92 | .20 |
| School | – | – | 3.14 | .86 | 3.55 | .50 |
| Clubs/organizations | 3.10 | .98 | 3.86 | 1.46 | 4 | 1.41 |

Note. (1) only Arabic, (2) mostly Arabic, (3) Arabic and French, (4) mostly French, (5) only French.

Language Attitudes

The Kruskal-Wallis test showed no significant difference across first, second and third generations pertaining to their attitude towards both Arabic ($\chi^2 = 4.23$, $df = 2$, $p > 0.05$) and French languages ($\chi^2 = 0.84$, $df = 2$, $p > 0.05$). Surprisingly, all participants exhibited very positive attitudes towards Arabic. Such attitude was in no way restricted to the mere use of the language, but also included a strong desire for the cross-generational transmission of the linguistic and cultural heritage. While it is expected that first-generation bilinguals display a positive attitude towards their mother tongue, the second and third generations do not usually show such a persistent tendency towards Arabic. This offers an advantageous situation for a long-lasting maintenance of their heritage language. On a similar note, all participants demonstrated a positive attitude towards French. Being part of a community dominated by another language, participants evidently resort to using French for a variety of reasons. The French language for Algerian immigrants in France constitutes the key to a better integration into the French society, an instrument for higher academic achievement, as well as a means for additional work opportunities. The means and standard deviations on bilinguals' self-reported attitude are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Self-reported Language Attitude Towards Arabic and French

| | Arabic | | | | | | French | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| | 1 st gen. | | 2 nd gen. | | 3 rd gen. | | 1 st gen. | | 2 nd gen. | | 3 rd gen. | |
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| Language attitude | 4.2 | 0.6 | 4.1 | 0.7 | 3.9 | 0.7 | 4.1 | 0.6 | 3.9 | 0.8 | 4 | 0.8 |

Note. (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) not sure, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree.

Extralinguistic Variables

Looking at the relationship between participants' LOR in France and their level of proficiency in both Arabic and French languages, it can be

observed that there is no significant correlation between the two variables ($r = -.024$, $p > 0.05$; $r = .146$, $p > 0.05$). On the other hand, the results indicate a non-significant, negative correlation between participants' age at immigration and their proficiency level in the French language ($r = -.147$, $p > 0.05$), and a highly significant, positive correlation between age at immigration and Arabic proficiency ($r = .228$, $p < 0.01$).

The results also show a highly significant, positive correlation between participants' attitude towards Arabic and their Arabic proficiency ($r = .339$, $p < 0.01$), and a significant but weak positive correlation between participants' attitude towards French and their proficiency in French ($r = .179$, $p < 0.05$). However, non-significant, weak negative and positive correlations are found between participants' attitude towards Arabic and their French proficiency ($r = -.022$, $p > 0.05$), as well as between participants' attitude towards French and their Arabic proficiency ($r = .058$, $p > 0.05$).

Interview Results

Following the questionnaire results, which revealed differences between the three immigrant generations, particularly in their Arabic and French language proficiency, and their use of these languages across various domains, the interviews' findings provide detailed information about the causes of language shift or maintenance and shed light on immigrant experiences and challenges to maintain their heritage language.

Language Choice

During the interview, most first-generation participants (7 out of 8) chose to answer the questions in Arabic, incorporating numerous French words and expressions. This is quite common for Algerians given the fact that French borrowings are a common feature of the spoken Arabic varieties, not only in Algeria but throughout all Maghreb countries. Only one participant (58 years old) chose to respond exclusively in French, suggesting that his linguistic choices are generally determined by his prior experiences and personal background. The participant elaborates on that by saying:

Excerpt (1)

In the country [Algeria], I used to study in French. Later on, I worked in the journalism sector where we operated in French...

As for second-generation participants, most of them preferred answering the interview questions in French, considering it the easier language for them. They admitted that despite their understanding of Arabic, their speaking proficiency is somewhat limited and weak. One participant explains:

Excerpt (2)

Thanks to my wife, I understand Dardja [Algerian dialect]. I do not understand everything of course, but it is okay for me. The problem is always when I try to respond in Dardja, I cannot and I do not feel comfortable speaking it. It is terrible.

Only one second-generation participant (23 years old) responded in Arabic. Despite being born and raised in a French-speaking environment, she explicitly stated that she faces no difficulties when communicating in Arabic. She further added that whenever addressed in Arabic, she would respond in Arabic.

Language Use

The interviews conducted with the Algerian immigrants in France provided valuable insights into their language use. When asked about the language they predominantly use in their day-to-day lives, both first- and second-generation participants claimed that it mainly depends on the situation they are in as well as the people with whom they are interacting.

First-generation interviewees indicated that the partner's nationality impacts their use, as well as their children's use of the Arabic language. Participants who are married to French spouses reported highly frequent use of French at the expense of Arabic at home. However, those who are married

to Algerian partners asserted the use of a mix of Arabic and French.

Second- and third-generation children may be exposed to Arabic through contact with family and relatives in Algeria. Such contact can be very beneficial for improving their Arabic proficiency. For instance, a first-generation woman married to a second-generation man described her third-generation children's Arabic as follows:

Excerpt (3)

My children speak Arabic very well, but since everyone here speaks French, they are obliged to use French instead. Whenever we go to Algeria, they only speak Arabic.

Evidently in this case, children's frequent contact with family members and relatives, be that online or during visits to Algeria, presents them with an opportunity to further interact with native speakers of the heritage language, which is not easily attainable abroad. Such interactions not only provide valuable exposure to Arabic, but also serve to counteract the societal and academic pressures for a shift towards French.

While contact with relatives in Algeria is important, it is by no means always positive. At times, contact can worsen the situation for second- or third-generation children, accelerating the shift towards the dominant language. A first-generation parent expressed how his children's frequent contact with family and relatives in Algeria was not beneficial for their Arabic proficiency. The following is an excerpt from his interview:

Excerpt (4)

Question: Which language do your children use when talking to their relatives in Algeria?

Answer: French.

Question: So, they did not learn Arabic even when they were in contact with family in Algeria?

Answer: No, because my family in Algeria spoke to them in French since they knew they do not understand Arabic.

As per this case, contact with family and relatives in the home country was not conducted in the heritage language, which resulted in additional exposure to French.

Attitudes

Concerning interviewees' attitude, the results are congruent with findings from the questionnaire. The participants who took part in the interview voiced their positive attitude towards their heritage language. For them, Arabic not only denotes an essential means of communication with family and relatives at home, but also bears great cultural value and deeply correlates with their Algerian identity which is substantiated by a myriad of interviewees' statements. One of which comes from a first-generation immigrant expressing his daily need to hear Arabic as it makes him feel home:

Excerpt (5)

I cannot live in a place where there are no Algerians or Maghrebis in general. I need to hear Arabic and talk about Algeria. I feel at home like that.

This positive stance towards Arabic drives transmission efforts among first-generation members who believe their children should speak the heritage language. A first-generation immigrant asserts the following:

Excerpt (6)

All this work we are doing is to establish the Arabic language in the hearts and minds of our children. We do not want our children to lose their Arabic language. On Sundays, I normally have other things to do, but look we are here from 8 am to 1 pm to teach our children Arabic. All this effort is for that.

Albeit one of the contributing factors to heritage language maintenance and transmission, religion may constitute the sole reason for the preservation

of Arabic among Algerians in France. The Arabic language in Islam is absolutely imperative. The holy Quran is written in Arabic, and every prayer and invocation requires the recitation of Quranic verses in Arabic. As such, Islam is inherently linked to the language, and so do its adherers by extension. This is especially evident in the next excerpt:

Excerpt (7)

There are schools here to learn Arabic, and we are trying as parents to speak with our children in Arabic so as to preserve their Arabic language and identity, but as I see it here, Arabic is on the decline. Maybe it will remain for years and years, but afterwards, God [Allah] only knows. We are trying to preserve Arabic just for our religion.

Interviewees also expressed awareness of the significant role that French occupies in their lives. First-generation immigrants recognise the importance of French in securing job opportunities, reaching academic milestones, as well as achieving social acceptance and integration. As such, their attitude towards it is not so much negative, but rather is one of awareness and positivity. An interviewee states:

Excerpt (8)

Now that we came to France, it is absolutely normal to speak French for work as well as for everything. Even back in Algeria, we did not speak Arabic fully as half of it was French and the other half Arabic. We kept doing that for years and it stayed with us.

Evidently, French also carries additional value for second- and third-generation immigrants. They are not only exposed to the French language at a societal level but are also formally taught in French from childhood until adolescence and possibly beyond. For them, French assumes the primary position that Arabic occupied in the lives of their first-generation parents or grandparents. In that sense, their attitude towards

French may prove positive for more reasons than just occupational or academic.

Although the shift towards the majority language may appear to be rapid for subsequent generations, it is by no means a process bereft of difficulty. Due to positive attitudes towards the heritage language and culture transmitted from first-generation immigrants to their descendants, the latter may receive scathing remarks or behaviours seeking to eradicate any presence of the heritage language. This is especially the case in workplaces or educational establishments wherein the French language is supremely powerful.

One first-generation participant tells the story of his child who was humiliated by one of his teachers for merely drawing an Algerian flag. The parent maintains his son's positive attitude towards Arabic and the Algerian culture, which prompted him to draw an Algerian flag when the teacher allowed them to freely sketch whatever they wanted. In consequence, the child was publicly shamed by the teacher in sight of his colleagues and other teachers. According to the parent, his son's once positive attitude towards Arabic dwindled in fear of stigmatization. Such incidents usually result in hastening a shift towards the French language and culture to avoid any unfavourable outcomes, whether academically, socially, or professionally.

Discussion and Conclusions

The present investigation sets out to explore language proficiency, language use, and attitudes among three generations of Algerian immigrants in France. The study is based on data collected from 187 participants through questionnaire surveys and 11 through interviews.

The results suggest a gradual shift towards French starting from the second generation. This was evident in participants' self-rated language proficiency and language use in different domains. As for proficiency, a significant decrease in Arabic language proficiency is reported by the second and third generations. This is especially marked by weak literacy as opposed to oral skills which remained relatively resilient. Based on the reported

language use patterns, Arabic is most often used by members of the first generation in various domains, including home, with friends, and in the mosque. Admittedly, French is not absent among first-generation speakers. It is used in workplaces, or when addressing friends who only speak French. Second- and third-generation participants also declared the use of Arabic, but only for religious purposes or when taking Arabic courses on weekends.

One of the most instrumental factors which considerably influence heritage language proficiency of second- and third-generation participants is heritage language exposure. Considering that home is the most important domain where second- and third-generation bilinguals are expected to learn and use Arabic, having only one first- or second-generation parent seems to limit their exposure to the language. Instead, this is likely to culminate in the use of French. This is not surprising since many previous studies on mixed marriages have acknowledged its contribution to language shift among heritage language speakers (see Sevinç, 2016; Pauwels, 1985).

Language use for first-generation immigrants can be influenced by their prior exposure to the majority language of the new society. As is the case with first-generation Algerian immigrants in France, many of them are familiar with French, while some are even fluent speakers of the language. In fact, Algerians who possess a secondary level of education usually have a good understanding of the French language. University graduates in scientific disciplines such as mathematics, engineering, and medicine are taught in French, and most of them have a good command of the language. Moreover, those working within the business sector communicate primarily in French. Thus, it is no surprise that some first-generation immigrants would prefer French to Arabic as they were already accustomed to using it prior to their arrival in France. This may influence the linguistic behaviour of their children.

All participants, regardless of their generation, exhibited positive attitudes towards both French and Arabic. Respondents acknowledge the importance of Arabic, not only as a marker of identity, but also as a crucial part of their religious beliefs. In light of that, they perceive its maintenance and transmission synonymous to the preservation of their culture and religion. The participants also recognise the importance of speaking French in the new

society as it facilitates social integration, increases job opportunities, and helps with academic achievements. For second- and third-generation bilinguals, French denotes part of their identity and culture given that they were born and raised in France. Nonetheless, the positive attitude towards Arabic, especially by members of the second and third generations, does not necessarily reflect their effort or motivation to learn it.

Attitude towards the heritage language is not entirely fixed. Data from the interview revealed that certain experiences can shape or change immigrants' perspectives. This is particularly the case in schools or workplaces where prejudice against anything Algerian or Arabic can be prevalent.

No correlation was found between participants' LOR in France and their Arabic proficiency. This could be related to the fact that most first-generation participants in the present study left Algeria after reaching adulthood. The age at immigration is strongly associated with the LOR, and often the two factors intersect. Literature on the topic suggests that migration prior to adulthood leaves immigrants more susceptible to shift towards the majority language, especially with a prolonged LOR (O'Leary, 1988). Among adults, however, language shift is not usually expected given that migrants have already fully acquired the language as well as the cultural values of their home country. Notwithstanding, the data is inconclusive. A recent study on German immigrants who moved to Finland as adults suggests that a shift has occurred towards Finnish after a prolonged LOR (Grasz, 2023). Schmid (2019) maintains that LOR should not be perceived in separation but rather in tandem with other factors which probably interact and influence one another in unpredictable, complex, and non-linear ways.

On the other hand, a highly significant positive correlation was found between participants' age at immigration and their Arabic proficiency level, suggesting that the older someone is at the time of immigration, the more proficient their mother tongue tends to be and the opposite is true. This result is in line with what was found by Luo and Wiseman (2000) in their study on language maintenance among Chinese immigrant children in the United States.

The results also show a highly significant positive correlation between the participants' attitude towards Arabic and their overall Arabic proficiency. This means that a more positive attitude towards Arabic is related to a better

proficiency level in the language. In this particular study, second- and third-generation participants' positive attitude towards Arabic does not seem to promote language maintenance since they predominantly use more French than Arabic in almost all domains.

In conclusion, this study revealed significant differences between the three generations of Algerian immigrants in their self-reported proficiency and use of Arabic and French languages, which may be an indication of a gradual shift towards French. Based on interview data, the reasons behind such a shift are related to the following: 1) prior exposure to French before migration; 2) lack of exposure to Arabic, and 3) experiences of discrimination and marginalization. However, given the special context and attributes of the target group, one would expect a more severe state of language shift in the community. Both, the top-down language policy of the host country and the prior knowledge of French could be accelerators of inter- and intragenerational language shift, yet this study demonstrated the use of Arabic in several domains, even in the case of third-generational Algerians. Bilingualism in the community is maintained by establishing language use norms, i.e. community group members use the L1 for intragroup communication in the family, with friends and most importantly in the religious domain, while L2 is used within the group and for interethnic communication. Fase et al. (1992) suggests that language maintenance can be ensured by geographically unbroken settlement patterns and the use of the language for communication in the minority group. In the case of Algerians living in France these factors seem to be present in addition to frequent contact with the home country when the L1 is used.

The results of this study may contribute to the body of knowledge on LMLS, especially that it focuses on a special group of migrants (colonial migrants) who have previous knowledge of the host country's language. It is also expected that this study will motivate other researchers to conduct further research on language maintenance and shift among other Arabic immigrant minorities in France.

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Zahia Flih

Panonijos universitetas, Vengrija

zahia.flih@gmail.com

ALŽYRO ARABŲ KALBOS IŠLAIKYMO BŪDAI PRANCŪZIJOJE

Anotacija. Ilgą laiką Prancūzijos kalbų politika prancūzų kalbą laikė vienintele respublikos kalba, neatsižvelgdama į kitas šalyje vartojamas kalbas. Tokioje situacijoje imigrantų mažumos, tikėtina, patiria nemažai iššūkių siekdamas išsaugoti savo paveldėtąją kalbą. Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjama, kaip alžyriečių mažuma, didžiausia imigrantų grupė Prancūzijoje, sudaranti 12,7 % visų šalyje gyvenančių užsieniečių, išlaiko savo kalbą ir pereina prie kitos kalbos. Siekiant įvertinti, koku mastu kiekviena karta išlaiko paveldėtąją kalbą, lyginamos trys kartos ir analizuojamas jų kalbos mokėjimas, kalbos vartojimas ir kalbinės nuostatos. Taip pat siekiama nustatyti, ar tyrimo dalyvių kalbos mokėjimas ir vartojimas susiję su jų gyvenimo priimančiojoje šalyje trukme, imigracijos amžiumi bei kalbinėmis nuostatomis. Dėl to tikslinei populiacijai buvo pateiktas klausimynas; be to, su mažesne kiekvienos kartos grupe įrašyti interviu. Remiantis 187 apklausos dalyvių duomenimis, Kruskal-Walls testas parodė reikšmingus skirtumus tarp trijų kartų pagal jų pačių nurodomą arabų ir prancūzų kalbų mokėjimą ir vartojimą bei laipsnišką perėjimą prie prancūzų kalbos. Iš interviu su 11 pašnekovų galima daryti prielaidą, kad tokį poslinkį lemia kelios priežastys: susidūrimo su prancūzų kalba mastas iki migracijos, nepakankamas arabų kalbos vartojimas, diskriminacijos ir marginalizacijos patirtys. Koreliacija tarp ekstralingvistinių kintamųjų ir kalbos mokėjimo neparodė jokio ryšio tarp dalyvių gyvenimo priimančiojoje šalyje trukmės ir jų arabų kalbos mokėjimo lygio. Tačiau asmens amžius imigracijos metu ir nuostatos teigiamai ir reikšmingai koreliavo su dalyvių arabų kalbos mokėjimu.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: Alžyro mažumos grupė Prancūzijoje; imigrantų mažumos; kalbinės nuostatos; kalbos išlaikymas ir kaita; kalbos mokėjimas; kalbos vartojimas.