Language Policy Shifts in Algeria: Exploring Teachers' Perceptions at 8 Mai 1945 Guelma University

HAMLAOUI Kamel *

8 Mai 1945 Guelma University (Algeria),
hamlaoui.kamel@univ-guelma.dz

Abstract:

This article examines Algeria's new language policy aimed at elevating the status of English across society. The shift is reflected in the introduction of English in primary schools alongside French and in plans to expand its use as the main language of instruction in higher education. Central to this strategy is training university professors from various disciplines in English, which forms the core focus of the study. Since strengthening a language is fundamentally a matter of language policy and planning, the article outlines and clarifies these concepts. It also presents data gathered from a questionnaire designed to evaluate the feasibility and quality of replacing French with English in higher education and scientific research. The study stresses that such a transition cannot be undertaken hastily, as it directly influences national language policy, societal structures, and future generations, carrying significant risks and long-term uncertainties.

Keywords: Language policy, language planning, linguistic reality, the new direction of the Algerian state, English language.

* *Corresponding author*

- INTRODUCTION

Language policy and language planning have become prominent areas of inquiry in scientific and educational research, owing to their critical role in shaping societies. These processes are inherently intertwined with the culture and heritage of a community, while also requiring adaptation to emerging realities and challenges. For this reason, language policy must be approached with caution, and language planning must be undertaken with careful consideration of both societal values and future needs.

In the Algerian context, the state has recently adopted a new strategy aimed at strengthening the status of English and promoting its wider use. This raises several important questions: What do we mean by language policy and language planning within the current sociolinguistic and educational context? What is the Algerian state's new approach to advancing English instruction and positioning it as the language of teaching and learning at the higher education level across disciplines? And, most importantly, how can the added value and potential impact of this initiative be assessed?

To answer these questions, this paper, which aims to contribute to the ongoing debate on the new endeavor to promote the use of English in Algerian higher education by shedding light on Algerian university teachers' attitudes about this project, starts by conceptualizing several terms, including language policy and language planning, while providing a brief overview of the linguistic educational reality in Algeria. Then, it moves to discuss the questionnaire used to collect data on the quality and feasibility of this project, conducted on a sample of university professors at the University of 8 Mai 1945, Guelma ,Algeria. For the theoretical part, the paper draws on the findings of previous research published in Algeria and abroad.

References in Arabic include articles such as Saleh Belaid's , "Language Policy and Language Planning in Algeria: Reality and Hope," Journal of Sociological Linguistics and Discourse Analysis,

University of Saida, Issue 1, 2016, and Magdi Haj Ibrahim's article, "Language Policy and Language Planning for Teaching Arabic as a Second Language in Malaysia," Journal of Al-Athar, Issue 31, 2019. References in English include Spolsky, B. (2004) " Language policy," Cambridge University Press, and Wright, S. (2016) "Language Policy and Language Planning: From Nationalism to Globalization," , Springer.

1- ConceptuelFramework :

Language Policy: "It is the set of principles and standards that a country's system takes into account in developing an approved plan to define the functions of linguistic use in various fields, promote interest in the national language, and organize positive interaction with it and with auxiliary languages, while highlighting the scientific trends that regulate the status of the language and the degree of interest in it in every area of life within the systems and institutions of society"[1]

The language policy of each country is the general philosophy embodied in the constitution or charter within the major axes defined by identity, language, civilization, and history...It is the essence or distillation of cultural, social, political, economic, and geographical aspects, as well as everything that contributes to the components of society's tributaries. In simpler terms, language policy includes the major dimensions in which major political choices are determined, derived from national, cultural, and scientific references, and are incorporated into the country's constitutional policy and its charters, with the aim of achieving the cultural features of society and contributing to its harmony and stability.

Language policy in each country is determined by the decision-making authority, which derives its authority from the people through dialogue, elections, and consultations. Sometimes, language policy is initiated by politicians, the elite, civil society (associations), or institutes of strategic studies (there are examples of some countries

that derive and build their language policies from their institutes of strategic studies, such as South Korea…)[2], As regards to language policy in Algeria, it is embodied in free democratic choice that stipulates the national identity represented by the slogan: Arabic is our language, Islam is our religion, and Algeria is our homeland. Arabic was the sole and official language, and social consensus around this language (Arabic) was established to avoid conflicts and tensions and overcome the obstacle of dialects since the era of the Berber kingdoms, which settled the linguistic issue amicably by placing Arabic above all other dialects, regardless of their origin. All other Arab countries have followed the same approach[3].

Language Planning: is an activity that refers to regular work, whether official or private, and attempts to solve linguistic problems in a society. Through language planning, the focus is on directing, changing, or maintaining the standard language (which is the language agreed upon to be the reference or universal for all components of society) in order to preserve the social status of the language, whether written or spoken[4] Planning is a set of specific measures taken to implement a specific goal. This means that the concept of a plan is determined by two elements: the first is the existence of a goal or objective that we want to achieve, and the second is the establishment of specific measures and means drawn up to achieve this goal. What distinguishes a plan is the existence of a specific goal and the existence of means to reach that goal. Planning, then, is a scientific, experimental attempt to improve the reality in which the individual lives to achieve specific goals within a specific period of time[5].

In other words, linguistic planning is the embodiment of the major goals in language policy by way of translatingit into educational programs at various levels of education, from basic to higher education. In other words, language planning is the curriculum, the educational methodologies, the content, the of educational tools and

techniques, in addition to the methods of preparing and training teachers[6].

Many topics stem from language or educational planning, which fall within applied linguistics. This, in turn, has various branches, including language teaching, machine translation, and others. In brief, from these two definitions, it is clear that language policy concerns the enactment of laws, regulations, and instructions, while language planning concerns the procedures and measures followed to achieve the objectives of this language policy in a given country.

2. An Overview on the Linguistic and Educational Reality in Algeria:

In Algeria's linguistic and educational reality, multilingualism and the continued presence of French are direct legacies of colonialism. Following independence, this linguistic inheritance was initially regarded as an asset, primarily because Algeria lacked viable alternatives at the time; the available resources had to be utilized in the effort to build and consolidate the state. Some intellectuals even defended this colonial linguistic legacy, advocating coexistence with it and emphasizing the practical value of maintaining linguistic plurality. For decades, the coexistence of Arabic and French characterized Algeria's linguistic landscape across all sectors of society.

In recent years, however, Algeria—like many other nations— has begun to reconsider its linguistic priorities, largely due to the growing global dominance of English as the language of communication, technology, and the internet. Scientific production in nearly all fields has increasingly shifted to English, a trend reinforced by the global scientific and technological hegemony that has elevated English to a position of near universality[7]. This development has fueled growing dissatisfaction with the French language and has motivated many countries to revise their linguistic and educational

policies. In some contexts, French has been entirely removed from curricula and educational systems. Several African countries, for example, have replaced French with English across all domains—not only in education, but also in broader public and professional spheres.

In this context, Algeria found it necessary to keep pace with contemporary global trends by promoting the teaching of English at all educational levels. As part of this initiative, English instruction was introduced in the third year of primary school, replacing the previous policy of beginning at the intermediate level. Additionally, measures were taken to train university professors in all disciplines to use English as the language of instruction, communication, and research—gradually replacing French. This policy, which remains in progress and forms the focus of this article, reflects a broader global tendency to embrace English as a response to the demands of globalization, where proficiency in English is increasingly seen as essential for development and international integration.

English has become the primary language used in international correspondence, technological industries, and virtually all areas of scientific research, as noted earlier. Statistics indicate that more than 95% of global scientific research across all disciplines is published in English. Consequently, scientists and specialists worldwide translate and write their work in English, even when it is not their native language or a language they master fully[8].

In this context, the present study examines the quality and feasibility of a key initiative in Algeria: adopting English as the primary language of instruction and research in universities, supported by training programs for university teachers across all disciplines. To explore this issue comprehensively, we developed a questionnaire targeting university teachers, aiming to capture their perspectives on the various dimensions of this transition with a focus on the program designed by the Algerian ministry of Higher Education and Scientific

Research to train university teachers to use English in instruction and research.

3. Research Instrument and Findings:

An exploratory/quantitative approach was employed to investigate the attitudes of university teachers regarding the plan adopted by the Algerian state to replace French with English and to assess the program introduced to improve their competency in English. A questionnaire was conducted for this reason. The study data were collected from a sample of twenty (20) Algerian university teachers from the department of Law at 8 Mai 1945-Guelma University, Algeria. The questionnaire is divided into two parts and five sections, each covering a different theme.

In humanities research, the questionnaires are frequently employed as data collection tools because they enable researchers to gather information from a large number of participants across diverse contexts. Their efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and ease of administration make them particularly attractive (Flick, 2015; Walliman, 2006).

The Questionnaire:

Dear colleagues: We thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire which aims to study the quality and feasibility of the project related to the new endeavor of the Algerian state regarding the English language and its use in higher education as a language of instruction and research. Your opinion matters greatly to us, so we ask you to answer the questions truthfully. Your answers will be used for purely research and academic purposes.

Before submitting the questions, here are some guidelines:
Please choose the answer that best reflects the degree of your agreement with each statement using the following scale:
1 = Strongly disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly agree

Please choose the answer that most accurately reflects your opinion.

Part One: General Information

1. Gender:

o☐ Male

o☐ Female

2. Age:

o☐ Under 30 years

o☐ 30-40 years

o☐ 41-50 years

o☐ Over 50 years

3. Teaching Experience:

o☐ Less than 5 years

o☐ 5-10 years

o☐ Over 10 years

General Information (Optional):

• Age: _____

• Years of Experience: _____

• Have you ever participated in English language training courses? Yes/No

Section One: Training Objectives.

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The training helped me improve my English teaching skills.					
The training provided me with the necessary knowledge to understand the latest teaching strategies.					
The training enhanced my confidence in interacting with					

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
students in English.					

Section Two: Training Content

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
The training content was comprehensive and relevant to my professional needs.					
The training covered current topics related to English language teaching.					
The training focused on developing oral and written communication skills.					

Section Three: Methods and Tools

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Innovative teaching techniques were used during the training.					
Sufficient educational resources, such as books and digital resources, were provided during the training.					
stimulating and appropriate learning environment was provided during the training sessions.					

Section Four: Training Challenges

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I face difficulty applying what I learned during the training in the classroom.					
The time allocated for the training is insufficient to achieve its objectives.					
There is a lack of guidance and follow-up after the training ends.					

Section Five: Foresight and General Evaluation

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
What is your opinion about the continuation of this project or similar projects in the future?					
Do you agree that this project will displace French from its scientific educational position?					
Do you agree that training in English will have an impact on academic development in Algerian universities?					

Additional Notes:…………………………………………..

Thank you for your time and valuable contribution!

After determining the sample, which was twenty teachers from the Department of Law, and collecting their answers, the results of the questionnaire came out as follows:

Table (First Part)

number	sex	age	experience	Skillsimprovement	Providingknowledge	Providing confidence	Comprehensiveness of Training	Modernity of training	Oral Skills
1	F	39	9	4	4	5	2	5	4
2	F	39	13	2	2	2	1	2	4
3	M	48	22	1	2	2	2	2	3
4	F	45	11	2	1	3	2	4	4
5	M	58	12	1	1	4	1	1	1
6	M	52	18	1	1	1	1	1	1
7	M	54	20	2	3	4	4	3	3
8	M	43	4	3	4	1	4	2	5
9	F	42	16	3	1	3	3	3	1
10	F	**37**	14	3	3	4	2	2	4
11	F	**38**	8	5	3	5	3	3	5
12	F	40	12	3	3	3	2	2	2
13	F	40	15	4	2	3	3	4	4
14	M	**64**	11	2	2	1	1	2	4
15	M	40	9	3	2	1	3	3	1
16	M	39	12	3	3	2	2	4	4
17	M	55	20	1	1	1	3	3	3
18	F	**36**	10	3	4	3	3	4	3
19	M	52	20	5	5	5	3	3	1
20	F	48	16	4	5	2	1	1	5

Table (Second Part):

number	Use of Innovative Teaching Techniques	ProvidingInnovativeEducationalResources	Providing a Stimulating Learning Environment	Difficulty Implementing Training in Education	Insufficient Training Duration	Lack of Post-Training Follow-up	Training Continuity	English Is Taking the Place of French	The Influence of English on the Development of Scientific Research
1	5	4	2	1	5	1	5	5	5
2	2	2	2	4	4	4	4	4	4
3	1	1	1	1	5	5	1	4	4
4	2	1	3	5	4	5	5	3	3
5	1	1	1	4	4	4	5	1	4
6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1
7	2	3	2	3	3	4	4	3	4
8	4	4	1	2	4	3	4	5	5
9	3	1	3	3	1	1	3	3	1
10	4	4	4	3	5	4	2	3	5
11	3	3	5	5	3	3	3	1	3
12	3	2	5	4	5	4	4	3	2
13	4	3	2	5	5	4	4	4	5
14	1	4	5	5	3	5	5	5	5
15	3	1	3	3	1	1	1	1	1
16	2	2	2	3	2	4	5	1	1
17	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3
18	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	3
19	3	5	5	4	4	1	1	1	1
20	3	3	3	2	5	5	5	5	5

4. Discussion:

This analysis aims to shed light on the views of Algerian university teachers regarding the priority given to the English language in higher education and the training program initiated to improve teachers' competency in English. It reviews the views of twenty teachers from the Law Department of the University of 8 Mai 1945, Guelma and analyzes their opinions on the feasibility and quality of the aforementioned project. The results are as follows:

Average age of participants: 45.45 years.

Average years of experience: 13.60 years.

The following table highlights some statistics related to teachers' opinions and answers to the questionnaire, along with the standard deviation of these opinions, their trends, their averages, and their interpretations or explanations according to the deviation ratio:

Mean	Standard	Axis Deviation	Interpretation
SkillImprovement	2.75	1.25	Medium
Knowledge Provision	2.60	1.31	Medium
Confidence Enhancement	2.75	1.41	Medium
Comprehensiveness of Training	2.30	0.98	Low to Medium
Recency of Training	2.70	1.13	Medium
Oral Skills	3.10	1.45	Medium Inclined to Increase
Use of Innovative Technologies	2.50	1.15	Medium
Providing a Learning Environment	2.45	1.15	Medium
Difficulty of Implementing Training	3.15	1.35	Relatively High
Insufficient Training Duration	3.75	1.29	Very High

Lack of Follow-up After Training	3.25	1.52	High
Continuity of Training	3.30	1.59	Relatively High
Substitution of French for English	3.00	1.45	Average or Hesitant Attitude
Impact of English in Education	3.25	1.59	Average Rating Inclined For positivity

What stands out in many sections of the questionnaire is that teachers frequently resorted to neutrality. This tendency may reflect either the difficulty of making a clear choice or the novelty of the process itself, since Algeria has not witnessed similar initiatives since independence—except for the 1993 opinion poll in public education that asked respondents to choose between French and English. At that time, French overwhelmingly dominated, with 99.67% favoring it and only 0.33% opting for English. This outcome shows that while Algerian society harbors a deep desire for change, it repeatedly encounters the enduring barrier of a linguistic legacy passed down through generations, which has made French an inseparable part of daily communication.

University teachers, being an integral part of society, naturally reflect these same tensions. The choice between French and English often served as a medium for expressing apprehensions and fears, with responses ranging from strong agreement to strong disagreement. Yet, neutrality ultimately prevailed. For instance, in Section Five, Question Two—"Do you agree with the opinion that this project will remove French from its scientific and educational position?"—all seven respondents chose neutrality. Similar patterns emerged elsewhere: in eight different questions across various sections, more than five teachers in each case opted for neutral responses. Examples include Section One, Question One (seven neutral responses), Section Two, Questions One and Two (seven and six neutrals, respectively), Section

Three, all three questions (eight, six, and seven neutrals), and Section Four, Question One (six neutrals).

The survey also revealed several shortcomings in the training program, particularly regarding its duration, which was widely perceived as insufficient. Thirteen respondents reported the duration to be too short, compared to only three who considered it adequate. A similar imbalance appeared concerning post-training support: ten participants noted a lack of follow-up and guidance, while only five acknowledged its presence.

A particularly significant issue—given its implications for the project's long-term success—is the question of training continuity. Here, the majority favored continuation, with 11 respondents supporting it against only six opposed. This positive tendency must be taken seriously and strengthened in order to ensure better outcomes in the future.

On the more sensitive matter of replacing French with English, responses were more evenly split: Seven in favor and six opposed. This division underscores the cultural, educational, and professional complexities surrounding the issue.

Nonetheless, despite these differences and the shortcomings of the training, the survey indicates an overall openness toward English. Ten respondents agreed that English would positively impact the academic development of Algerian universities, compared to only six who disagreed. This reflects a genuine aspiration for change, a willingness to embrace foreign languages, and a desire to move beyond the long-standing dominance of French.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it can be argued that the current trend toward the generalization of English in Algerian universities—making it the primary language of instruction and research across disciplines—

represents a positive and forward-looking shift. However, this transformation also poses significant challenges, as it requires university teachers to undergo training in a foreign language other than the one historically used in academia. It is therefore understandable that many teachers expressed uncertainty, hesitation, and neutrality in their responses. This reflects not only the ambiguity surrounding the project of transitioning from French to English in higher education and research but also the fact that the initiative remains in its early stages, with tangible results yet to emerge.

According to the surveyed teachers, the project must be sustained, further developed, and broadened in scope. Special emphasis should be placed on post-training follow-up, the strengthening of oral communication skills, and the adoption of modern teaching techniques to ensure the successful integration of English in higher education. Equally important is the need to intensify awareness campaigns and professional development opportunities, so that both teachers and the wider university community fully understand the necessity and advantages of this transition, which has now become an urgent priority.

While this article has focused primarily on the general features and implications of the project, the policies and initiatives of the Ministry of Higher Education—particularly the role of English departments—remain worthy of deeper study and critical analysis. These issues will be the subject of future research and publications.

---

[1] Fadil A. (2014). The Reality of Language Policy in Our Country Fifty Years After Independence. Arabic Language, 16(1), 14-89.
And see: Lee, S. Y., & Dong, Y. (2016). Language Management/Policy. In Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance (pp. 1-6). Springer, Cham.
And see also: Francis, D. J., & Kamanda, M. C. (2001). Politics and language planning in Sierra Leone. African Studies, 60(2),pp225-244.

[2]Balaid S,(2016) Language Policy and Language Planning in Algeria: Reality and Prospects, Journal of Sociological Linguistics and Discourse Analysis, University of Saida, Issue 1, p16.

[3]BalaidS, (2016) Language Policy and Language Planning in Algeria… p17.

And see: Alik A. (2018), Language Policy in Algeria and its Impact on Arabic Language Teaching in Primary Schools, Journal of the Algerian Academy of the Arabic Language, 14(2), pp197-214. **And see also:** 7. Darbal B. (2015). Language Policies in Colonized Countries: The French Colonization of Algeria as a Model, Journal of Linguistic & Literary Studies, 6(1).

[4] Abbad et al. (1997). Dictionary of Linguistics, Lebanon Publishers Library, Beirut.p77.

And see: Haugen, E. (1966). Language conflict and language planning: The case of modern Norwegian. Harvard University Press. **And see also:** Kaplan, R. B., & Baldauf, R. B. (1997). Language planning from practice to theory (Vol. 108). Multilingual Matters.

[5] Al-Farabi et al. (1994). Dictionary of Educational Sciences, Pedagogical Terms, 1st ed., Rabat Al-Najah New Press (Educational Sciences Series 9-10) p268.

[6] Bouziani K. (2008). Language Planning Strategy and the Problem of Language Development in the Arab World. Journal of the Algerian Academy of the Arabic Language, 4(2), pp197-198.

[7] Montgomery, S. L. (2013). Does science need a global language?: English and the future of research. University of Chicago Press.

And see: van WeijenDr, D. (2012). The language of (future) scientific communication. Research trends, 1(31), 3.

[8] Di Bitetti, M. S, & Ferreras, J. A. (2017). Publish (in English) or perish: The effect on citation rate of using languages other than English in scientific publications. Ambio, 46, pp121-127.

- References:

1- Abbad et al. (1997). Dictionary of Linguistics, Lebanon Publishers Library, Beirut.

2- Alik A. (2018), Language Policy in Algeria and its Impact on Arabic Language Teaching in Primary Schools, Journal of the Algerian Academy of the Arabic Language, 14(2), 197-214.

3- Al-Farabi et al. (1994). Dictionary of Educational Sciences, Pedagogical Terms, 1st ed, Rabat Al-Najah New Press (Educational Sciences Series 9-10)

4- Balaid Salah, (2016) Language Policy and Language Planning in Algeria: Reality and Prospects, Journal of Sociological Linguistics and Discourse Analysis, University of Saida, Issue 1.

5- Bouziani K. (2008). Language Planning Strategy and the Problem of Language Development in the Arab World. Journal of the Algerian Academy of the Arabic Language, 4(2), 195-216.

6- Di Bitetti, M. S., & Ferreras, J. A. (2017). Publish (in English) or perish: The effect on citation rate of using languages other than English in scientific publications. Ambio, 46, 121-127.

7- Darbal B. (2015). Language Policies in Colonized Countries: The French Colonization of Algeria as a Model, Journal of Linguistic & Literary Studies, 6(1).

8- Fadil A. (2014). The Reality of Language Policy in Our Country Fifty Years After Independence. Arabic Language, 16(1), 14-89.

9- Francis, D. J, & Kamanda, M. C. (2001). Politics and language planning in Sierra Leone. African Studies, 60(2), 225-244.

10- Haugen, E. (1966). Language conflict and language planning: The case of modern Norwegian. Harvard University Press.

11- Kaplan, R. B, & Baldauf, R. B. (1997). Language planning from practice to theory (Vol. 108). Multilingual Matters.

12- Lee, S. Y., & Dong, Y. (2016). Language Management/Policy. In Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance (pp. 1-6). Springer, Cham.

13- Montgomery, S. L. (2013). Does science need a global language? English and the future of research. University of Chicago Press.

14- Van Weijen, D. (2012). The language of (future) scientific communication. Research trends, 1(31), 3.