

Sociology of Linguistic Transformations in the Digital Space. An Approach in the Context of Algerian Society

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ABSTRACT: This article proposes a sociological approach to analyze language transformations in Algeria's digital space. It views language as both a social construct and a key system of communication, especially in the context of evolving digital interactions. Through examples from online linguistic practices, the article highlights the emergence of new forms of expression shaped by individual interactions. In Algeria, hybrid languages and widespread use of dialects are increasingly common. These shifts reflect a dilution of standard language norms on social media. The study also points to a gradual decline in the symbolic dominance of Classical Arabic.

KEYWORDS: Sociology, Language, Linguistic Transformation, Digital Environment, Algerian Society.

TITLU: „Sociologia transformărilor lingvistice în spațiul digital: O abordare în contextul societății algeriene”

REZUMAT: Acest articol propune o abordare sociologică în analiza transformărilor lingvistice din spațiul digital al Algeriei. Limba este percepută atât ca o construcție socială, cât și ca un sistem cheie de comunicare, în special în contextul interacțiunilor digitale în evoluție (transformare). Prin exemple din practicile lingvistice online, articolul evidențiază apariția unor noi forme de expresie modelate de interacțiunile individuale. În Algeria, limbile hibride și utilizarea pe scară largă a dialectelor sunt din ce în ce mai frecvente. Aceste schimbări reflectă o diluare a normelor limbii standard pe rețelele de socializare. Studiul indică, de asemenea, o scădere treptată a dominației simbolice a limbii arabe clasice.

CUVINTE-CHEIE: sociologie; limbaj; transformare lingvistică; mediu digital; societatea algeriană.

Introduction

In recent years, the digital environment has undergone profound and rapid changes that have affected all aspects of social and cultural life. Widespread use of modern digital communication and media tools have shaped new forms of linguistic interaction in virtual communities. Moreover, these changes can be observed in soft linguistic symbols, thereby forming hybrid elements based on the rich and diverse linguistic repertoire of Algerian society, leading to a communicative language integrated with letters and symbols which derive simultaneously from a multitude of languages and dialects.

Like many societies, Algerian society continues to see a significant increase in the number of citizens using a range of digital platforms from social media platforms to messaging and mobile chat applications. It is significant to note the interaction with technology and the widespread use of technology in all aspects of life. These developments will continue to impact the visible aspects of daily life in Algeria, but they represent a shift in not only the way information is visible, but how the frameworks, methods and patterns of communication are framed. This change means a direct shift in the language of communication, which nonetheless, is still the artifact of communication and social exchange itself.

Given the linguistic diversity and the richness of life, both through the variety of dialects or even just foreign languages as a result of the historical socio-cultural fabric of the country and language

exposure as a result of the modern world, it clearly shows the digital space shaped by the internet, and other communicative tools, has integrated as a space to study and investigate new approaches to language and their sociological contexts of language use.

Therefore, the significance of the research topic can be rationalized on the grounds of exploring the processes of the transformation of language occurring in the digital space and the sociological meanings of the changes it produces in Algerian society.

This article also aims to explore the nature of the transformations that have affected the language of communication in the digital space, with a focus on Algerian society. It adopts a sociological approach that considers the concept of new digital languages not as neutral tools, but rather as a social structure that interacts with modern communication and media technologies—ultimately giving rise to a new culture of communication.

Based on this premise, we pose the following question: “What are the sociological implications of the linguistic transformations taking place in the digital space within Algerian society, and what is the impact of the new digital language?”

Language from a Sociological Perspective

Linguists, in addressing the issue of linguistic transformation, start from the assumption that language possesses social value. They continue their research into its characteristics based on communication processes between social groups within the framework of what is known as linguistic capital, which itself includes varying levels of social acceptance. These levels are determined by speech patterns that may, even temporarily, abandon their original linguistic background and national character.

Karl Mannheim, therefore, argues that a society characterized by diverse structures and systems is essentially built upon distinctions within the social hierarchy – whether in knowledge domains or linguistic fields. Such a society generates differentiated linguistic capital, which in turn contributes to the kind of change that leads to linguistic transformation (Fawzia & Driss 2023, 556).

Sociology has been concerned with studying language as a social phenomenon, a focus that has been reflected in the work of well-known pioneers. These scholars sought to establish a link between linguistics and society in order to create a causal foundation connecting language and the social structure. Through this perspective, language use is described as a social phenomenon that, in one way or another, contributes to the very possibility of forming communities—while at the same time, those communities shape their languages through their patterns of use (Mohamed 2018, 377).

Anthony Giddens states, while it is possible to communicate through non-verbal ways in our demeanor to give meaning to our actions or meaning to how others are behaving toward us, most of our communication happens through spoken language. For this reason, sociologists have already come to the consensus that language is a basic axis of social life.

He continues that we often use patterns of understanding unconsciously. In all of our interactions with others, it is true that part of the meaning of the interaction is found in the words we say, but another part is found in the manner in which speech happens in its social context. The routines in our day-to-day acts and social lives – together with the meanings and consequences they have—depend on shared tacit assumptions about what has been said and those intentions. The rules of conversation may seem trivial but are very important.

Language, from a sociological standpoint, is more than a communicative medium that operates within the social system. Rather, language is laden with meanings, messages, and consequences. Therefore, both the linguistic act of speaking and the social contexts or conditions in which it takes place are intimately tied to language, merging into the social world.

Language is the very bedrock of social interaction, as it is a mechanism to build and structure a social relationship, build and sustain a social group, along with all of the shared aspects of different groups and the social attachments that make the group's existence real and meaningful.

Thus, the question of language from a sociological point of view can be tackled through the following axes:

Language as an Organiser of Social Life and_A Way of Obtaining Culture

Ibn Khaldun's treatment of language as a social factor is unique in that he regarded it as one of the fundamental base elements for organising social life and as a measure of civilisational progress and developing worlds into civilisations. Language mimics the cultural reality of society, its social structure, and the role of language is critical with regards to education, instruction, and socialisation. Language is also a means of directing and regulating behaviour in accordance to the customs and traditions of society.

Moreover, language is a carrier of culture that the individual gradually obtains through upbringing in family and social contexts, such that it can be described as almost natural (Abbassia 2023, 651).

Ibn Khaldun, in this reading, starts from a position that the languages of all urbanised populations are those of the dominant nation and/or prominent generation. He has seen particular languages be put aside in territories that favoured the Islamic state (ie. lands of Islam in a political sense), particularly where Arabic became the language of power and governance.

In this light, language, while inherited and incidentally learned, can transform or adapt through a range of contexts including being adopted as a language of governance and/or the respective positions of relevant stakeholders. He mentions the case of the various iterations of non-Arab political power and adds, "the travel of the Tatars and Mongols to power in the East did render the premise of a dominant power ineffective and I saw Arabic, the language of Islam, completely lapse".

While Ibn Khaldun argued that language can be inherited—"the language of the descendants is almost always similar to the language of the ancestors"—he also recognized that it could change and that some of its rules could be altered slowly through influence from non-native speakers and at that point, it becomes urban language, as is recognized with people anymore from local and urban definitions. Urbanization was the end of civilization and, from his perspective, one of the greatest reasons for linguistic change and transformation.

So when you pull all of this together, with the consequences of the digital revolution -particularly the accentuation of urban living—and the weighs the compression of the modern world into the "global village," the time it takes for urban living norms to cross into the societal lexicon, we start to see that language indeed progresses frequently and infinitely. Increasingly accountable to the variables of social change.

Language as an Instrument of Domination and Power

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu endorses and extends this viewpoint. More specifically, Bourdieu does not see language as merely an abstract system of signs. For Bourdieu, language, like all social practices, is produced and enacted within a field with symbolic hierarchies, which makes a linguistic exchange a socially conditioned act with respect to the speaker and the listener. Bourdieu calls this the linguistic market.

Within this understanding, Bourdieu engages the idea of linguistic capital, which he describes as an individual's power to use language to make a distinction and therefore wield power, and an individual's position within a social order. Therefore, not all forms of speech have the same values or impact; the power of speech derives from social recognition and the symbolic power of one position over another (Bourdieu 2014).

In this sense, Bourdieu contended that language should not be viewed solely as a set of phrases that serve as exchange and tools for communication, but rather, it should be seen as fundamentally bound to the structure of society, in which it forms individuals – it gives individuals status, dispositions, and tendencies. A person's speech has meaning only when the words are considered relative to their social position as well as the environment of the discourse.

Thus, we can see that language is an expression of power relations and control present within speech.

Language as a Social Practice

William Labov and Louis-Jean Calvet argue that linguistic phenomena, and practices, are fundamentally and primarily social phenomena and practices—this does not mean that we do not have linguistic and technical aspects (e.g., phonetics, morphology, etc.) of the level of phenomena we talk about secondarily, but specifically this is because speech acts are socially shaped through the social contexts that give them meaning. So, instead of thinking about languages as standards we use that are established beforehand, think of the languages we have as social practices through which we establish those standards (Nawal 2022, 44).

Language as a Sociological Marker of Class and Belonging

Basil Bernstein is one of the leading theorists in the sociology of language. Bernstein, a linguist and researcher at the Institute of Education, University of London, was one of the first people to reinforce the link between language and social/class structure. Bernstein posited a unique idea that the form of children's language, and how they used it, was entirely different amongst working class children, using a restricted code, compared to middle class children who typically used an elaborated code, and that part of the reason working class children were linguistically unequal was connected to the symbolic dominance of the educated classes.

From Bernstein's perspective, the variation in language use between individuals derives from the variation in social lifestyles, and the social groupings thinking and conceptualizing patterns. (Bernstein, 2025) To illustrate, the way of life, and associated mode of thinking, between farmers varies significantly from industrial workers or middle classes (Ali Asaad 2025).

Language and the Public Sphere

In starting with communicative action, Jürgen Habermas considers language as a right and legitimate basis for establishing public rationality in action, as language is the basis of understanding and dialogue towards to rationality in the public sphere.

In The Theory of Communicative Action, the German philosopher argues about language and the public sphere in respect with communicative action grounded in rational understanding. Communicative action constitutes the basis for the dialogue and discussion about matters of public concern that would be of concern to the public characterized audience. Communicative action must be free from structural limitations and coercion (Mostafa 2025).

In Habermas' conception of communicative action as an expression of communicative rationality, we should reflect the opinion of the public as representative of the plurality of opinions rather than a bounded singular opinion. Language is used as a tool for dialogue, persuasion and argumentation in order to extricate positions and opinions and arrive at common solutions.

Language as a reference and marker of social and cultural identity

Language represents an essential component of any culture and is also a significant form of social identity. As a social phenomenon, it helps to reinforce the unity and cohesion of society, and it provides a reference point for national identity and a marker of cultural specificity. Researcher Hossam Fayadh endorsed this view and noted that language is a product of social crystallization, and has social character by nature in its structure (Aissat 2022, 253).

There is no linguistic reality apart from the time and speech community, only time gives social forces the power to create meaning in language. He also cites language as an essential component of identity building in society (Fayadh 2025).

Language and the Network Society

Manuel Castells defines network society as the special form of social structure of the Information Age, a society consisted of various interconnected networks of production, power, and experience.

These components together provide the foundation for creating a virtual culture amid the globalized flows in which society is increasingly situated (Mostafa 2018, 67). It is these changes that mark a major transition from embedding experiences in specific temporal and spatial contexts, to an embeddedness that exceeds belonging to a specific temporal and spatial moment. In other words, the network society is dependent upon the interconnection and reconfiguration of organizational forms and social institutions. Castells asserts that social networks have emerged as the dominant form of social organization concerning both production and consumption. Society is being reformed, and the virtual culture created is central to how that is happening (Gomaa 2021, 311).

The concept of Network Society was first introduced by Dutch researcher Jan van Dijk in his book *The Network Society* published in 1999. The concept is also elaborated on by the thinker Manuel Castells in volume one of his trilogy *The Information Age* published first in 1991.

According to Castells, information systems contribute to the creation of a new society model called the network society and represents the ideal communication space, especially for younger generations, whose consciousness has been informed and behaviours formed by digital visual culture. This digital culture produced a new language with its share of symbols and meanings and thereby formed new social life within the digital space with new methods of communication.

In summary, digital life simultaneously has developed as an extension of people's real lives, particularly in youth culture, where experience and behaviours have become intertwined in this networked space (Shbeili 2019, 380).

Digital Societies as a New Linguistic Market

The concept of the digital space refers to the realm generated by communication and information technologies – most notably the Internet. This electronic space is closely linked to the physical world, and understanding it requires delving into its ideological foundations and distinctive characteristics (Dheeb & Fazzaa 2021).

Researcher Walida Haddadi defines digital societies as groups of social relationships that emerge among individuals through their interactions on various social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and others (Haddadi 2021, 1344).

The phrase digital society refers to societies that share two key attributes:

A / The first attribute has to do with their dependence on advanced digital technologies utilized in the areas of communication and the organization and distribution of information in a networked way. The digital infrastructure represents a basic foundation for social, political and economic activities.

B / The second attribute is a peculiar quality reflected in the replication of the network and its institutions throughout these societies. The network becomes the pervasive form of organization which regulates relationships between individuals and institutions across the civil, political and economic dimensions (Moumna Shalabi 2022, 290).

The digital society is also characterized by additional features that have emerged from the expansion of communication technologies and the proliferation of networks, most notably: the shift from an industrial to an informational economy, the adoption of the network model in global economic organization, the reorganization of human activity in terms of time and space, and the redistribution of power based on access to networks and the interaction between place-based identities and transnational networks.

It can be said that with the emergence of the digital environment as a new virtual domain, new forms of communication have begun to appear, reshaping social interactions and linguistic transformations on the internet. This calls for the reconsideration of certain concepts from the field of sociology to explore and understand the nature of these transformations – especially in how language functions as a communicative tool within virtual societies.

Among the most relevant ideas is the thesis of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who states:

"Every linguistic situation functions as a market in which the speaker places their products. The product they offer in this market depends on what they anticipate in terms of value or 'price'..." (Sarhat 2025).

Most sociologists and anthropologists agree that societies are culturally founded. However, the network society does not possess a fixed culture, nor does it typically reflect a specific historical identity. According to Castells, this society is characterized by its inclusiveness—it integrates diverse cultures that are continuously evolving. This affects the general cultural structure, as the network follows an evolutionary logic: its capacity to absorb new cultures and content grows over time within the process of social organization.

This occurs alongside a relative independence from traditional centers of power. The network society is distinguished by three fundamental characteristics: **flexibility**, **resilience**, and **gradualism** (Abdel Muttalib 2023, 115).

The Sociological Significance of Linguistic Transformation in the Algerian Digital Space

Edward Sapir considers language to be a constantly changing entity, and in his view, there is no inherently dominant or authoritative language. Rather, language takes shape according to the social and historical contexts that surround it, which leads to the emergence of linguistic differences and transformations within the speaking community.

In the same context, Heinrich Himmler is considered one of the first linguists to address the topic of linguistic shift. Since then, numerous writings have followed, and the subject has become a focal point of scientific research within the field of sociolinguistics. Linguistic shift refers to the phenomenon where an individual transitions while speaking from one language to another, or from standard (formal) language to colloquial language and vice versa or blends them during speech.

Currently, the world is experiencing a digital transformation that has permeated practically all dimensions of life, and this includes language. Language is a medium that enables us to communicate, think, and express ourselves, and indeed, language has been affected. The Internet and social platforms brought concrete changes to linguistic practices and communicative behaviors.

Algeria's complex linguistic diversity embodies its cultural and historical richness. Arabic is the official language and serves as an emblem of national culture and uniqueness. Amazigh has also become a national language since 2002 in accordance with the Constitution of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

Algerian colloquial Arabic (Darija) is in everyday use and has many dialects that fluctuate from region to region as a consequence of Algeria's large geographic and cultural and social heritage, developed over time from pre-Numidian to present-day.

Algerian society has also developed under the influence of foreign contact, notably during the French colonial period. Hence French is the most prominent foreign language influence by virtue of the colonial period legacy; while English is gradually used for scientific use, and Spanish to a lesser degree. (Laachris 2020, 159)

This diversity and richness in linguistic terms is also manifested in Algerian society in the digital age particularly across social media or networked social media as like mini networks that extend the linguistic economy in real time. According to Data Reportal statistics dated 2025 there are 25.6 million Facebook users, 21.1 million TikTok users, 21.1 million You Tube users, 12 million Instagram users, 9.11 million Snapchat users and 4.8 million LinkedIn users. These numbers show that Algerians utilize and have different reasons for producing linguistic resources on digital platforms: entertainment, komunikasi, and profession.

This also highlights that digital transformation has reached Algeria, and the number of internet users has also reached 36 million, which represents 77% of Algerians, while looking at the digital populations, the gap still exists between urban populations and rural populations (Emergent 2025).

Building on Pierre Bourdieu's assertion that language cannot be studied as an independent subject focused solely on meaning without examining the social conditions surrounding word usage - since the power and authority of a word do not stem from the word itself but rather from its social applications - we will attempt to present and observe the manifestations of digital linguistic transformation in Algeria (Ahmed 2022, 290).

Subsequently, we will interpret this phenomenon from a sociological perspective by identifying and analyzing these changes as follows:

Linguistic Hybridization in the Digital Space

Also known as the phenomenon of language hybridization, this refers to an informal, newly emerged form of language that appeared with the rise of communication technologies. It is widely used in digital environments, especially in written form, where Arabic script, local dialects, foreign languages, and numbers are blended together.

This "chat language" in particular emerged as a result of the use of modern technology and the internet. It is characterized by mixing Arabic with foreign languages or writing Arabic using Latin characters. This new linguistic form spread especially through chat applications, most of which were initially available in English only. This led users to invent a Latinized form of Arabic, where numbers are used to represent Arabic letters not found in the Latin alphabet. This innovation aimed to facilitate communication and save time and effort in online interactions.

In this context, the researcher Fatima Bouhani found in her study that the Algerian user—especially the university student—has developed a unified digital language that blends Modern Standard Arabic with Algerian dialect, along with partial use of French and English, as well as symbols, images, and numbers.

The study also revealed that 75% of university students rely in their written comments and conversations on a mix of Latin and Arabic scripts, with a notable emphasis on the use of numbers and emoticons (Bouhani 2013, 12).

In this regard, another study conducted by researcher Ghadbane Ghalia concluded that 48.40% of participants believe that the use of the Facebook platform has contributed to the emergence of new words and expressions among university students (Ghadban 2017, 210).

A study conducted by researchers Samia Ben Omar and Khadija Amri also showed that a significant percentage of participants—70%—stated that they had acquired a new language through their use of Facebook. Meanwhile, **30%** of them expressed **no sense of linguistic change** or acquisition of new vocabulary via the platform (Ben Omar & Amri 2015, 49)

Researcher Kamel Gharbi attributed the use of code-switching in Algeria—through the blending of various languages and dialects with Arabic (such as French, Turkish, Amazigh, Latin, etc.)—to the succession of numerous civilizations over Algeria, including the Romans, Vandals, and French colonizers.

It is clear that the new network language has solidified itself into modern language as a complete way of engaging in discourse, both formally and informally. In that sense, as Castells mentions, network language is not only a social reality that needs to be understood, it is the ideal model of organization to produce modern social systems.

In the context of Algerian digital space, these linguistic changes, especially the hybridization of language, can be viewed as a sign of the digital user's new digital identity. This identity has come about by the user's existence in a culturally rich and varied virtual world, showing multiple societies, and the interminable interplay of a variety of local and foreign languages in one global digital space.

Franco-Arabic Writing

This type of writing is classified as an informal writing system. It appeared a couple of years ago and many young people, in particular, have adopted it into their texting or chatting habits. It is a result of the hybridization of language, in this case, Arabic and Latin letters and numbers.

Within this context, the researcher Khadija Hamdawi found in her study that the phenomenon of "Franco-Arabic" or "Arabizi" appears in widespread fashion among the youth of contemporary Algerians on social media. It is one of the most conspicuous linguistic phenomena of the moment and has impacted the Arabic language and linguistic communication between individuals.

The reason they use this language phenomenon in chatting terms is because of the wish, to save time and effort, to make talking quicker, and everybody knows that being inflexible to formal grammar makes life easier. This is also perceived as being easier than "normal", informal writing, when it is even compared to any foreign language (Abdiche 2018, 55).

From a sociological perspective, the new language used in digital communication – known as "Franco-Arabic" – is not merely a form of writing on social media platforms, but rather a sociolinguistic transformation that can be interpreted from several angles:

- **A rapid technological expression:** It represents a new language that does not adhere to traditional linguistic writing rules.
- **A symbolic shift in linguistic authority:** Between Classical Arabic, produced by official institutions such as schools and universities, and the new Franco-Arabic language born from digital platforms. This shift has created a new reality in which Classical Arabic no longer monopolizes the linguistic landscape of social media platforms.

One can also infer, as part of this new language, that the digital world is also defined by information speed, hence this language is created in network time which is likewise defined by speed; not only with regards to how fast it is created, but also the speed at which the audience processes it.

Growing Use of Colloquial Dialects within the Digital Environment

Due to the proliferation of communication technology across the digital environment, many users of Arabic now largely rely on colloquial dialects instead of Modern Standard Arabic to communicate in the Arab region. So many users are now selecting to write in spoken vernacular in all domains, instead of with formal linguistic rules.

Importantly, colloquial dialects were once solely confined to oral communication by individuals with each other, but with the expansion of the internet, and social media platforms (e.g., Facebook; X; Instagram; YouTube, etc.) colloquial dialects have now moved into digital spaces and have become the dominant form for much of the media content in those spaces.

It seems that researcher Kamal Gharbi attributes this phenomenon to several factors. First, Gharbi links the prominence of Algerian Darija to the long period of marginalization of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) during French colonialism in Algeria. Even following independence in 1962, Arabic was still largely limited to formal contexts - schools, official speeches, formal written works - which allowed Algerian Darija to become the dominant element of the linguistic market as the primary means of communication among the diverse linguistic groups in the country.

Researchers Fawzia Habbachi and Driss Ennouri further explain that this dominance is related to the notion that the Algerian individual has dual linguistic competence, which allows the individual to communicate and navigate the local linguistic varieties throughout the country.

Based on Pierre Bourdieu's contextualization of the linguistic market, capital, and social field, one can contend that in the framework of the internet, and in particular the social media platforms of Algeria, Modern Standard Arabic has lost considerable value in the digital linguistic market. This also means that the colloquial dialect (Darija) has overtaken Modern Standard Arabic as the dominant mode of communication for digital users within Algeria.

This has resulted in Darija possessing linguistic capital or some value in the market, especially when compared to Modern Standard Arabic. Furthermore, this transition gives Darija users more social

recognition and interactions especially with writers of Darija. In this case, the use of colloquial language becomes about community and the users of the language are included as part of that community.

In addition, this is much more than just a linguistic choice. Following sociologist Erving Goffman's theory of self-presentation which stipulates that individuals act or present themselves to others according to the interaction context they are in. The digital space, and social media specifically, could be seen as a stage where Algerians use colloquial language, conveying messages that they used in their ordinary daily lives (Goffman 2023, 1).

This allows these users to present themselves, which reflects their cultural identity or social belonging; therefore, alveolar language becomes a mode of self-representation that allows the users to construct and project their digital selves more truly in the digital environment.

Additionally, the Algerian digital user is speaking in colloquial dialect as a form of self-representation in the face of an informal digital audience. In this sense, Modern Standard Arabic does not have the same acceptance because the digital space is not formal like schools where the presence of Arabic is still expected at the institutional level.

In the words of American sociologist Harold Garfinkel, "Commonplace social activities come from individuals leaning on the informal, locally devised procedure to accomplish their activities." Language, and by implication social interaction, exist as fundamental pillars for the construction of social realities. Individuals create meaning through everyday simple interactions.

In this regard, the hybrid and colloquial language that characterize social media platforms in Algeria effectively serve as a tool to help create a digital life by allowing for meaning making in the digital community to occur. In many situations, Modern Standard Arabic does not have the flexibility to express particular social circumstances—like proverbs, jokes, and informal expressions—which tend to be better articulated in local or dialect forms idioms.

The Decline of the Symbolic Authority of Modern Standard Arabic in the Face of the Dominance of Popular Digital Content

In her examination of Algeria's digital space, researcher Fatima Bouhanani determined that the Algerian linguistic repertoire predominantly relies on Darija (colloquial Arabic) in various forms of interaction, and therefore, the use of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) diminished (Naili Daouda 2022).

Another Algerian study by Walida Haddadi, revealed that, more than half of respondents preferred using Darija (written in Arabic script), as their choice of interaction on social media, which made 14.30% of users. Darija, written in Latin script, came in second with use by 9.20% of respondents.

Additional analysis from a study conducted by Sonia Abdiche showed that the use of emojis and symbol language is the most commonly acknowledged type of chat language used at a 3.91% use rate among females and a 4% use rate among males. Next, we have Darija in Latin script (34.95% for females and 90% for males). Next, we have some combination of Arabic and Latin script (51.01% for males and 90% for females). Foreign languages had a relatively high use rate for males (52.99%) with an astounding drop-off for females (1.05%). Lastly, Modern Standard Arabic ultimately remains the least used language for both genders, clearly never exceeding 4%.

Another study by Aida Daira and Sarah Belmir (2016, 256) found that 53.08% of the sample prefer using Franco-Arabic (Arabic written in Latin script), while 34.6% use colloquial Arabic (Darija) in their digital communication.

The studies discussed have shown that social media users in Algeria mainly communicate and interact in a language of daily life, colloquial Arabic (Darija). This will be understood as the language best suited to convey social realities.

Rather, this linguistic shift can be understood in Pierre Bourdieu's theory in which he presents that a given language's symbolic value is not determined by an institution; rather a language begins to acquire social legitimacy through different communicative fields.

This is consistent with the findings of researcher Hicham Abada wherein he concluded from his study that messaging application users and bloggers are using Darija as a means of expression because it is unbound just as the internet is not unbound by strict language.

The Prevalence of Symbols, Images, and Emojis as Tools of Virtual Communication

The term emoji is an English word from Japanese that is made up of the prefix "e," which means picture, and "moji," which means character. Emojis are first introduced in Japan in 1995 as a prototype of 176 symbols used in the first mobile internet service system. Emojis have become popular as digital expressive symbols fastened to message texts, positioned on the social media platform, and are used to visually convey emotions and ideas.

In a survey of more than 7,000 Algerians on World Emoji Day, Rakuten Viber discovered that 58% of participants indicate using emojis regularly to express their feelings and opinions. This reflects their increased prevalence in digital communication via instant messaging (Wessar 2022, 1010).

This conclusion is affirmed through another study that revealed that 57.7% of the sample utilized visual symbols when communicating through applications such as Messenger, due to their benefits of saving time and effort and their ability to express emotion and ideas.

Additionally, a study conducted by researcher Safia Awadi revealed that facial emojis were the most frequently used symbols by the participants, at a frequency of 84.4%, because of the simplicity, clarity of meaning, and ability to express emotional states. Following those were activity and motion symbols (37.5% of participants).

The symbolic interactionist theory of sociology can be used to analyze the occurrence of emojis in online social media networks. Initially, the authors of symbolic interactionist theory stress that individuals do not act alone on other people (action perspective); however, individuals rely on the meanings they perceive from symbols (for example, signals, words, gestures).

Based on the findings of the previously outlined studies, emojis—when used in communication – can be categorized as a communicative behavior and social action as part of an individual's digital performance on the internet. Using the internet offers individuals an opportunity to manage their digital self-presentation to an audience that does not include face-to-face social engagement with another, i.e., without sight, sound, or touch that may comprise other social interactions. Therefore, individuals can use a non-verbal language of emojis to communicate meaning to others, often to substitute for a lack of communication that includes social interaction. In essence, emojis can be viewed as symbolic tools for expressing their emotional or social communications.

These practices are among broader changes in the modes of communication in digital spaces produced by the limits of what Marshall McLuhan called the medium. As McLuhan noted, people cannot mandate language planning policy on those who control technology; the internet and its platforms serve as technological determinism that influences the structure, vocabulary and register of language, thus changing the mode of communication.

Conclusion

In the end, it is clear that language has always held a significant place in research and academic inquiry, whether in classical sociology or in various modern sociological schools. This importance is especially evident in how language is viewed as a foundation for human communication and interaction, as well as in its symbolic role in power, dominance, and authority. It is also reflected in the factors of change and transformation that have influenced the very essence, meanings, and symbols of language throughout ancient and modern human history.

Since change is an inherent characteristic of societies – and language, as part of social and cultural heritage, evolves throughout its development – the modern era, marked by profound transformations in all aspects of social life, particularly through the powerful forces of information and communication technologies, has produced complex and multi-dimensional changes in language within digital environments. These changes cannot be reduced to mere technical or linguistic aspects; rather, they

are the result of a set of social and cultural interactions between language, society, and communication technologies, whereby language has transitioned from being a part of everyday real-life practice to becoming embedded in the global digital space of the internet.

These linguistic transformations can be interpreted in light of the new and accelerating social and cultural shifts, within the broader context of a global transformation driven by the effects and consequences of globalization. This is reflected in the hybridization and blending of multiple languages and dialects, such as the use of Franco-Arabic, as well as the use of images and symbols, among other changes – all aimed at conveying ideas and achieving communication goals as quickly and effortlessly as possible.

In this context, it has become evident that language use in Algeria's digital space is no longer limited to mere communication. Rather, these practices have evolved to take on additional social dimensions, expressing identity, belonging, and contributing to the redistribution of language as a form of social capital within the digital network.

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