

Beyond Arabization and Linguistic Competition: A Domain-Based Framework for Language Governance in Algeria

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Abstract

Algeria presents a particularly complex sociolinguistic configuration in which constitutional provisions, language-planning decisions, institutional practices, everyday communication, and the international value of languages do not always converge. Earlier approaches have often interpreted this configuration through binary oppositions, especially Arabic versus French or Arabization versus multilingualism. Although these oppositions capture important historical tensions, they provide an incomplete account of the ways in which different linguistic resources operate across contemporary Algerian society. This article therefore reconsiders the Algerian linguistic situation by distinguishing among language status, language function, and language domain. It adopts a qualitative documentary and interpretive approach based on foundational sociolinguistic scholarship, research on Algerian language planning, studies of language attitudes and multilingualism, and official constitutional provisions. The analysis shows that Arabic, Algerian Arabic varieties, Tamazight, French, and English do not occupy identical sociolinguistic positions. Arabic possesses central constitutional and institutional status; Algerian Arabic varieties remain fundamental to everyday interpersonal communication; Tamazight combines official recognition with cultural and identity functions and an ongoing need for institutional development; French retains historically accumulated functional capital in several professional, scientific, educational, and economic contexts; and English is acquiring increasing strategic value in international academic, scientific, technological, and professional communication. The article argues that multilingualism should therefore not be understood exclusively as a process of linguistic competition. Competition may occur within particular domains, while complementarity may characterize relationships across domains. On this basis, the article proposes a Domain-Based Linguistic Governance Model (DLGM), organized around five principles: national-language empowerment, institutional development of Tamazight, functional multilingualism, domain differentiation, and evidence-based policy evaluation. The proposed framework seeks to reconcile linguistic sovereignty, linguistic rights, educational effectiveness, social equity, and international participation without reducing language planning to the replacement of one language by another.

Keywords: Algeria; language policy; language planning; linguistic governance; Arabization; multilingualism; diglossia; Arabic; Tamazight; French; English; language domains.

1. Introduction

Language policy is frequently presented as a question of selecting, promoting, or restricting particular languages. Such an understanding is particularly attractive in contexts where language is closely connected with national identity, historical memory, political authority, or postcolonial reconstruction. Yet contemporary sociolinguistic scholarship has increasingly demonstrated that language policy cannot be reduced to official declarations. It also involves linguistic practices, ideological orientations, institutional arrangements, language management, and the distribution of linguistic resources across social domains (Shohamy, 2006; Spolsky, 2004, 2009).

This broader perspective is particularly appropriate for Algeria. The country's contemporary linguistic situation is the product of several overlapping historical processes, including the Arabic-Islamic cultural tradition, the long-standing presence of Amazigh languages and varieties, French colonial rule, post-independence Arabization, the gradual institutional recognition of Tamazight, and the increasing internationalization of higher education, science, technology, and professional communication.

The resulting linguistic ecology cannot easily be represented through a simple distinction between national and foreign languages. The constitutional position of a language, its everyday use, its institutional presence, its symbolic value, and its international utility may differ considerably. Consequently, a language may possess strong formal status without dominating every social domain, while another may have limited official recognition but substantial practical value in particular institutional settings.

The Algerian constitutional framework illustrates this distinction. The 2020 Constitution identifies Arabic as the national and official language and explicitly associates the state with the development and wider use of Arabic, including in scientific and technological fields. It also recognizes Tamazight as a national and official language and assigns the state responsibility for its promotion and development.

These provisions establish a significant legal framework for national linguistic recognition, but legal status alone cannot determine how languages are actually distributed across education, administration, scientific research, professional life, media, family communication, and international interaction.

French provides an especially clear example of the distinction between status and function. Although it does not possess official-language status in contemporary Algeria, its historical institutionalization has allowed it to retain considerable functional importance in several areas. Benrabah (2005, 2007) documented the complexity of Algerian language planning and the persistence of French within educational and institutional practices. Mostari (2004) similarly examined the relationship between Arabization and actual language use rather than treating official language planning as a complete description of linguistic practice.

English introduces a further dimension. Belmihoub (2018) describes the increasing presence of English in Algeria and examines its use across different domains, including its relationship with French. His research also indicates that language attitudes among Algerian university students cannot be reduced to a simple preference for one language over another.

English is increasingly associated with international academic communication, scientific knowledge, digital resources, professional mobility, and global economic participation.

These developments suggest that the Algerian linguistic situation should be examined through a more differentiated analytical framework. In particular, three concepts require explicit separation: language status, language function, and language domain.

Language status concerns the formal position assigned to a linguistic resource by law, institutions, or policy. Language function refers to the communicative, educational, scientific, cultural, professional, administrative, or symbolic purposes for which a language is used. Language domain refers to the social or institutional context in which a particular linguistic function occurs.

The central argument developed in this article is that these three dimensions overlap but should not be treated as equivalent. The distinction makes it possible to explain why Arabic can possess central constitutional status while French continues to possess functional capital in specific domains; why Tamazight can possess official recognition while still requiring institutional development; and why English can gain strategic value without simply replacing French or displacing Arabic from its national institutional position.

The article consequently proposes a Domain-Based Linguistic Governance Model (DLGM). The model does not seek to establish a new linguistic hierarchy. Instead, it proposes a framework through which Algeria could coordinate its linguistic resources according to national objectives, social needs, institutional capacities, and domain-specific requirements.

The article addresses four questions:

1. How can the Algerian linguistic situation be reconceptualized through the distinction among language status, function, and domain?
2. What does the history of Algerian language planning reveal about the relationship between official policy and actual linguistic practices?
3. How are Arabic, Algerian Arabic varieties, Tamazight, French, and English differently positioned across major social and institutional domains?
4. What principles could constitute a coherent and sustainable framework of linguistic governance for contemporary Algeria?

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

2.1. From language planning to language governance

The concept of language planning traditionally focused on deliberate attempts to influence the form, status, or acquisition of languages. Over time, however, language-policy scholarship expanded the field by recognizing that linguistic outcomes are not produced exclusively by centralized government decisions.

Spolsky (2004) distinguishes among language practices, language beliefs and ideologies, and language management. His approach is particularly useful for the Algerian case because it draws attention to the difference between what authorities prescribe and what speakers and institutions actually do. Language policy consequently operates at several levels, from the state to schools, families, workplaces, and other social institutions. Spolsky's later work further

develops the idea of language management and emphasizes the dynamic relationship between policy decisions and changing social circumstances.

Shohamy (2006) similarly argues that language policy is not confined to explicit legislation. Policies can also operate through educational practices, examinations, institutional mechanisms, and other instruments that influence language behavior. This perspective is important for Algeria because formal language policy has not always produced uniform linguistic behavior. The history of Arabization illustrates the point. The promotion of Arabic substantially transformed educational and institutional arrangements, but it did not simply erase the linguistic capital accumulated by French during the colonial period. Benrabah's historical analysis demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between Arabization, education, and continuing linguistic plurality.

Language governance is therefore used in this article in a broad sense to refer to the coordination of formal policy, institutional implementation, linguistic practices, and social objectives.

2.2. Diglossia and functional differentiation

Ferguson's (1959) concept of diglossia remains an important reference point for understanding situations in which linguistic varieties are distributed across differentiated social functions. His original formulation distinguishes between a High variety associated with formal contexts and a Low variety associated with more informal contexts.

Fishman (1967) subsequently distinguished between bilingualism and diglossia, emphasizing that the ability of individuals or communities to use more than one language is conceptually different from the social distribution of linguistic varieties across domains.

This distinction is particularly relevant to Algeria. The coexistence of formal Arabic and Algerian Arabic varieties should not be interpreted in exactly the same way as the coexistence of Arabic and French, because the relationships involve different historical trajectories, forms of social distribution, and institutional functions.

Moreover, the contemporary Algerian situation exceeds the classical two-variety model. It involves Arabic varieties, Tamazight, French, and increasingly English, each of which may assume different roles depending on the communicative context.

Consequently, diglossia remains useful as a concept for describing functional differentiation, but it is insufficient as a comprehensive model of Algerian multilingualism.

2.3. Language status, function, and domain

The distinction proposed in this article can be summarized as follows:

Language status answers the question: What does the legal or institutional framework recognize?

Language function answers the question: What communicative or social work does the language perform?

Language domain answers the question: Where does that function occur?

The distinction prevents a common analytical error: assuming that formal status and actual use are necessarily identical.

A language can have high constitutional status but limited use in a particular scientific domain. Another may lack official status but retain considerable professional utility. A third may have strong identity value while still requiring additional institutional infrastructure.

The Algerian case therefore requires a multidimensional rather than unidimensional conception of linguistic position.

2.4. Linguistic capital and political economy

Bourdieu's (1991) theory of linguistic and symbolic capital provides another useful dimension. Linguistic resources do not have identical social value. Their value is partly determined by the institutions, professions, markets, and social groups that recognize particular forms of linguistic competence.

This perspective helps explain the continuing functional importance of French in Algeria. Its position cannot be explained solely by its formal status. French accumulated institutional capital through its historical role in administration, education, professional life, and scientific communication.

English presents a different configuration. Its value is increasingly connected to global scientific, technological, academic, and economic networks. Ricento (2015) emphasizes that the international position of English is linked to political-economic structures and to its perceived value for socioeconomic mobility and global participation.

Thus, the linguistic value of French and English should not be interpreted solely through their relationship with Arabic. Their value is also produced through different historical and global processes.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study adopts a qualitative documentary and interpretive research design. It does not seek to estimate the frequency with which Algerian speakers use particular languages, nor does it claim to provide a nationally representative sociolinguistic survey.

Instead, the study examines established theoretical literature, Algeria-focused sociolinguistic research, official constitutional provisions, and contemporary scholarship addressing linguistic attitudes and the changing position of English.

The purpose is analytical and conceptual: to develop a framework capable of explaining the relationship among linguistic status, function, and domain.

3.2. Documentary corpus

The documentary corpus was organized into four categories.

The first category consists of foundational sociolinguistic scholarship, particularly Ferguson (1959), Fishman (1967), Bourdieu (1991), and Spolsky (2004, 2009).

The second category consists of language-policy and language-rights scholarship, including Shohamy (2006), May (2015), and Ricento (2015). May's work is particularly relevant because it emphasizes the potential gap between formal language rights and their practical implementation.

The third category consists of Algeria-focused research, particularly Benrabah (2005, 2007), Mostari (2004), Aitsiselmi (2006), and Belmihoub (2018). Benrabah's major studies provide an extensive historical account of Algerian language planning, while Mostari examines Arabization and language use from a sociolinguistic perspective. The fourth category consists of official policy documentation, particularly the 2020 Constitution of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. The constitutional provisions explicitly establish Arabic as a national and official language and Tamazight as a national and official language, while providing for institutions concerned with their development.

3.3. Analytical procedure

The analysis proceeded in four stages.

First, the principal theoretical concepts relevant to multilingual societies were identified.

Second, the historical development of Algerian language planning was examined to identify the relationship between formal policy and linguistic practice.

Third, the major linguistic resources were mapped onto principal social and institutional domains.

Fourth, the findings were synthesized into the proposed Domain-Based Linguistic Governance Model.

Because the study is conceptual, the model should be regarded as a theoretical policy framework rather than an empirically validated causal model.

4. Historical Development of Language Planning in Algeria

4.1. Colonial language restructuring

The contemporary Algerian linguistic situation cannot be separated from the colonial transformation of linguistic institutions.

French colonial rule did not simply add another language to an existing linguistic repertoire. It altered the institutional distribution of linguistic resources by establishing French as a principal language of administration, formal education, and elite institutional communication.

The resulting linguistic hierarchy became embedded in educational structures, professional practices, documentation, scientific resources, and institutional routines. This historical accumulation helps explain why the post-independence promotion of Arabic did not automatically eliminate the functional presence of French.

Aitsiselmi (2006) situates the post-independence language question within this historical context, noting the importance of Arabization as a response to the linguistic and cultural consequences of French colonial rule.

4.2. Arabization and post-independence reconstruction

Following independence in 1962, Arabization became a major component of national reconstruction. Its objectives extended beyond linguistic change. It was connected to national identity, cultural recovery, educational restructuring, and the reduction of dependence on the former colonial language.

Benrabah (2005) provides a detailed historical account of this process and emphasizes the complexity of language planning in Algeria. His analysis shows that language planning developed within a broader context of social, political, educational, and historical change.

Benrabah (2007) further demonstrates that language-in-education planning produced complex outcomes and that the relationship between Arabization and French remained significant within educational policy and practice.

The lesson for contemporary policy is important. A language policy can modify institutional status without immediately transforming all forms of linguistic capital. The historical accumulation of linguistic resources continues to influence institutional practices long after formal policy changes.

4.3. Recognition of Tamazight

The recognition of Tamazight constitutes a major development in Algeria's language-policy framework.

The 2020 Constitution identifies Tamazight as a national and official language and states that the state works for its promotion and development in its linguistic varieties used across the national territory. It also provides for an Algerian Academy of the Tamazight Language.

This development changes the conceptual structure of Algerian language policy. Tamazight can no longer be treated simply as a regional or informal linguistic resource within a binary Arabic–French framework.

At the same time, formal recognition and institutional realization are not identical. May (2015) emphasizes more generally that language rights can remain incomplete when formal principles are not translated into institutional practices.

For Tamazight, effective institutionalization requires educational provision, teacher preparation, terminology, publishing, research, media development, and digital resources. The relevant policy question is therefore no longer simply whether Tamazight is recognized, but how its constitutional status can be translated into sustainable institutional capacity.

5. The Contemporary Algerian Linguistic Ecology

The Algerian linguistic situation can be analytically represented through five major linguistic resources: Arabic, Algerian Arabic varieties, Tamazight, French, and English.

The following classification is conceptual rather than statistical.

Linguistic resource	Principal position	Major functions	Main form of linguistic value
Arabic	National and official	Administration, formal education, legislation, national culture, institutional communication	Constitutional and institutional
Algerian Arabic varieties	Everyday linguistic resources	Family interaction, informal communication, popular culture, everyday commerce	Communicative and social

Tamazight	National and official	Cultural expression, community communication, education, identity, institutional development	Cultural, identity-based, constitutional
French	Foreign language	Professional communication, selected scientific fields, higher education, media, economic activity	Historically accumulated functional capital
English	International foreign language	Science, higher education, international communication, technology, professional mobility	Global strategic capital

6. Arabic: Status, Capacity, and Functional Empowerment

Arabic occupies a distinctive position because its constitutional status is directly linked to national institutional life.

The 2020 Constitution not only recognizes Arabic as the national and official language but also establishes a Higher Council of the Arabic Language and associates its work with the development and generalization of Arabic in scientific and technological fields and with translation into Arabic.

This is significant because it indicates that the constitutional conception of Arabic is not limited to cultural symbolism. It explicitly includes scientific and technological development.

Nevertheless, formal recognition does not by itself guarantee functional capacity.

A language becomes institutionally powerful when it possesses the resources required to perform complex functions. These include:

- specialized terminology;
- scientific publishing;
- technical dictionaries;
- translation infrastructure;
- digital corpora;
- language technologies;
- professional communication resources;
- academic databases;
- teacher training;
- research networks.

Consequently, the strengthening of Arabic should not be reduced to the replacement of foreign terminology or the symbolic restriction of other languages.

A more sustainable objective is functional empowerment.

The distinction is important because protection and empowerment are not identical. Protection seeks to prevent marginalization; empowerment seeks to expand the domains in which a language can operate effectively.

For Arabic, the second objective is particularly important.

7. Algerian Arabic Varieties and Everyday Communication

The existence of Algerian Arabic varieties should not be interpreted as evidence of a deficiency in formal Arabic.

Their principal significance lies in the functions they perform in everyday social interaction.

They are used extensively in contexts such as:

- family communication;
- interpersonal interaction;
- informal commerce;
- popular culture;
- everyday socialization;
- digital interaction.

The distinction between formal Arabic and Algerian Arabic varieties is therefore fundamentally functional.

Ferguson's (1959) conception of diglossia helps explain the principle of differentiated linguistic functions, while Fishman's (1967) distinction between bilingualism and diglossia makes it possible to avoid treating individual multilingual competence and societal functional distribution as identical phenomena.

A sensible language policy should therefore avoid interpreting the existence of Algerian Arabic varieties as something that must be eliminated in order to strengthen Arabic.

The more appropriate objective is complementarity: formal Arabic can perform institutional and formal functions while Algerian Arabic varieties remain central to everyday interpersonal communication.

8. Tamazight: From Recognition to Institutional Capacity

The constitutional recognition of Tamazight represents an important development in the contemporary Algerian language-policy landscape.

However, recognition alone cannot guarantee linguistic vitality.

The development of Tamazight requires a policy infrastructure capable of connecting constitutional status with practical opportunities for language use.

Four areas are particularly important.

First, educational provision must be developed where there is sustained demand.

Second, teacher preparation must be sufficiently strong to support effective instruction.

Third, linguistic resources, including terminology and teaching materials, must continue to be developed.

Fourth, Tamazight needs a substantial presence in publishing, media, research, and digital environments.

The objective should not be uniformity. The Constitution itself recognizes the linguistic varieties of Tamazight in use throughout the national territory.

Consequently, a flexible approach is preferable to an overly centralized model that treats linguistic diversity within Tamazight as a problem to be eliminated.

The broader principle is that linguistic rights become meaningful when institutional systems allow speakers to use and develop their linguistic resources in practice.

9. French and Historically Accumulated Functional Capital

French occupies an unusual position in Algeria.

It has no official-language status in the contemporary constitutional framework, yet it continues to possess substantial functional value in particular domains.

This apparent contradiction becomes less problematic when status and function are distinguished.

French accumulated considerable institutional capital during the colonial period. That capital was reproduced through education, professional training, scientific literature, administrative practices, economic networks, and institutional continuity.

Benrabah (2005, 2007) documents the persistence of French within the broader history of Algerian language planning. Mostari (2004) similarly demonstrates that the relationship between Arabization and language use cannot be reduced to formal declarations of language status.

The continuing presence of French should therefore not automatically be interpreted in either of two simplistic ways.

The first would be to consider French's continued use proof that Arabization has failed.

The second would be to conclude that French should therefore retain an unrestricted institutional position.

Both positions overlook the central issue: functional distribution.

A more productive question is which domains continue to rely on French, why that reliance persists, and whether Arabic or English can gradually develop the capacity to perform some of these functions.

This approach allows language policy to distinguish historical continuity from future institutional objectives.

10. English and the Changing Value of International Languages

English introduces a different type of linguistic capital into Algeria.

French's position is strongly connected with historical institutionalization. English derives much of its contemporary value from global science, technology, higher education, digital communication, international mobility, and global economic networks.

Belmihoub (2018) provides an important analysis of the increasing presence of English in Algeria and its relationship with other languages, particularly French. His study of English in Algeria also demonstrates that the language is used across a range of domains and that competition between English and French is becoming an important component of the country's linguistic landscape.

Belmihoub's (2018) research on language attitudes among Algerian engineering students is also relevant. The study found positive attitudes toward several languages and reported that respondents associated English with economic opportunity and knowledge transfer, while multilingualism itself received substantial support.

These findings should not be interpreted as evidence that English is inevitably destined to replace French.

Rather, English is acquiring a distinct form of strategic value.

Its expansion creates opportunities for:

- international scientific communication;
- access to global academic literature;
- research collaboration;
- international publication;
- digital knowledge;
- professional mobility.

At the same time, an accelerated shift toward English can create challenges involving teacher preparation, unequal access, disciplinary terminology, pedagogical adaptation, and institutional readiness.

Consequently, English should be developed strategically rather than introduced through an assumption of automatic linguistic substitution.

11. Beyond the Arabic–French Binary

The traditional Arabic–French framework remains indispensable for understanding the history of modern Algerian language planning. Nevertheless, it is increasingly insufficient for describing the contemporary linguistic ecology.

Three developments make this clear.

First, Tamazight has acquired national and official status.

Second, English has gained increasing international and academic value.

Third, digital communication has expanded multilingual practices and reduced the relevance of strictly compartmentalized linguistic environments.

The contemporary linguistic configuration is therefore better represented as a multidimensional system:

Arabic ↔ Algerian Arabic varieties ↔ Tamazight ↔ French ↔ English

The arrows should not be interpreted as indicating a single continuum or uniform competition. They represent relationships that can vary according to domain.

For example, two languages may compete within higher education while remaining complementary in family communication. Two others may be complementary in cultural production but competitive in a particular professional field.

The key analytical proposition is therefore:

Languages may compete within domains while remaining complementary across domains.

This proposition provides the foundation for the model proposed below.

12. The Domain-Based Linguistic Governance Model

12.1. Rationale for the model

The preceding analysis indicates that a language-policy framework based exclusively on linguistic competition is inadequate for Algeria.

The proposed Domain-Based Linguistic Governance Model is designed to account simultaneously for:

1. constitutional status;
2. institutional capacity;

3. domain-specific functions;
4. multilingual competence;
5. social and developmental outcomes;
6. continuous policy evaluation.

The model is therefore not intended to establish a new ranking of languages. Its purpose is to provide a mechanism for coordinating linguistic resources.

12.2. Definition

The Domain-Based Linguistic Governance Model is defined as follows:

A language-policy framework in which linguistic resources are governed according to their constitutional status, social functions, institutional capacities, and domain-specific requirements, with the aim of reconciling national linguistic development, linguistic rights, multilingual competence, and international communicative needs.

The model consists of five principal stages.

12.3. Stage 1: Constitutional and legal status

The first stage establishes the formal legal framework.

For Algeria, this includes the constitutional recognition of Arabic and Tamazight as national and official languages. The 2020 Constitution also assigns institutional responsibilities for their development.

Legal status provides legitimacy and establishes policy direction.

It does not, however, determine all subsequent linguistic practices.

12.4. Stage 2: Institutional capacity

The second stage concerns the institutional resources required to translate formal status into actual language use.

These resources include:

- legislation;
- educational systems;
- teacher preparation;
- terminology;
- publishing;
- research;
- translation;
- digital infrastructure;
- administrative procedures;
- professional resources.

This stage is crucial because a language cannot acquire sustained institutional functionality through legal recognition alone.

12.5. Stage 3: Domain-specific language functions

The third stage determines the principal functions required in different domains.

Relevant domains include:

- state administration and legislation;
- education;
- science and research;
- economic and professional life;
- media;
- culture and heritage;
- international communication.

The objective is not to impose a rigid language monopoly in every domain but to identify the linguistic resources required to perform particular functions effectively.

12.6. Stage 4: Multilingual competence

The fourth stage concerns individual and collective competence.

A successful language policy should not only decide which languages institutions use. It should equip citizens with the linguistic repertoires necessary to participate in the domains that matter to them.

Multilingual competence should therefore be understood as a national resource.

12.7. Stage 5: Social, educational, scientific, and economic outcomes

The final stage concerns policy consequences.

Language policy should be evaluated in relation to:

- educational achievement;
- access;
- equity;
- scientific production;
- employability;
- cultural participation;
- administrative effectiveness;
- international engagement.

The model therefore treats language policy as an iterative process rather than a one-time political decision.

13. Figure 1. Domain-Based Linguistic Governance Model for Algeria

The figure represents the policy process as a sequence from constitutional and legal status through institutional capacity and domain-specific language functions toward multilingual competence and social, educational, scientific, and economic outcomes. It also represents policy evaluation as a feedback mechanism rather than as a terminal stage.

The five linguistic resources are positioned around the domain layer because their relationships cannot be adequately represented as a single hierarchy. The figure distinguishes complementarity from domain-specific competition. This distinction is central to the argument of the article.

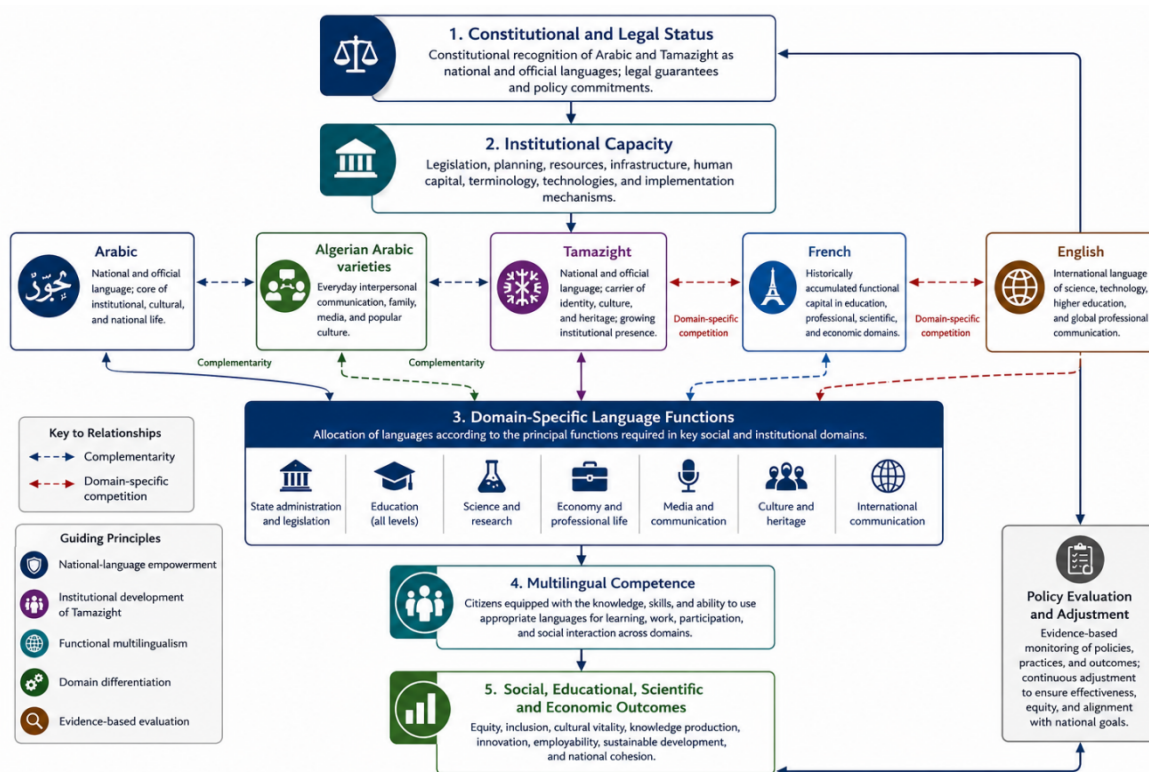


Figure 1. Domain-Based Linguistic Governance Model (DLGM) for Algeria.

14. Five Principles of the DLGM

14.1. National-language empowerment

Arabic should remain central to national institutional life, but the objective should be functional empowerment rather than symbolic exclusivity.

This requires expanding Arabic's capacity in scientific, technological, professional, administrative, and digital domains.

The constitutional framework itself provides a basis for this orientation by explicitly linking the development of Arabic to scientific and technological fields.

14.2. Institutional development of Tamazight

The constitutional status of Tamazight should be supported by practical institutional capacity.

This includes:

- educational programs;
- teacher preparation;
- research;
- publishing;
- terminology;
- media;
- digital resources.

Implementation should take regional and sociolinguistic variation into account rather than imposing a uniform model on all communities.

14.3. Functional multilingualism

Foreign languages should be treated as complementary resources whose use is determined by communicative and institutional needs.

This does not mean that all languages should have identical status.

It means that multilingual competence should be cultivated because different linguistic resources provide access to different forms of knowledge, communication, and participation.

14.4. Domain differentiation

Language planning should identify the principal linguistic objectives of different domains.

Domain	Proposed policy orientation
Constitution and national legislation	Arabic
Central state administration	Arabic
Formal national education	Strong Arabic capacity
Tamazight education	Tamazight where institutional and social conditions support provision
Everyday interpersonal communication	Respect for existing linguistic practices
Cultural heritage	Arabic and Tamazight
Higher education	Flexible multilingualism
Scientific research	Arabic development combined with strong English competence
International academic communication	Strong English competence
Established professional domains	Pragmatic multilingual use
Digital communication	Multilingual competence

This table is normative. It does not claim that current practice corresponds perfectly to these proposed distributions.

14.5. Evidence-based evaluation

Language policy should be evaluated through measurable outcomes rather than ideological assumptions.

Possible indicators include:

- language proficiency;
- educational achievement;
- access to education;
- teacher competence;
- scientific publication;
- research collaboration;
- employability;
- administrative efficiency;

- cultural participation;
- intergenerational transmission;
- public attitudes.

The policy should then be adjusted according to evidence.

15. Relationships among Complementarity and Competition

The model distinguishes two major forms of relationship.

15.1. Complementarity

Complementarity occurs when different linguistic resources perform different functions without necessarily displacing one another.

An example is the relationship between formal Arabic and Algerian Arabic varieties. Their functions may differ substantially without requiring the elimination of either.

Another example may occur when Arabic supports national institutional communication while English provides access to international scientific literature.

15.2. Domain-specific competition

Competition occurs when two or more languages seek to perform substantially the same function within the same domain.

This is more clearly visible where French and English compete for international or professional functions.

It may also arise where Arabic, French, and English overlap within higher education.

The concept of domain-specific competition is therefore more precise than describing the entire Algerian linguistic ecology as a generalized linguistic conflict.

16. Language Policy and Political Economy

Language choices are partly shaped by material incentives.

A language can become valuable because it provides access to:

- employment;
- scientific knowledge;
- higher education;
- international mobility;
- professional networks;
- economic opportunities.

This perspective is particularly important when considering English.

Ricento (2015) places English within a broader political-economic framework in which global languages can become associated with socioeconomic mobility.

The same general principle can be applied to French, although its Algerian linguistic capital has a different historical origin.

French's value is partly the product of accumulated institutional infrastructure.

English's value is increasingly associated with international academic and economic networks. Arabic's future functional capital depends partly on whether institutions continue to develop the resources necessary for Arabic to function effectively in increasingly specialized domains.

Tamazight's institutional value similarly depends on whether constitutional recognition is accompanied by sustainable educational, cultural, and technological infrastructure. Language policy is therefore inseparable from questions of access and opportunity.

17. Linguistic Rights and Social Equity

Language governance also has an important equity dimension.

Formal language recognition does not necessarily guarantee equal access to linguistic resources.

May (2015) emphasizes the gap that may arise between language-rights principles and their practical implementation.

In the Algerian context, two forms of inequality deserve particular attention.

The first concerns unequal access to national linguistic resources. If Arabic or Tamazight is formally recognized but educational and institutional resources remain insufficient, legal status does not automatically translate into meaningful access.

The second concerns unequal access to international linguistic capital. If high-value professional or academic opportunities increasingly depend on English or French proficiency, individuals with unequal access to quality foreign-language education may experience additional disadvantage.

Consequently, multilingualism should not be promoted without considering the distribution of linguistic opportunities.

The objective should be to broaden access to linguistic resources rather than to transform language into another mechanism of social stratification.

18. Implications for Higher Education

Higher education is arguably the domain in which the tensions among national language development, established professional practice, and internationalization become most visible.

A purely monolingual approach risks restricting access to international research.

An exclusively foreign-language-oriented approach risks weakening the development of national academic discourse.

A domain-based approach offers a third possibility.

Arabic should retain and strengthen its capacity for:

- academic instruction;
- disciplinary terminology;
- research dissemination;
- institutional administration;
- national scholarly communication.

English should be developed for:

- international publication;
- scientific collaboration;
- international conferences;
- global databases;
- research mobility.

French may continue to have functional relevance in disciplines and institutions where its accumulated capital remains significant.

The policy objective should therefore not be rapid replacement but gradual development of linguistic capacity.

19. Implications for Language-in-Education Policy

Language education should be designed as a cumulative multilingual trajectory rather than as a sequence of abrupt linguistic substitutions.

At the primary level, priority should be given to strong literacy and conceptual development, with appropriate opportunities for Tamazight where relevant and carefully designed foreign-language instruction.

At the secondary level, learners should progressively develop multilingual competence and awareness of language use across academic and social domains.

At the higher-education level, language policy should become more flexible because disciplinary requirements differ.

At the postgraduate and research level, strong English competence is increasingly important for international academic participation, while Arabic academic literacy remains important for national scholarly communication.

Such a model avoids the false choice between national-language development and international-language competence.

20. Implications for Scientific and Technological Development

The relationship between language and scientific development deserves particular attention.

A national language becomes more capable of supporting scientific and technological activity when it possesses:

- standardized terminology;
- specialized dictionaries;
- scientific journals;
- technical translation;
- digital resources;
- language-processing technologies;
- academic training materials.

The development of these resources should therefore constitute a central element of Arabic language policy.

At the same time, international scientific participation requires access to languages through which global research is disseminated.

English consequently has an important instrumental role.

The appropriate strategy is not to choose between Arabic and English but to develop the capacity to use both for different purposes.

This is a central application of the DLGM.

21. Implications for French

The proposed framework also changes how French should be discussed.

Instead of asking whether French is "good" or "bad" for Algeria, policy analysis should ask:

1. Where is French currently functional?
2. Why has that function persisted?
3. What institutional capital supports it?
4. Can Arabic assume some of these functions?
5. Can English assume others?
6. What would be the educational and economic consequences of rapid substitution?

This approach removes the question from purely ideological debate.

It also permits gradual policy change without denying the actual linguistic resources available within Algerian institutions.

22. Implications for English

The same reasoning applies to English.

The increasing value of English should not automatically be interpreted as a reason to replace French.

Instead, English should be developed where it provides clear added value, particularly in:

- science;
- technology;
- higher education;
- international research;
- digital communication;
- international professional mobility.

Belmihoub's (2018) analysis is particularly useful here because it places English within the broader multilingual ecology of Algeria rather than presenting it as an isolated foreign-language phenomenon.

The transition toward greater English competence should nevertheless be accompanied by:

- teacher development;
- curriculum reform;
- disciplinary language support;
- appropriate assessment;
- access policies;
- institutional planning.

Otherwise, language reform may create new inequalities rather than simply expanding opportunities.

23. Comparative Significance

The Algerian case has broader implications for language-policy research.

First, it demonstrates the limits of viewing multilingual societies exclusively through language competition.

Second, it illustrates the importance of distinguishing formal status from actual function.

Third, it shows why institutional capacity is essential to the realization of language rights.

Fourth, it highlights the influence of historical and global forms of linguistic capital.

Spolsky's work is particularly relevant because it emphasizes the multidimensional nature of language policy and the importance of practices, beliefs, and management.

Shohamy's approach similarly demonstrates why official policy should not be treated as the only form of language policy. May's discussion of language rights draws attention to the difference between formal principles and their practical realization. Ricento's political-economic perspective demonstrates why the global value of English cannot be understood independently of wider structures of mobility, knowledge, and economic opportunity.

These theoretical perspectives support the broader proposition that Algeria's linguistic future should be approached through governance rather than through a simple winner-versus-loser model.

24. Discussion

The analysis has several theoretical implications.

First, the concept of linguistic competition should be supplemented by functional differentiation. Competition is real, but it is generally domain-specific.

Second, language status should be distinguished from linguistic capital. A language may possess constitutional recognition without possessing equal capital in every professional or scientific field.

Third, institutional capacity should be treated as an intervening variable between language policy and linguistic outcomes.

Fourth, multilingual competence should be treated as a potential national resource rather than as evidence of linguistic fragmentation.

These observations lead to the following analytical sequence:

Constitutional status → institutional capacity → domain allocation → multilingual competence → social outcomes → policy evaluation.

The sequence should not be understood as strictly linear. The final stage feeds back into policy revision, allowing language governance to respond to changing educational, scientific, economic, and social conditions.

This feedback mechanism is essential because linguistic environments are not static.

25. Limitations

This study has four principal limitations.

First, the research is documentary and conceptual rather than survey-based. It therefore does not provide quantitative estimates of language use among the Algerian population.

Second, linguistic practices vary by region, age, educational level, profession, social network, and institutional context. The proposed domain framework should consequently not be interpreted as a uniform description of all Algerians.

Third, the position of English is changing, particularly in higher education and scientific communication. Its long-term impact requires longitudinal investigation.

Fourth, the DLGM is a proposed conceptual framework. Its empirical validity remains to be tested through field research.

These limitations are important because they prevent the model from being presented as an empirically established causal theory.

26. Future Research

Future research should operationalize the DLGM through five measurable dimensions.

The first is status: what do laws and official policies prescribe?

The second is capacity: what institutional resources are available for each language?

The third is practice: what languages are actually used?

The fourth is domain: where does each linguistic resource perform particular functions?

The fifth is outcome: what educational, social, economic, cultural, and scientific consequences follow?

A national empirical research program could combine:

- sociolinguistic surveys;
- language-attitude questionnaires;
- institutional language audits;
- classroom observations;
- interviews with policymakers and educators;
- corpus analysis;
- linguistic-landscape analysis;
- higher-education studies;
- longitudinal research.

Particular attention should be given to the changing relationship between French and English. Research should determine whether increasing English competence actually reduces French use in particular domains or whether the two languages develop partially complementary functions.

Research should also examine whether increased English provision is distributed equitably across socioeconomic and geographical groups.

27. Conclusion

The Algerian linguistic situation cannot adequately be understood through a simple opposition between Arabic and French or between Arabization and multilingualism. These categories remain important for understanding the country's linguistic history, but contemporary Algeria presents a more differentiated linguistic ecology.

Arabic possesses central constitutional and institutional status. Algerian Arabic varieties perform indispensable everyday communicative functions. Tamazight has national and official status and requires continued institutional development. French retains historically accumulated functional capital in several professional, scientific, educational, and economic contexts. English is acquiring increasing strategic value through international science, higher education, technology, and global communication.

The central argument of this article is that these linguistic resources should be analyzed through three distinct but interconnected dimensions: status, function, and domain.

This distinction makes it possible to move beyond a generalized conception of linguistic competition.

A language may compete with another within a specific institutional domain while remaining complementary to it elsewhere. Arabic and Algerian Arabic varieties illustrate functional differentiation. Arabic and English may complement one another in national and international academic communication. French and English may compete for certain professional and scientific functions. Tamazight and Arabic may perform complementary cultural and identity functions while sharing some educational and institutional domains.

The Domain-Based Linguistic Governance Model proposed in this article responds to this complexity through five principles: national-language empowerment, institutional development of Tamazight, functional multilingualism, domain differentiation, and evidence-based policy evaluation.

The model does not reject Arabization. It reframes its sustainable objective as the functional empowerment of Arabic rather than the symbolic elimination of other linguistic resources.

It does not deny the practical value of French. It distinguishes the language's historically accumulated functional capital from its constitutional status.

It does not reduce Tamazight to a symbolic identity marker. It treats constitutional recognition as the starting point for institutional development.

Nor does it advocate the simple replacement of French by English. Instead, it treats English as an increasingly important international linguistic resource whose development should be strategic, gradual, and accompanied by adequate educational and institutional preparation.

The principal policy implication is therefore that Algeria does not have to choose between national linguistic development and multilingual competence.

A more sustainable alternative is coordinated multilingual governance.

Such governance would strengthen Arabic as the principal language of national institutional life, support the effective development of Tamazight, respect the everyday functions of Algerian Arabic varieties, manage the domain-specific use of French pragmatically, and develop English strategically for international scientific and professional participation.

The fundamental policy question should consequently shift from asking which language should dominate to asking how Algeria can organize its linguistic resources so that national identity, linguistic rights, educational effectiveness, social equity, scientific development, and international participation reinforce rather than undermine one another.

The Algerian case thus supports a broader sociolinguistic conclusion: multilingualism does not become a policy problem merely because several languages coexist. The greater challenge arises when institutions lack an adequate framework for coordinating the functions, values, and access conditions associated with those languages.

The future of Algerian language planning therefore depends less on eliminating linguistic plurality than on developing the institutional capacity to govern that plurality coherently.

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