

# The Teaching of Two Foreign Languages (French/English) in Primary Education in Algeria

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## Abstract

The teaching of French in Algeria, beginning in primary school, can be attributed to various historical and social factors. French and English are introduced alongside a mixture of languages starting from the third year of primary education in Algerian schools. In this context, one may question whether this constitutes a challenge or a linguistic asset, particularly following the requirement to introduce English at the same stage as French. Several phenomena emerge, including language transfer, interference, and code-switching.

## Keywords

French and English teaching, primary school, interference, transfer, code-switching.

## 1 Introduction

At present, the entire world is characterised by linguistic and cultural diversity. Plurilingualism occupies a central place in current didactic and educational considerations. In this respect, J.-C. Beacco (2007) asserts that “learning foreign languages is a gateway to the world and a means of achieving a deeper intercultural understanding.” Similarly, Nelson Mandela (1996) confirmed that “learning a new language is one of the most enriching experiences a human being can have.”

Algeria, as a quintessentially plurilingual country, offers a vibrant environment. Among Arabic, the mother tongue and official language, Tamazight, French, an inherited language from colonisation that is still widely used in education and English and was recently introduced at the primary level, new challenges have emerged concerning the coexistence of several languages within the same school setting.

As a teacher-researcher, my interest has focused on this plurilingual situation and, more specifically, on the teaching and learning challenges of French as a foreign language in relation to English among fifth-year learners. This reflection can be approached in two directions: first, the current educational policy promotes the development of plurilingualism from an early age; second, teachers frequently encounter pedagogical and linguistic difficulties when faced with this new didactic configuration. Moreover, this raises the question of whether the teaching system for both languages aligns with the needs of plurilingual education, particularly in light of recent changes in the Algerian educational system.

This has led us to formulate the following research question:

To what extent does the integration of English at the primary level affect the teaching and learning of French?

To explore this question further, we have developed the following subquestions:

What difficulties do fifth-year primary pupils encounter when learning French simultaneously with English?

What measures are employed by teachers to implement plurilingualism in Algerian primary schools?

To address these questions, we propose the following hypotheses:

The simultaneous learning of French and English may lead to linguistic interference that hinders language acquisition among primary school learners.

Educational policies need to be reformed to meet pedagogical needs in foreign language teaching and to improve their implementation in the primary school curriculum.

Teaching both languages enhances Algerian learners' linguistic competencies from an early age.

The methodology chosen for this study is a mixed-method, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Quantitative study: A questionnaire will be designed and distributed to foreign language (French/English) teachers at the primary level in several selected schools in the Wilaya of Bordj Bou Arréridj, Algeria. The questionnaire focused on their perceptions and experiences in teaching and learning languages.

Qualitative study: Direct classroom observations of French and English lessons will be conducted to collect data on pedagogical practices and classroom interactions.

## 1. Multilingualism

The term multilingualism is composed of the prefix multi, meaning “several,” the root lingue derived from “language,” and the suffix -ism, which describes the condition of a community (or person) being plurilingual, that is, capable of expressing themselves in several languages.

The Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales defines plurilingual as follows: “A person who, within a community, uses several languages depending on the type of communication (relations with family, with administration, etc.)” (<https://gerflint.fr/Base/MondeMed7/kebieche.pdf>).

According to Le Dictionnaire de didactique du français langue étrangère et seconde, “Plurilingualism is an individual’s ability to employ linguistic reality and to coordinate one language with another in certain communicative situations” (Jean-Pierre Cuq, op. cit., p. 195).

## 3. Plurilingual Competence in Algeria

Plurilingualism can manifest in various ways. On the one hand, it can be viewed from an individual perspective, referring to a speaker’s ability to communicate in multiple languages. On the other hand, it may be understood from a collective or institutional perspective, where diverse linguistic varieties coexist within an institution, a society, or a larger group.

The plurilingual approach emphasises that an individual’s linguistic experience is progressively enriched, beginning with the family language, extending to those of the social group, and subsequently to other languages acquired through education or personal experience. Rather than compartmentalising these languages and cultures, the individual develops an overarching communicative competence in which their linguistic knowledge and experiences interact and complement one another (Council of Europe, 2001).

## 4. Language Contact

Language contact refers to the phenomenon in which two or more languages are used either simultaneously or alternately by the same individuals or within the same community. This phenomenon may arise naturally in plurilingual contexts or result from structured learning situations, such as those encountered in the teaching or learning of foreign languages.

### 4.1 Mother tongue

The mother tongue is characterised as a naturally acquired language. According to Gotaki (1985), the acquisition of the mother tongue occurs unconsciously and is learned spontaneously by a child through experiences shaped by contact with their immediate environment.

#### 4.1.1 Arabic

Arabic was the first national and official language of Algeria. It is the language of the State as well as of the people and is widely used in daily life by the majority of Algerians. It is present across all of the country’s institutions.

Two primary forms of Arabic are distinguished:

**Classical Arabic:** This is used as the language of instruction and plays a central role in the official linguistic landscape. It is “perceived as a fundamental element of national identity and a symbol of the unity of the Algerian people” (Jacques Leclerc, Québec, TLFQ, Université). However, from a social perspective, this form of Arabic is not commonly used in everyday communication. It is acquired primarily through schooling and is reserved for formal contexts.

**Dialectal Arabic** is a form derived from classical Arabic and enriched by the influence of other languages, such as Berber, French, and Turkish. According to Khaoula Taleb-Ibrahimi, “Dialectal Arabic is the mother tongue of 72% of the Algerian population” (<https://doi.org/10.4000/multilinguales.1632>). Also known as Darija, it is a spoken language that lacks a standardised writing system. This linguistic variety is the native language of the majority of Algerians. It is generally not used in official documents, and its written usage is mainly confined to communication on social media platforms or text messaging. Conversely, it is omnipresent in everyday life, public spaces, cafés, streets, and informal and familial conversations.

#### 4.1.2 Berber (Tamazight)

Berber is the ancestral language of Algeria and North Africa. The Romans introduced the term Berber to designate the indigenous peoples of this region. However, speakers prefer to identify themselves as Imazighen (plural of Amazigh, meaning “free man”) and refer to their language accordingly.

## 4.2 Foreign Language

The teaching of a foreign language is based on a pedagogical interaction in which the teacher employs various strategies and methods to convey linguistic and cultural knowledge related to the target language. As Cuq and Gruca (2005) noted, teaching a foreign language involves not only transmitting a linguistic system but also providing tools to understand a different culture, which requires ongoing reflection on teaching methods and pedagogical objectives.

#### 4.2.1 The Status of French in Algeria

Since 1830, the French language has undergone various phases in Algeria, shaped by sociopolitical upheavals that have altered its status as a foreign language. From the onset of colonisation, the French established itself as the sole official language in the Maghreb region.

Following independence, French remained at the centre of numerous debates, with its status evolving continuously. Even today, this language retains a significant position within Algeria's linguistic landscape. In the field of education, French continues to be the first foreign language taught. It is introduced as such in primary school, where its study becomes compulsory from the third year (3AP).

Despite independence and the Arabisation efforts that followed, the position of French has not diminished; instead, its teaching has expanded due to its crucial role in the current educational system. Furthermore, French is increasingly prominent in higher education, where it is used in numerous academic disciplines and elite institutions throughout the country.

#### 4.2.2 Status of English in Algeria

In Algeria, Arabic and French are the two dominant languages, occupying a central position in the national linguistic landscape. The country's history, shaped by colonisation and language policy decisions, has greatly influenced the perception and use of languages.

English, although recognised as the second foreign language after French, remains marginalised within Algerian society. Despite its status as a truly international language associated with the world's leading power, modernity, science, and technology (Derradji, 2002, p. 115), it struggles to gain prominence in the face of the Francophone legacy.

Nevertheless, there is a noticeable trend among the younger generation to incorporate English words, particularly through language linked to new technologies.

#### 6. Linguistic Borrowing

In linguistics, borrowing refers to the process by which one language adopts a word or expression from another. This phenomenon often occurs to describe novelty or to enrich the lexicon. For example, the French language has incorporated words of English origin, such as weekend words or emails.

"Borrowing and calquing are often initially due to interference. However, interference remains individual and unintentional, whereas borrowing and calquing are in the process of being integrated, or are already integrated, into Language A" (Dictionnaire de Linguistique, Larousse, 2002).

#### 7. Language Transfer

Language transfer refers to the phenomenon in which a speaker applies elements of their mother tongue, such as grammatical structures, syntactic rules, or phonological patterns, while learning or using a foreign language. This process can facilitate the acquisition of a new language when both languages share similar structures (positive transfer), or conversely, it may result in errors when differences are misinterpreted (negative transfer or linguistic interference).

#### 8. The Integration of English into the Educational System

The legacy of French colonisation in Algeria has profoundly shaped the educational system, establishing French as the dominant language to the detriment of other foreign languages, particularly English. This dominance persisted for decades, extending to various sectors such as administration, education, and the media. However, a gradual transition is currently underway, aiming to replace French with English.

As Algeria becomes more integrated into the global context and actively participates in international exchanges, English is progressively assisting itself as the primary language of international communication. Its growing importance is evident not only in traditional domains such as business and technology but also in higher education.

Although French retains a central role in Algeria's linguistic landscape, the rise of English marks a significant shift, reflecting the country's determination to adapt to the demands of an increasingly interconnected and multilingual world. With the advent of globalisation and Algeria's deeper integration into the global economy, the demand for English language proficiency continues to rise.

In response to this need, the Ministry of Higher Education has introduced reforms to strengthen English language instruction in scientific and technical fields at the university level. Beginning with the 2025–2026 academic year, English will become the primary language of instruction in several fields, particularly in medical sciences, marking a key step in government policy to reduce the use of French in favour of English.

##### 8.1 Objectives of Introducing English in Primary School

This measure reflects an increased awareness of the growing global importance of English and aims to prepare pupils better to meet the challenges of globalisation. Representing a turning point for Algerian education, the introduction of English in primary school classes seeks to strengthen pupils' linguistic versatility and equip them with the tools necessary to adapt to an ever-evolving world.

This reform aligns with international standards, as many countries have already chosen to introduce English from the early years of schooling, recognising its role in global exchanges and future professional opportunities.

The effects of this reform extend beyond the educational sphere. For example, in sports, some Europe’s best players could benefit from greater proficiency in English in their international careers.

However, the integration of English into the primary curriculum also presents challenges regarding teacher training and the adaptation of pedagogical content.

Early exposure to English could also strengthen Algeria’s presence on the international stage.

#### 9. Obstacles and Challenges in Teaching and Learning Two Foreign Languages

“The social identity of a foreign language learner is largely (although not entirely) fixed. Conversely, the desire not to lose this identity can sometimes constitute a significant barrier to language acquisition” (<https://doi.org/10.3917/ela.126.0145>).

Learning a new language goes beyond acquiring linguistic skills; it enables learners to broaden their cultural horizons, establish global connections, and enhance professional opportunities. However, despite these numerous advantages, language learning is often accompanied by challenges that can discourage both learners and teachers.

##### 9.1 Language Barriers

The first and most obvious difficulty lies in understanding the new language. Differences in grammatical structure, vocabulary, and pronunciation can create initial obstacles.

##### 9.2 Pronunciation Difficulties

Some learners may struggle to accurately reproduce the sounds of a new language, which can affect listening comprehension and verbal communication.

##### 9.3 Cultural Factors

Understanding cultural elements of language, such as idiomatic expressions, social norms, and cultural nuances, can present an additional challenge.

##### 9.4 Fear of Making Mistakes

Some learners are reluctant to speak because they are afraid of making errors. The anxiety of being judged can hinder oral practice, which is essential for mastering a language.

##### 9.5 Lack of Practice

In practice, consistency is a key component of language learning. Insufficient opportunities to practice can significantly slow progress.

#### Question 1

To address our initial research questions, we used the following survey item:

Does the influence of English on pupils affect their learning of French?

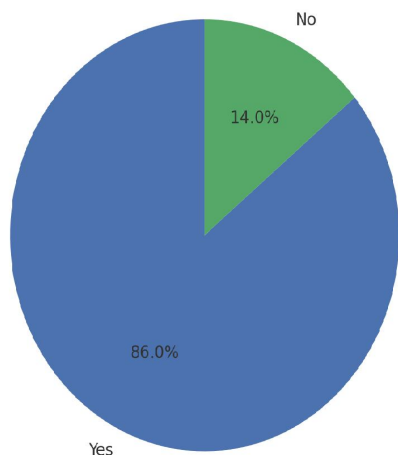
Table 1

Influence of English on the Learning of French

Response	Yes	No	Total
Number	20	2	22
Percentage	86%	14%	100%

Figure 1

Influence of English on the Learning of French



The majority of teachers (86%) believe that the influence of English affects pupils’ learning of French. This majority highlights a shared pedagogical concern regarding potential linguistic interference between

the two languages, particularly in a context where English is gaining visibility in the media, technology, and even certain educational practices. Conversely, 14% of teachers do not perceive this influence as an obstacle, which may indicate that the effects vary depending on teaching practices, pupils' proficiency levels, and sociolinguistic context.

Question 2

If so, how does this influence manifest?

Table 2 (A)

Manifestations of English Influence Identified by French Teachers

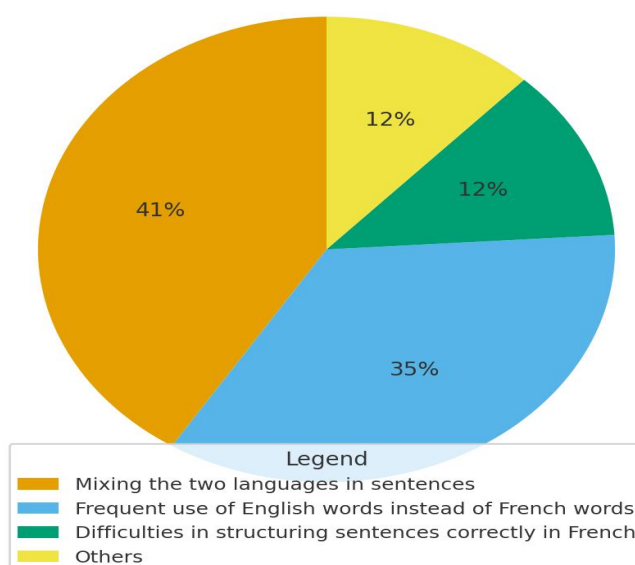
Response	Number	Percentage
Mixing the two languages within sentences	7	41%
Frequent use of English words instead of French words	6	35%
Difficulties in correctly structuring French sentences	2	12%
Others	2	12%

Table 2 (B)

Manifestations of French Influence Identified by English Teachers

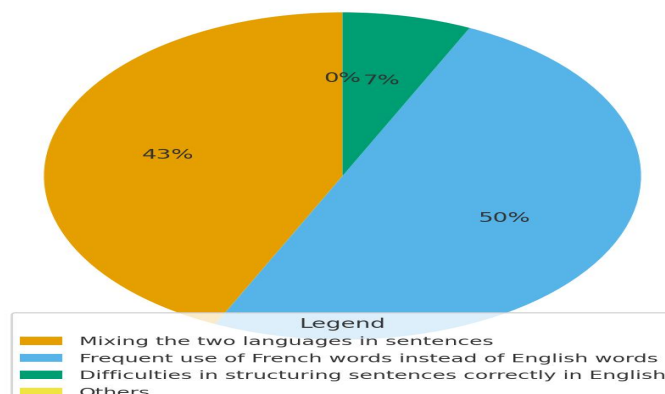
Response	Number	Percentage
Mixing the two languages within sentences	6	43%
Frequent use of French words instead of English words	7	50%
Difficulties in correctly structuring English sentences	1	7%
Others	0	0%

Figure 2 (A): Manifestations of English Influence According to French Teachers



Teachers  
Figure 2 (B):

Manifestations of French Influence According to English



**Teachers**

The analysis of the responses provided by French teachers reveals nearly all the concrete manifestations of English influence on pupils' learning of French. For 41% of the teachers, this influence was reflected in the mixing of the two languages within the same sentence. This may indicate linguistic interference, where pupils simultaneously use elements from both languages. In addition, 35% of the teachers reported the frequent use of English words in place of French terms; this lexical choice could be explained by increased exposure to English. Furthermore, 12% of teachers state that this influence manifests in difficulties with correctly structuring sentences in French, which may be linked to confusion between the syntactic structures of the two languages. Finally, another 12% highlighted other responses (such as some pupils valuing English over French), which could affect their motivation and engagement in learning the language.

From the perspective of English teachers, the manifestations are confirmed, similar to those reported by French teachers. According to 43% of them, this influence is expressed primarily through mixing the two languages within the same sentence, a trend strongly noted by French teachers as well. Furthermore, 50% of English teachers observe that pupils often substitute French words for English terms; this lexical substitution may indicate the growing dominance of English in young learners' environments. Conversely, only 7% of the teachers identified difficulties in syntactic structuring, which could be explained by differences in how the two languages are perceived and processed.

**Question 3**

What are the most challenging aspects of teaching two foreign languages (French and English) in parallel?

Table 3 (A)

Challenging Aspects of Teaching French

Response	Number	Percentage
Pronunciation	10	53%
Grammar	0	0%
Spelling	2	10%
Reading comprehension	1	5%
Speaking/Oral production	6	32%

Table 3 (B)

Challenging Aspects of Teaching English

Response	Number	Percentage
Pronunciation	10	42%
Grammar	2	8%
Spelling	4	17%
Reading comprehension	2	8%
Speaking/Oral production	9	25%

Figure 3 (A)

Challenging Aspects of Teaching French

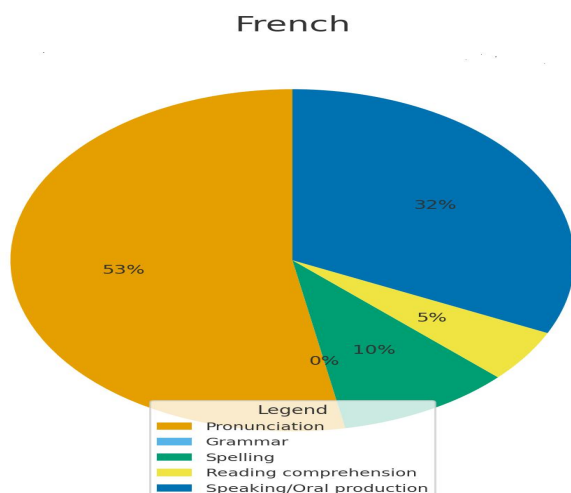
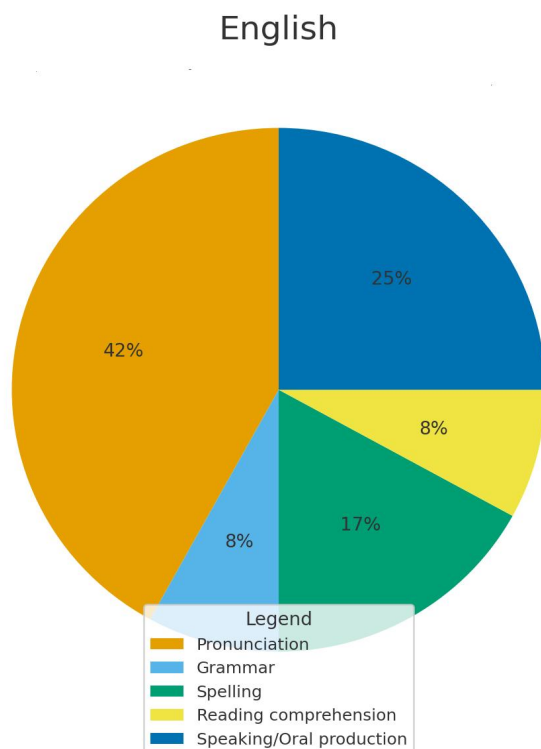


Figure 3 (B)  
Challenging Aspects of Teaching English



French teachers indicate that pronunciation is the most challenging aspect of teaching within a plurilingual context, with 53% of respondents identifying it as a significant difficulty. This challenge can be explained by the phonetic differences between the two languages. Another significant point that emerged from the responses was that 32% of the teachers considered speaking/oral production to be another challenging aspect of teaching. This confirms that oral skills, particularly spontaneous and fluent expression, are interwoven between the two languages, especially in terms of vocabulary and syntax.

Notably, however, grammar was not cited by any teacher as an obstacle. This may suggest that teachers consider grammatical rules, although different between French and English, to be less problematic. Similarly, spelling (10%) and reading comprehension are perceived as minor difficulties, which could be attributed to their lower exposure in pupils' daily lives compared with spoken language.

Responses from English teachers provide additional insight into the challenges of teaching French and English in parallel. Like with French teachers, pronunciation is perceived as the main challenge, cited by 42% of respondents.

Oral production, mentioned by 25% of English teachers, also appears to be problematic, indicating that oral skills represent a cross-cutting challenge in plurilingual education. Unlike French teachers, 8% of the respondents identified grammar as a difficulty, whereas 17% cited spelling. Although these minority responses suggest that some teachers also perceive challenges in written language, it is possible that teaching English as a second foreign language in a Francophone context places greater emphasis on grammatical and orthographic differences. Finally, reading comprehension, reported by 8% of teachers, remains a minor difficulty, similar to the responses given by French teachers.

**Question 4**

What strategies do you use to encourage the learning of foreign languages (French and English)?

**Table 4 (A)**

Pedagogical strategies reported by French teachers

Response	Number	Percentage
Use of varied teaching materials	8	33%
Communicative approach	6	25%
Comparison and distinction between the two languages	3	13%
Encouragement of reading	7	29%

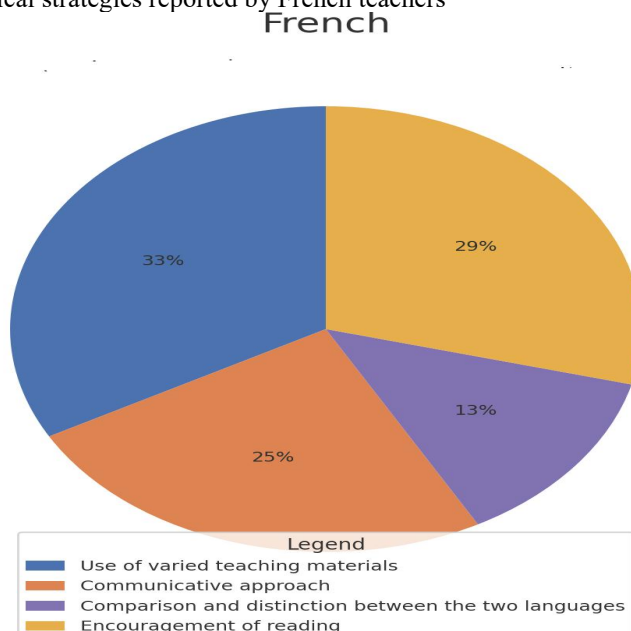
**Table 4 (B)**

Pedagogical Strategies Reported by English Teachers

Response	Number	Percentage
Use of varied teaching materials	6	27%
Communicative approach	9	41%
Comparison and distinction between the two languages	1	5%
Encouragement of reading	6	27%

**Figure 4 (A)**

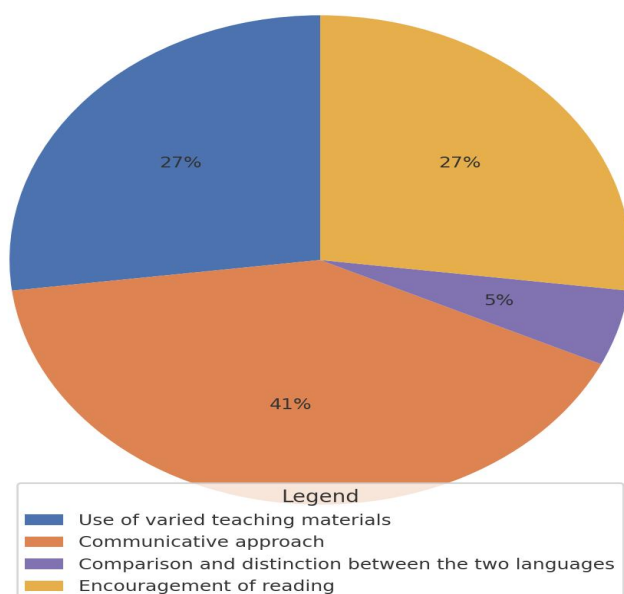
Pedagogical strategies reported by French teachers



**Figure 4 (B)**

Pedagogical Strategies Reported by English Teachers

## English



The results of this survey highlight a variety of teaching strategies employed by teachers. For French teachers, the most frequently mentioned strategies include the use of various teaching materials (33%), suggesting that teachers recognise the importance of diversifying instructional resources. The communicative approach accounts for 25% of the responses, reflecting a shift toward learner-centered pedagogy and the functional use of language. This aligns closely with the principles of teaching modern languages. Comparisons and distinctions between the two languages were mentioned by only 13%, even though this approach could enhance learners’ metalinguistic awareness. Finally, encouraging reading (27%) remains a traditional yet relevant strategy, strengthening reading comprehension skills while broadening vocabulary.

Although some strategies are shared between French and English teachers, their frequency of use varies, reflecting different didactic priorities depending on the language being taught. The communicative approach stands out as the most cited strategy among English teachers (41%), likely because English is widely perceived as a global communication language. The use of various materials (27%) suggests an emphasis on integrating diverse cultural content, especially in French instruction. Encouraging reading is relatively balanced between the two groups, showing that reading is regarded as a cross-disciplinary strategy. Finally, comparison and distinction between the two languages is rarely employed in either context (5%), indicating that metalinguistic approaches remain underutilised.

### Analytical Commentary

Following this survey conducted among French and English teachers of fifth-year primary pupils, several significant findings emerged.

The recent introduction of English at the primary level, while generally perceived as a positive initiative, has had a notable impact on French language learning, particularly through linguistic interference and a differentiated level of motivation among pupils. The collected data highlight specific challenges, such as pronunciation and oral production, which are common to both languages, as well as a lack of pedagogical tools adapted to balanced plurilingual education. The teachers surveyed expressed a need for more structured guidance, continuous professional development, and an allocation of teaching hours better suited to the demands of simultaneous foreign language learning.

The reported teaching strategies, including the communicative approach, the use of digital tools, and the diversification of teaching resources, demonstrate a willingness to adapt to new educational challenges. However, these efforts are sometimes insufficient to fully address the difficulties caused by the coexistence of French and English within the same educational setting.

Although limited in sample size, this study provides avenues for reflection on the implementation of more effective plurilingual education in primary schools. It underscores the importance of realistic, progressive, and contextually appropriate language planning tailored to Algeria’s sociolinguistic landscape.

### 1. Presentation of the Classroom Observation Survey

Classroom observations during French and English lessons were conducted as follows: an observation grid was used to complement the data collected through the questionnaire survey. This method served as a qualitative research approach, supplementing the questionnaire-based study.

We opted for direct observation in French and English classes to gain an in-depth understanding of the plurilingual teaching context in Algeria. The study was carried out at Hadadi Khaled Primary School in the Wilaya of Bordj Bou Arréridj, with the goal of recording notes on the influence of introducing English in the teaching and learning of languages. The observations sought, among other things, to verify whether linguistic interference or mixing between the two languages occurs among pupils who are at an early stage of foreign language acquisition.

## 2. Observation

According to Bourdieu, “Understanding the rules of social games requires observing practices” (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 312).

Observation is therefore both an investigative tool and a qualitative scientific research technique. It is a method of data collection that consists of closely studying a phenomenon or behaviour to gather precise and reliable information, following a predetermined process to ensure the credibility of the collected data. The aim is to record accurate and detailed notes without influencing or altering the behaviour of the observed subjects, thus enabling deep insights.

For this reason, we designed an observation grid in advance, inspired by the theoretical framework. Nonparticipating observation was carried out to avoid disturbing the pupils or disrupting classroom activities.

### 3. First Observation Session: French Class

#### General Overview

Date and Time: 09/03/2025, from 12:00 to 13:00

Level: Fifth year of primary school

Number of pupils: 38 pupils

Project 02: “C'est un lieu exceptionnel!” (It is an exceptional place!)

Sequence 02: Describing the exceptional place

Activity: Oral and written production

Lesson Objective: To describe the actions carried out and the characteristics of the place visited.

#### Observation Table – French Class

Observations	Yes	No
Is the weekly number of hours allocated to lessons sufficient?		*
Does the teacher use a variety of materials (images, videos, songs)?	*	
Does the teacher employ effective didactic methods to facilitate language acquisition?	*	
Does the teacher frequently use the textbook during the lesson?		*
Does the teacher resort to other languages during the lesson?		*
Is the teacher well-trained to teach French in a plurilingual context?		*
Is the pupil motivated to learn the French language?	*	
Does the pupil use English words during the French lesson?		*
Can the pupil read a sentence aloud?	*	
Does English pronunciation affect French pronunciation?	*	
Does the pupil distinguish between the letters of each language in oral and written production?	*	

#### Observation Summary – French Class

During the observation session, we noticed that the pupils were highly motivated and eager to learn French. The teacher played a key role in motivating the learners, drawing on her extensive teaching experience and employing a constructivist approach that captured the pupils’ attention. No use of English was observed among the learners during the French as a foreign language (FFL) lesson.

The teacher deliberately avoided using other languages, relying instead on effective didactic methods that facilitated language acquisition, as well as a range of teaching aids, such as visual materials. However, it was also noted that the allocated time was insufficient to complete the lesson.

### 4. First Observation Session – English Class

#### General Overview

Date and Time: 17/03/2025, from 10:00--10:45

Level: Fifth year of primary school

Number of pupils: 38 pupils

Project 02: “Home Town”

Sequence 02: City, village, amenities, directions

Activity: Reading

Lesson Objective: Vocabulary of amenities

Observation Grid – English Class

Observations	Yes	No
Is the weekly number of hours allocated to lessons sufficient?		*
Does the teacher use a variety of materials (images, videos, songs)?		*
Does the teacher employ effective didactic methods to facilitate language acquisition?		*
Does the teacher frequently use the textbook during the lesson?		*
Does the teacher resort to other languages during the lesson?	*	
Is the teacher well-trained to teach English in a plurilingual context?		*
Is the pupil motivated to learn the English language?	*	
Does the pupil use French words during the English lesson?	*	
Can the pupil read a sentence aloud?	*	
Does French pronunciation affect English pronunciation?	*	
Does the pupil distinguish between the letters of each language in oral and written production?		*

Observation Summary – English Class

During the English lesson, the pupils were able to distinguish between French and English, as they had been introduced to French from the third year of primary school. However, pupils appeared less motivated to learn English than French, which may be attributed to the teacher’s level of training and experience.

The pupils were able to read English but had difficulty pronouncing words correctly. During reading activities, they often pronounced certain words in French (e.g., cousin, Algérie).

In written production, a mixture of letters was observed; for instance, a pupil wrote *i* instead of *e*, which seemed to be influenced by the teacher’s pronunciation.

The teacher frequently resorted to other languages, such as French and Arabic, to facilitate comprehension.

Finally, the allocated class time was insufficient to complete the lesson and achieve the stated objectives.

5. Comparative Analysis of the Two Observation Sessions

In this comparative analysis, we examined the results obtained from the two classroom observation sessions in French and English:

During the French lesson, it was noted that pupils clearly distinguished French from English at multiple levels. In oral production, learners are able to pronounce words correctly and read passages aloud fluently. In written production, they successfully constructed well-structured sentences and demonstrated accuracy during dictation exercises. Pupils were also observed to be highly motivated to learn French, with most actively participating and making efforts to respond promptly, reflecting their collective attentiveness and engagement despite variations in proficiency levels. This can be attributed to the teacher’s applied methodology and her extensive teaching experience.

The teacher made use of visual aids (e.g., images of landmarks and places such as La Casbah, the Martyrs’ Memorial, and Jardin d’Essai) to support learning. French lessons were observed to be more content heavy and demanding, requiring intense concentration from pupils. The teaching emphasised accurate letter formation and correct pronunciation of sounds.

In English lessons, pupils were also able to differentiate between English and French. However, in oral production, they tend to mix the pronunciation of certain letters (e.g., the letter G) between the two languages. Pupils also experienced difficulty reading aloud fluently in English, indicating that English instruction presented greater pronunciation and oral challenges than French instruction did.

In written production during English lessons, pupils often rely on French to construct sentences. For example, one wrote: “madame *i* have not stylo bleu.” During dictation, pupils based their spelling on French phonetics, replacing *e* with *i*.

In terms of motivation, pupils were less engaged during the English lesson than during the French lesson, with only a few actively participating. The teacher used only the textbook as a pedagogical tool.

Unlike French lessons, English lessons were observed to be lighter and more playful, relying on interactive activities such as games and songs to create a more relaxed learning environment.

6. Analysis of Grades

Foreign language learning is a crucial component of Algerian pupils’ educational journey, particularly in the fifth year of primary school, where the foundations of both French and English are already established.

Within this context, the study aims to analyse pupils' grades in these two subjects, with a focus on comparing French results before and after the integration of English into the primary curriculum. This allows for a more accurate assessment of the influence of English on pupils' French proficiency.

This comparative analysis focuses on the overall averages achieved by fifth-year primary pupils in French during the second trimester of the 2022–2023 academic year.

Additionally, a comparison was conducted between the overall averages in both French and English during the second trimester of the 2024–2025 academic year.

The primary objective is to compare learner performance in French and English to identify any significant gaps and provide possible explanations for the observed differences.

General conclusion

Our study, titled “The Challenges of Teaching and Learning French in Relation to English: The Case of Fifth-Year Primary Pupils in the Wilaya of Bordj Bou Arréridj (BBA)”, falls within the field of foreign language didactics. This research was conducted to address a central question of interest:

To what extent does the integration of English at the primary level affect the teaching and learning of French?

We sought to describe the situation of plurilingual education in Algerian primary schools, focusing specifically on whether learning French in parallel with English has a positive or negative effect on the acquisition of linguistic competences.

To answer this research question, we employed practical data collection methods to establish a precise diagnosis of the situation. The methodology chosen for this study was a mixed-methods approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative research to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the observed realities.

We began our research with a theoretical section focusing on an important linguistic phenomenon, plurilingualism, explored through its presence in French as a Foreign Language (FFL) classrooms, particularly in Algerian primary schools.

In the practical section, we outline our research methodology, the stages of data collection, and the corpus of our investigation. We also presented the analysis and interpretation of the questionnaire results and the classroom observation sessions conducted.

Following the surveys and analyses, we arrived at the following nuanced and varied findings:

On the positive side, pupils in fifth-year primary school who learn two languages simultaneously demonstrate curiosity and enthusiasm for exploring both French and English. This often contributes to enhanced cognitive and linguistic skills, as they generally become more aware of linguistic structures, making learning more engaging and motivating.

However, teaching and learning both French and English in fifth-year primary classes present significant challenges for both teachers and pupils. Learners often mix the two languages, leading to linguistic confusion, such as syntactic and lexical interference from French, which may affect English production. Simultaneously, the acquisition of two foreign languages at a young age can impose a cognitive load on learners.

Teachers reported difficulties in managing plurilingual classrooms, adapting pedagogy, and finding adequate teaching resources for both languages. Moreover, the limited instructional time dedicated to language teaching was identified as a significant obstacle in managing classrooms effectively. On the other hand, the experience and training of teachers were highlighted as essential factors that positively influenced pupils' language acquisition.

These findings show that the challenges of teaching and learning French in relation to English can vary significantly depending on pupils' profiles and the pedagogical approaches applied.

Given the introduction of English from the third year of primary school and the difficulties encountered by both teachers and learners, establishing a new educational policy in the primary cycle is imperative.

This policy should include the following:

Selecting a clear and effective methodology for language learning in a plurilingual environment.

Increasing the number of teaching hours allocated to French and English;

Expanding pedagogical and digital resources;

Reducing the overall curriculum load in primary education;

The training and professional support of teachers should be strengthened.

In conclusion, this research enabled us to answer our research question and confirm our hypotheses. Importantly, this study remains open to further inquiry, as many aspects of the issue have yet to be fully explored. The findings should not be generalised and must be complemented by additional studies to contribute to a more effective pedagogical framework, particularly as the current reforms in language education continue to evolve.

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