Analysis of the Algerian Novel *Fahla* (Rabah Sbaa) from a Sociolinguistic Approach

Nassima Kerras  
Global Studies, Pompeu Fabra University  
Barcelona, Spain  
Corresponding Author: Nassima.kerras@upf.edu

Moulay Lahssan Baya  
Translation department, Granada University  
Granada, Spain

Received: 07/29/2022  
Accepted: 10/18/2022  
Published: 10/24/2022

Abstract
This study analyzes the Algerian novel *Fahla* from a sociolinguistic point of view. The author has taken the initiative to write his novel in Algerian and in Latin characters and Arabic characters for both Arabic and Francophone readers since Algerian remains uncodified to this day. The main objective is to observe the linguistic system of the Algerian language and that of the standard Arabic one to understand the functioning of the dialect mentioned above and demonstrate the need to study its linguistic typology and the phylogenetic relationships between the two languages. It is essential to investigate the relationship between language use, society, and identity to compare them. The novel is an appropriate example to analyze this three-dimensionality of language as osmosis that reflects the uniqueness of each speaker. A sociolinguistic study is carried out to evaluate the validity of Algerian as an official language. Fragments of texts that reflect these characteristics are considered following a qualitative methodology based on the observation and interpretation of data to demonstrate the use of various literary resources, syntax, structures and phrases of a language which is considered a dialect. The analyzed work reveals the real attitudes of society through the Algerian language for the first time in the literary field. It is a linguistic revolution that accompanies the social revolutions of recent years. The importance of communication in the mother tongue is shown through this work. To further raise awareness in the sociolinguistic community, there must be more encouragement for authors and journalists to write in this language, just as it is used by the media and culture (through means such as the theatre and the cinema) to emphasize the importance of identity values, including verbal and written expression in the mother tongue.

*Keywords*: Algerian novel, *Fahla*, identity, ideology, linguistic analysis, literature devices, sociolinguistics

Introduction

This article analyzes fragments of *Fahla*, an Algerian novel written by the author Sabaa and published at the end of 2021. It is considered to be one of the most significant literary productions for Algeria, taking into account the importance of issuing texts in a language spoken by its users instead of the usual publications in Standard Arabic or French, which tend to be the two languages of publication.

The published novel is a significant challenge for the Algerian community and for sociolinguists, given the status of writing in the mother tongue (Cherrad, 1987) and transmitting messages in a language dominated by the entire Algerian population as opposed to Standard Arabic and French.

*Fahla* is a novel that reflects not only the linguistic situation of the country but also the political and social setting of recent years. The main character in the novel is *Fahla*, a woman who offers hope to her compatriots at a much-needed time; their country is submerged in darkness due to several factors detailed in this analysis.

The objective of the study is to analyze the literary resources of the text in question and understand its operation in order to answer the questions posed in this research: If Algerian is gaining ground more and more in formal contexts, and if this work is a clear example of it, could it be considered as an independent language that reflects the identity of its speakers? And since it is an important element in the construction of Algerian identity, should it be recognized at the national level?

Firstly, the sociolinguistic approach and its relation to literature are explained, and the sociolinguistic situation of the country is observed. This is done in order to highlight the importance of producing works in the Algerian language and the need to publish literary texts such as the novel in question.

Secondly, the novel's characters and demonstrating how vital it is to create figures are reflected. This is precisely what the author of this novel has done for a society that seems to be having a bit of an identity crisis. The main character offers a glimmer of hope and, above all, reflects the real strength of Algerian women and their powerful influence in the social and identity makeup. Other characters are also essential in this work; each brings their own representative touch of culture. In this section, social complexity through inclusive language is reflected.

Subsequently, the methodology followed to carry out the sociolinguistic study of the work is exposed, and an analysis of fragments of the novel is carried out to investigate the complexity of the linguistic and social situation in Algeria.

Finally, the conclusions relevant to the analysis and the challenges of the novelists, linguists, and politicians who must collaborate to offer their recipients works, research, and artistic and literary manifestations to give wings to the Algerian language are reflected.
Literature Review

In this section, the linguistic and social situation of Algeria is reflected in order to understand the coexistence of languages and the importance of the novel in question.

Sociolinguistic approach and the literary text

A significant number of specialists throughout history have looked into language and linguistics. De Saussure (1972) addressed language autonomously, while other authors focused on certain specific elements of language, such as grammar and morphology (Mathesius), the function of language (Jakobson), phonology (Troubetzkoi), the evolution of language (Martinet), etc. (García, 2020). Linguistic studies have advanced further by dealing with cultural, contextual and social issues. Literature has been treated equally in various fields, several theories were raised and what interests us in this work is to relate literary studies to language. Until the 20th century, when intersectional studies between language, society and literature began to be carried out (Halliday, 1978), as García (2020, p. 64) comments. “The new objective was to describe how languages were used in everyday reality. This implied a very significant change in the epistemological order of linguistics. […] this implied certain possibility of incorporating literature as a form of language use”.

According to Bakhtin (García, 2020), language is a means of communication and studies should focus on the relationship between the act of speaking, the language used, ideology and, therefore, society. Sociolinguists have begun to be interested in literature. This mutual dependence between language and society facilitates the understanding of the literary text and its proper interpretation at the time of reading and its translation.

The Sociolinguistic Situation in Algeria

Algeria has always coexisted with various civilizations and this situation has enriched its language (Taleb-Ibrahimi, 2004; Abbes-Kara, 2010). The Algerian language, considered as a dialect today, groups this richness since it is possible to travel, in just one paragraph, through several civilizations that have left their linguistic traces, such as Tamazight, French, Spanish and Turkish, amongst others.

This situation is reflected by Belahcen (2021, p. 80), who states: “the social context has shown an extremely complex matrix of languages and dialects and their unstable functional roles in connection to situational language use”. We add the importance of English to the aforementioned languages, which has lately been imposing its status due in no small part to globalization. This reality is due to many factors, such as online communication, business, and travel (Belmihoub, 2018).

The official languages in Algeria are Arabic and Tamazight, with French enjoying a special status. However, these languages are spoken correctly by a variable percentage of Algerians. Tamazight is dominated by Kabyles, Standard Arabic by Arabic speakers, and French by Francophones. Few Algerians speak three languages, but the vast majority speak Algerian, which most inhabitants use since it is the language of communication in various fields, and this language is made up of the languages that have coexisted in Algeria, as stated by Belahcen (2021).
Despite the importance of Algerian, it is difficult to speak of a co-officialization alongside the official language, which is standard Arabic. This could be seen as a rather worrying fact from a sociolinguistic point of view because we are talking about over 44 million inhabitants, plus a diaspora of 6 million who speak a language that is considered a dialect. Standard Arabic indeed has a particular prestige in Arab countries due to an Arabisation policy that was imposed in the 1960s to affirm Arab unity, but its function has always been symbolic and not practical in all Arab societies (Belahcen, 2021).

The author of the analyzed novel *Fahla* explicitly takes the initiative to publish his work in both Latin and Arabic characters, which is done first and foremost to reach a broader audience. Furthermore, it demonstrates the emergence of codifying the Algerian language. This is a linguistic strategy that is applied to get the message across to the reader and to the researchers and politicians who are responsible for the current linguistic situation.

Several different languages, and varieties of those languages, are used on a daily basis in Algeria, showing the multilingualism that exists in the country. Algerian, Standard Arabic, Tamazight and French are among the said languages which can be typically seen and heard across Algeria. Algerian and Tamazight are generally used for day-to-day communication between citizens, whereas Standard Arabic is more likely to be used and found in more formal settings and education, and it has been an official language of Algeria since it gained independence in 1962 (Benmokhtar, 2013; Benrabah, 2007; Boucherit, 2002; Ennaji, 1999; INALCO, 2019). French has had no such status since then, though it remains prominent, especially in areas such as higher education, the media and administration. Such is the prominence of the French language; Algeria is ranked second only to France in terms of the number of French speakers.

All of the languages hold significance in the country, though the preferred one for everyday life is Algerian; it is the language which is generally heard on stage at the theatre (Gutiérrez de Terán, 2014) and used for jokes and wit (Serhani & Kerras, 2019). Around 75% of the population of the country acquire Algerian as their mother tongue from an early age.

Despite the fact that there is some semblance of Arabic in Algerian, it is tremendously distinct in other ways, not least in the vocabulary, which is a massive part of any language. Many civilizations that have visited the country over the years have left a lasting mark on the Algerian language as we know it today (Benrabah, 2013). Subsequently, Algerian history, tradition, and culture are driven by the Algerian language (Chachou, 2012; Taleb-Ibrahimi, 2004).

The emergence of Algerian being promoted is more than obvious, given that most of the artistic, media, audio-visual, medical manifestations and daily conversations are held in the Algerian language. The Algerian literary upheaval is currently being witnessed thanks to the work of Sbaa, the beginning of a clear example of the need for collaboration between linguists to give the required value to the speakers of their language.

Varieties of Arabic are often spoken about, but each variety has its own linguistic system inspired by all the languages that form it and not only from standard Arabic, as Belhassena &
Benhattab (2016, p. 75) explain:“linguistic variation affects the phonology, morphology, and syntax of a given language.”

This linguistic complexity is not overly typical of the Arabic language, and many countries have experienced similar situations and continue to experience it to this day, as expressed by Dunn (2021).

Language is the reflection of identity; for this reason, variations exist, and it is important to relate speech to society because they are inseparable (Holmes, 2013; Purba et al., 2021;).

The Algerian Novel *Fahla* and its Contextualization

The novel *Fahla* was written and published by the Algerian author *Sabaa*, a professor of sociology and linguistic anthropology at the University of Oran. He is also a contemporary essayist and novelist. He has published several works and the one that interests us here is *Fahla*, a novel written entirely in Algerian and which reflects the current linguistic situation of the country.

The author's motivation was to have the book published in the mother tongue of his audience, which is Algerian. The author insists that the reader expected work in his native language as much as the country's sociolinguists did. The author is fully aware of the distinct lack of literature published in the Algerian language, although theatre plays are performed in Algerian. There are poetic texts issued that have not seen the light of day, regarding which he expresses, “[…] tous sont restés confinés dans l’obscurité et l'exiguïté des tiroirs” (Le Soir, 2021) [all remained confined in the darkness and cramped drawers] (the translation is mine).

The author has written his novel in Oran Algerian (the western region of the country) but has chosen words that can be easily understood throughout the entire territory, as a sign that a common variety can be found despite the size of the country and the existing linguistic variety. This is nothing new, though. Algerian television companies tend to broadcast series, movies, and programs that try to use inclusive language, as even if the accents are different, the message is transmitted effectively.

The synopsis of the novel specifies that it is about the murder of a poet by the propagators of darkness. This murder gives the woman the opportunity to force the door of the cemetery to attend his burial. Thus, a fight ensues, without a truce, against all forms of oppression disguised as morality or religion. *Fahla* (the protagonist of the novel), accompanied by her friends, challenges all the threats posed by the frantic attempt to darken society in the name of false religious values erected in dogmas. To these deadly values, she opposes the spread of beauty. Beauty here is an antidote to the horror that brings ugliness and a struggle led by a woman to live with dignity and beauty, to think freely, love excessively and dream indefinitely.

This novel deals with various issues that must be corrected in a society like the one we are focusing on; there is awareness of it, the author has a great insight of it, and he reflects his knowledge and understanding very clearly.
The story reflects the Algerian reality that has lived through years of fighting against terrorist groups that have sought to implement dark societies in the name of religion, a facade presented by the terrorists to Islamize the country in their own way and according to their interpretation, through fear and strength. These acts have lasted for many years and, consequently, changed the ideology and way of life of the Algerians. This black facet began in the nineties and contaminated the country with extremist and sexist ideas, to the point of failing to see the beauty of the culture. Therefore, hope of building a productive and sustainable society has seemingly been lost.

Because of this black decade, Algeria has found itself in an overwhelming spiral between sexist ideas, demotivation, suffocating corruption and mismanagement at all levels, and citizens' non-involvement due to a vicious circle created and that is incredibly challenging to overcome.

This suffocating vicious circle is represented by the protagonist Åaskar Eddlam [the soldier of darkness] and his allies, and this hope and beauty so dreamed of by a part of the population is represented by the strength of Fahla, a determined woman, courageous and bearer of values. She is a woman with character, supported by her friends, who want to change these attitudes and propose another model of life or recover a model that had previously existed in Algeria at some point.

The work is analyzed from a sociolinguistic perspective, meaning that language and its relationship with society are analyzed; taking into account the cultural, social and ideological aspects of the community in question and that are at the same time handled by the author in the work.

Literature is often the reflection of society, and on this occasion, it is absolutely the case, since the author analyzes social problems through the mother tongue of his readers, a language still considered a dialect today. Analyzing this language through literature is important for linguists, as stated by Belal and Ouahmiche (2021).

Some authors consider it difficult to understand a language that has not been codified (Moudjari et al., 2020), though this is not the case with this novel. It can be easily understood without needing to be re-read as it uses terms that all Algerians have most probably been exposed to regardless of their educational level and geographical location, and it relates to its readers. This is a pivotal aspect to consider and one which has been attempted in post-colonial literature and during other moments of Algerian history: "Djebar plays with historiography in order to create an autobiography narrative that makes the reader question the linearity of identity" (Smith 2021, p. 2).

Methodology

The research methodology is based on data-collecting and qualitative data. Fragments of the work are analyzed from a perspective that allows the text to be examined from two angles: linguistic and social, as reflected in this figure:
A research instrument is a device that collects and analyses data from subjects related to the research topic. Fragments of texts, grouped into six main topics addressed by the author, are reflected. The social situation regarding these topics is expressed through documentation and observation to analyze the language used that reflects the problems of society: “Observation is an activity that involves paying close attention to something or someone in order to learn more about them” (Purba et al., 2021, p. 4).

The text is analyzed through sociological observation. As Rion (2008, p. 1) explains: “Sociolinguistics provides an adequate theoretical framework to determine the relationship between language and ideology”. A qualitative method based on observation is applied to collect nonnumerical data; entire quotes are collected to be interpreted, analyzing the relationships of different meanings that occur in Algerian culture. Through analysis, the significance of the data is discussed, and conclusions are drawn.

Analysis

Some fragments of the novel (written in Latin characters) are analyzed in order to study the linguistic means used by the author as a way of demonstrating the Algerian social aspects. The author addresses several issues in his work and the most relevant ones are examined from our point of view, and those are: positivism and negativism, sexism, education, the role of religion, corruption, and liberation.

Fragments of texts are analyzed to investigate the literary resources in Algerian and explain their functioning to understand the syntactic and the morphological typology and relate it to its use in society. The influence of culture on language is reflected and the cultural norms that shape speech acts are observed.

Positivism vs Negativism

The author personifies two important figures in his novel: Āaskar Eddlam, who represents darkness and sadness, and Fahla, the cheerful woman who symbolizes beauty and joy. The former denotes the social problems of Algerian society (sexism, corruption, ignorance, etc.), whereas the latter reflects the will to solve and overcome these struggles (equality, reconstruction, progress, and tolerance). These features are examined by linguistic analysis.

The protagonist, Fahla, criticizes society with a metaphor and uses a figure of speech to talk of perversity through different concepts with which what is represented bears a specific resemblance. She compares the evil that exists in the country to a black carpet which lingers above...
the land and covers the sky. She uses a simple Algerian structure to demonstrate the severity of the situation, alluding to the behavior of certain individuals in a community that is losing its beauty, repeating the word black (kahla) twice to show the pessimism that pervades society:

Kifach engattâ ou had ezzarbiya el kahla eli bghaw iddirou foug rass leblad. Ou ighattou biha essma. Hadou bghaw ibantrou essma belekhel (p. 52) [How could I cut this black carpet that they want to put over the country, and with which they want to cover the sky. They want to paint the sky black.]. (The translation is mine).

This darkness reflects the pessimism that Fahla criticises with her friends:

Hetta lahiout ibanou kili rahoum yabkou. Wa elward eli f les balcons ibane madbal (p. 31) [Even the walls look like they’re crying. And the flowers that are on the balcony look like they have faded.]. (The translation is mine).

The main character claims beauty with a metaphor alluding to the walls that cry like sad people, and the flowers that lose their freshness like people who lose their dynamism. A hyperbole is expressed in Algerian and demonstrates an exaggeration and uses a personification as a literary device in Algerian to attribute human qualities to inanimate beings. She also uses a sensory image (Wa elward eli f les balcons ibane madbal) [And the flowers that are on the balcony look like they have faded] to demonstrate the despondency of people. In this paragraph, the author uses alliteration with the word (ezzine) [beauty] to give it strength and convey the message. Several literary devices are present in the text written in Algerian in its entirety. This is a clear sign that the language in question is gaining ground in the literary field.

Sexism

The scenario that reflects sexist attitudes begins when women are not allowed to be present in the cemetery on the day of the funeral, that is a rule that exists in Arab societies to this day. A chauvinist attitude is reflected by the writer and is the first revolution of Fahla in this novel. A conversation develops between the men and Fahla depicting the lack of women’s presence in events like these in Arab culture in general.

Ya el oukht Fahla, enssa f el janaza déjâ haja ghir normal f bladna! Wa enti bghiti etzzidi taqray briyya goudam errjal. Hadi makanch menha. Jamais essrat (p. 12) [Sister Fahla: Women at a burial is not normal in our country! And you also wanted to read a letter in front of men. That cannot be. Nothing like this has ever happened.]. (The translation is mine).

In this sentence there is a code-switching between standard Arabic, French and Algerian. Even though several words have their roots in the Arabic language there is a variation from the phonological and syntactic point of view. The following words are pronounced differently than usual in standard Arabic (bladna, taqray, goudam, essrat, Hadi). The negation is different between Algerian (makanch) and Arabic (ما كان), the suffix (ch) does not exist in Arabic. The conjugation is equally different (taqray) to the Arabic equivalent which requires a suffix (تقررين). The use of adverbs follows the structure of the French language (déjà, jamais). This is to be expected since it
is an active language and has a long history, as Belahcen (2021, p. 84) comments: “language contact inevitably leads to bilingualism”.

All the comments chosen by the author have Arabic roots in the following paragraph, although the syntax and phonetics differ from the Arabic language. The negation (makanch) as mentioned before, the lexicon is not usual (dar) in the Arabic language (فعل; nichane) rather than ( مباشره), and the phonetics are different.

Kifach makanch menha? Goul li ya Si Mohamed chkoun eli dar had el qanoun? radet âalih Fahla ou hiyya tchouf fih nichane (p. 12) [How can it not be? Tell me Mr. Mohamed, who has made this law? Fahla replied, looking at him intently]. (The translation is mine).

Several utterings relate to the fact that, still to this day, the presence of women in men only places is deemed unacceptable. Fahla replies to the statements of Âaskar Eddlam as follows:

Ma kayen hetta qanoun igoul belli lamra ma tatkallemeh f el jebbana (p.12) [There is no law that justifies women not being able to speak in the cemetery.]. (The translation is mine).

In this section, the author expresses Fahla's disgust with regard to sexist interpretations that have no logical basis, one of the battles led by women. He uses the Algerian language throughout the sentence. It uses variations such as when it refers to the cemetery, a variety used in the center of the country (jebbana), but it is understood by readers in general, due to its use in the media. Here we can mention synonyms that can enrich the Algerian language and it is not at all a problem, as it is usually manifested in the publications when it is questioned about the dialect to codify to recognize the Algerian.

Fahla is supported by the women in one of the villages which the author describes. The town in question represents the rural towns of the country, and even if women do not have the educational opportunities that women of the big cities have, they are aware of the problems and the sexist reactions, as one of them expresses:

Rana âaychine el miziriya mâa Âasker eddlam. Ghir ichouffou emra yadrobhoum jen. Nssahoum ou bnathoum issouffrou elil ou nhar ou hetta eli tkoun fayta f ezenqa ma yettelgouhach. Idallou yatkalmo aâla eddine ouhouma mouafiajine. Mnine ykouh vou wahedhoum yatkalmo ghir a yettelgouhach (p. 135) [We live in misery with Âasker eddlam, as soon as he sees a woman, he gets angry; his wives and daughters suffer morning and night and even those who pass by on the street do not leave him alone.]. (The translation is mine).

Here, the author expresses his disgust towards the chauvinists who make life hard for women, using an Algerian expression (yadrobhoum jen) to describe the anger that one may have towards another. It is an Algerian cultureme that gives aesthetic-argumentative value to the message, which could be untranslatable into Arabic or indeed any other foreign language. A code-switching between Algerian words is used mainly, and syntax proper to this language: the conjugation is
different between Algerian (âaychine) and Arabic (نعيش؛ لا يتركونها) instead of (لا يتركتها). Verbs whose etymology come from French (souffrir) but are conjugated according to Arabic grammar (issouffrouf) are observed. Foreign words (misery) are present and transcribed according to Algerian standards (the miziriya), using Arabic article.

Education

The third protest expresses the defence of egalitarian education, a deficiency that has been invented by extremists, when the Muslim religion does not display it anywhere in the text, on the contrary, it promotes it. Fahla defends the education of women with her companions who support her, like Lila, another brave woman in this novel who supports the mixed and free education of girls:

Âandak essah Fahla. Ana tani ma nebghich had lagssim eli ma âandou hetta fayda pedagojiya. Ou izzid idakhel afkar âawja âand el atfal. Lazem tani natkalmou mâa el mouâalimat loukhrine Bach enhaassou had el halla eli machi normale gaâ. Likkoul meddiour bach iggareb mchi bach ibaâed (p. 18) [You’re right Fahla, I also dislike this separation, which has no pedagogical benefit. In addition, they incorporate crooked reflections into children. We must talk to the teachers to stop this situation, that is not normal. The school is made to bring people closer and not to push them away.]. (The translation is mine).

In this extract, the syntax follows Algerian norms when the protagonist is right (Âandak essah) instead of standard Arabic (معك حق). The selection of the terms is intentionally made to create various literary devices such as an apostrophe in this case. The syntax is typical of the Algerian language: the negation is different (ma nebghich) from standard Arabic (لا أحب). The phonetics are dissimilar (âandou) even when the word is of Arabic origin (عند). Note the use of French words in their entirety (normale), and others adapted to Algerian phonetics (Likkoul) instead of (l’école). The director of the school intervenes in this conversation. She says:

Wach had el fawda ? Wach had el fawda eli rakoum eddirou fiha enttouma zouj ? Ou machi hadi el khattr el ouwla. Hada issmouha «khalel bi ettassyir el hassen lil mouassassa» (p.18) [What is that disturbance? What disturbances are you two making? And it's not the first time. This is having a negative impact.]. (The translation is mine).

The author demonstrates how women have been carried away with macho ideas when they don’t open their eyes to think for themselves. This behavior has been noticeable in recent years in society. Women have been formatted with macho ideas that go against them and they instil them in community without realizing it because they are the ones who educate. Algerian structures are used in general, and this time two phrases in standard Arabic are used in their entirety (khalel bi ettassyir el hassen lil mouassassa), with an evident intention, which is that of showing that punishments are usually expressed in standard Arabic. The laws have been written in Arabic since the implementation of Arabization and the courts primarily operate in Arabic, so this reflects the current institutions.
The protagonist *Fahla* corrects these acts that have no reasoning, affirming her personality by confronting the female director:

*Diri alf taqrir bessah ma tanssaych tadoukri raqm el qanoun eli ihattem lagssim bin labnat wa lawled* (p. 19) [You can make a thousand reports, but do not forget to put the name of the law that requires girls and boys being separated.]. (The translation is mine).

The protagonist's sense of humor is described in Algerian to show the non-existence of laws that dictate behavior, but rather that interpretations have illogically spread.

The author expresses the importance of education in this passage. It is an exciting message to encourage girls to study and achieve certain independence; in this way, there is no remedy to silence them. There is a mixture of Algerian and French, and metonymy is used, an object is designated by the name of another with which it is related, there is talk of obtaining diplomas and skills and it refers to the open-mindedness and independence that one can attain. This is a sign of the hope that Algerian women had during the smile revolution of 2019. The figure of *Fahla* represents the scuffle of women who have been struggling for a decent life and absolute equality. This is reflected in the following paragraph and in the Algerian language:

*Men li kanet sghira ou hiya ma tabghich el hogra. Bdat tnaddel men sghourha* (p. 20) [Since her childhood she has not liked contempt. She started her fight during her childhood]. (The translation is mine).

The protagonist defends the importance of transversal education with simple words in Algerian to get the message across to all layers of society and above all to point out the importance of raising the level of education that has been falling in recent years. The author uses a litote, which is, she denies what (ma tabghich el hogra) [she does not like contempt] she can affirm (he likes equality).

Furthermore, the character expresses several current concerns. Firstly, the need to raise the level of education that has declined in recent years, with the first sentence using a combination of Arabic and French. The author employs irony when he alludes to the fact that everyone tries to understand everything at university when values have been lost and when the level is not what is necessary in an institution that is supposed to train brains:

*Wach ya el khawa, L’université taget biha el had eddaraja? Wellat souq! Qbel, kountou tajtamâou Bach ttdirou mounaqachat, journée d’étude wela colloque wela hettet chouffou film wela massrahia. Darwek, el kerch wellat tfout qbel el moukh ou lehama daret janhine. Ou nzidou nassamou f wast l’université «Samhouli natkalam belougha el ajnabiya». Normalement, f l’université natkalmou koul elouchat. [...] Ou nzidou natâlmaou koul elloughat entaâ el âllam. Ou qbel koulchi, ncharfou loughatna eli yatkalama essghir ou lakbir. Ellougha el jazaïriya, loughet oummatne ou bbatna ou wladna. Ellougha eli tâayecga ou hna enâaychouha aâla khater kberna biha ou kabret fina* (p. 60) [Has the standard of university has dropped to this level? It has become a market! People used to meet to hold debates, study sessions or colloquiums, or watch movies or plays. Now, it seems that the belly is more a priority than the brain, and everyone understands things, and we also hear in the heart of the university "sorry but we have to...
speak in Arabic”. Supposedly, at university we speak all languages, [...] And we learn more languages of the world. The Algerian language is the language of our country and the language of our sons and daughters. The language that makes us live and we make it live because we grew up with it.). (The translation is mine).

He continues his speech addressing the issue of the language that is ignored. Ignoring a language spoken by its natives, and considering it a dialect without any status, is a problem of recognizing its own identity. The author deals with the need to give importance to the Algerian language by using a simple structure in Algerian, creating a clear mental image to show the need to assert a national linguistic identity, further encouraging the study of foreign languages since it is a trilingual country and it is essential to preserve this wealth (Belahcen, 2021).

There was an attempt to kill culture and education in Algeria through fear during the black decade, that is reflected in the book when a traveling book seller is shot by an unknown group. The author emphasizes the consequences of this time in the country’s history:

Nour Ezzine tayeh foug ettrottoir ou laktouba eli kane ichouf fihoum mnine tiraw aâlih mchattine ou dayrine bih. Fahla bghat etgareb bessah zouj bouliissiya habssouha (p. 98) [Nour Ezzine was lying on the sidewalk and the books he was consulting when he was shot were scattered around him. Fahla wanted to get closer, but two police officers stopped her.]. (The translation is mine).

The brutality of extremism is manifested when force was used against innocent people who sold books to reduce the number of intellectuals, with the objective of lowering the educational level and dominating society even further. The structure of the sentence follows the rules of Algerian, even if some words have French etymology (ettrottoir, boulissiya). In addition, the reduced freedom of journalism has revolutionized the protagonist of this novel when she expresses her disgust in Algerian: “Wach, rakoum thewssou gaâ essahafa tmout wella tesket bach tddirou wach tebghou? [You are looking to kill journalism or silence it so you can do what you want.] (p. 147). This is a reality that the author highlights to promote the absolute freedom of journalism. The sentence is written in Algerian, except for the word journalism that is intentionally written in Arabic (essahafa).

The Role of Religion

One of the aspects reflected in this novel by the author is the need to separate religious issues from social ones. A minority claims it and that is reflected in Fahla’s words.

Ou lazem enfarqou bin eddine wa edouniya (p. 27) [We must differentiate between religion and everyday routines.]. (The translation is mine).

Religion, a taboo subject in Algeria since the 1990s, has intervened in life, that is something that had not been apparent in previous years. It is a taboo subject, but the author expresses it with simple words in Algerian that every citizen can understand. Taboo words express a multitude of emotions, as Babou (2014, p. 111) explains: “…moreover, taboo words may cause shame and
anxiety, as they can communicate several emotions such as anger, frustration and happiness”. Taboo subjects differ from one society to another according to the dominant ideology of each country and the culture that has been built around it. On many occasions euphemisms are used to express sensitive issues that arouse shame or ill-being, and the author of this work has expressed it through real examples with simple words in Algerian, the language that speaks to the readers. This is also described to show that religion is manifested through hypocrisy, giving the example of the taxi driver who plays the Qur’an in the background in his vehicle, but annoys his passengers. The author wants to demonstrate once again the contradictory sense that has been given to religion lately, and that shows in appearance, without respecting primordial values:

Ou loukane jit tahttarem ghir had leqqraya, ma tddirhach f had ellootto eli ma chafetch el ma ou essaboune men ââm Daqiouss. [...] Leqqraya medioura Bach ettasmaâa f blassa enqiya ou ennass yastafdou biha. Bessah enta m âandek la dine la mella (p. 175) [If you are embarrassed, don't put this recording (Qur’an) in the car that hasn't seen soap and water for a long time. ... The Qur'an is made for you to listen to in a clean place and for people to take advantage of it. But you have neither religion nor principles.]. (The translation is mine).

The protagonist uses Algerian structures starting with a condition to express her disgust towards people who use religion as a facade in public places when it should be something personal and respectable. She uses two purely Algerian expressions, the first (men ââm Daqiouss) to refer to time; this is a sentence to talk about a distant date and the equivalent is different in standard Arabic. She uses it to refer to his dirty car which seemed as though it hadn’t been washed for a long time. It is an oxymoron, the use of two terms logically opposite, because the Qur'an must be heard and put in a purified and clean place, but in this context, it is heard in a dirty place and by a person who misbehaves, and that is contrary to what religion, in principle, requires. It is an ellipsis because all that is omitted from the sentence, and a cultural background is needed to understand it and the author has done this deliberately. The second phrase (m âandek la dine la mella) is another Algerian expression that originates from the Standard Arabic, for people who lack principles. The author has chosen his words and phrases well to impact the readers, like a mental calculation (Belhassena & Benhattab, 2016).

**Corruption**

Certain manipulation has been imposed on society and this corruption is expressed in the work. citizens live with an apprehension instilled in society, which in turn discourages productive or sustainable societies. The author expresses this feeling.

Wach men hebss rak tatkallem ââlih ? Yak rana déjà fih men eli zedna ! (p. 165) [What prison are you talking about? We are already in it, and we have been since we were born!]. (The translation is mine).

The author uses a figurative sense when he talks about jail, he is not interested in talking about prison but about a locked country, as if it were a penitentiary. He is referring to a lockdown, or rather, a labyrinth that currently has no exit due to corruption and mismanagement at all levels, a burdensome issue in Algeria. He uses simple phrases in Algerian to convey his message and adds the lyrics from a popular song that expresses the following: Wahran Wahran, rouhti khssara
[Wahran Wahran, it's a pity that you hurt yourself] (p. 157), to set forth the pity of damaging a country with significant potential. This is a deliberate intertextuality because it is a well-known song, and it excites the Algerian reader.

**Liberation**

The author ends his novel with an air of hope for the liberation of these restrictions that overwhelm citizens and enclose the country more and more.

Kayen bent sghira fouf ktaf bouha rafda warqa mektoub fiha « Yahya Ezzine » (p. 184) [There is a little girl sitting on her father's shoulders, she carries a sheet which has long live beauty written on it.]. (The translation is mine).

The author expresses specific positivity in the Algerian language once again to evoke the reader’s emotions because he speaks in a language that reflects their identity. *Fahla* represents every Algerian woman who fights to improve the social structure every day, each one at her level; and the beauty that has been hidden can be recovered with a continuous and persistent struggle. It is the message of the character in this work that expresses social problems through its own language, and reflects values and the essence of its speakers through inclusive lexicon that brings together the languages and dialects that may exist in a large country like Algeria: there are regional dialects, social and professional varieties (Belmekki & Mbata, 2018), but this novel reflects the possibility of broadcasting not only speech acts in Algerian but also a work that can thrill all Algerians. The author has played with language using varieties from different parts of the country and that creates synonyms (Tgoul / Yatkelem) (Eljournane / Essahafa) as in all languages of the world.

**Conclusion**

The objective of the study is to analyze the literary resources of the Algerian novel to demonstrate the importance of studying a dialect dominated by a high percentage of the population concerning the standard Arabic language (official language) through the analysis of the proposed literary text. Fragments have been analyzed to explain the structure of specific literary resources and their relationship with the context of the receiving reader and the importance of language as an element of identity. This work reflects the possibility of writing literature in a language that has not yet been codified nor recognized as a co-official language but is still considered a dialect. Various literary devices have been used entirely in Algerian (metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification, oxymoron, onomatopoeia, ellipsis, etc.). This reinforces the potential of the analyzed language. This does not, though, repress the other languages such as Arabic, Tamazight and French, which are important in the country, or even the use of other foreign languages that are considered essential to open minds. However, it is more than clear that the Algerian language occupies more and more space because it is the identity language and the reflection of this community and the need for its co-officialization alongside the languages admitted in the country's constitution is apparent.

**About the Authors:**

Nassima Kerras received her Ph.D. in translation and interpreting from the University of Granada in 2012. She is a professor of Languages and Culture at University of Pompeu Fabra, ESADE and Blanquerna, and professor of Sociolinguistics in Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain). Member of the Research
Group HUM-835 "Translation, Knowledge and Culture". Her dissertation focused on pragmatic, sociocultural, and contextual aspects of multilingual multimedia texts. ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9700-8257.

Moulay-Lahssan Baya E. is a professor of Translation & Interpreting, Faculty of Translation & Interpreting at University of Granada (Spain). Director of the Research Group HUM-835 "Translation, Knowledge and Culture". Main lines of research: journalistic translation, interpretation, dialectology, food in Arab Bedouin societies. ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3066-8082.

References


Le soir d’Algérie. (2021). *Entretien avec l’écrivain Rabeh Sebaa: la langue algérienne est vivante et entière* [Interview with the writer Rabeh Sebaa: the Algerian language is alive and whole ]. https://acortar.link/FQNupX.


