



Akademik Eğitim ve Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi (AJESS Journal)

Teaching English Amidst Linguistic Crowding The Third Year of Primary School as a Model-

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Article History

Received: 31/07/2026 ; Accepted : 20/10/2026 ; Published : 05/11/2026

Abstract:

Based on the global status of the English language, which has asserted its presence in the linguistic marketplace, and guided by the necessity for nations to open up to foreign languages, the educational policy in Algeria has adopted a new course: opting for English as a primary foreign language and breaking free from the unilateral hold of French, which remains limited in its global reach. Consequently, this led the Algerian educational system to introduce English instruction for Algerian children starting in the third year of primary education, alongside the mother tongue and French. This integration has produced what is termed "linguistic crowding" within the child's learning process at an early developmental stage. Stemming from this reality, we must ask: Was it necessary to introduce two foreign languages simultaneously at such an early educational phase? Or does it represent a pedagogical gamble? Is it premature to pass judgment on this decision? Or is the policy purely educational, proceeding from the premise that a child's capacity for learning and comprehension should never be underestimated provided that educational curricula are well-designed and properly implemented?

Keywords: English Language Didactics, Linguistic Crowding, Primary Education, Third Year Primary, Educational Policy, Foreign Language Acquisition

1. Introduction

Language didactics represents an issue of paramount importance within the broader educational process. It serves not only as a primary manifestation of national identity, but also as a vital avenue for global openness, keeping pace with the digital era and the advancements unfolding beyond national borders.

Although the Algerian school system has undergone successive reforms over decades—each building upon the last to establish and consolidate the national language, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)—both teachers and learners have not remained immune to the realities of everyday communicative usage. Dominated by local vernaculars stemming from both Arabic and Tamazight varieties, this linguistic reality has subjected the learner to a pronounced form of diglossia within the classroom, not to mention the pervasive influence of French across various pragmatic communicative practices.

In the context of contemporary global shifts, wherein English has asserted its prominence and hegemony over the cultural, economic, technological, and labor spheres, Algeria's language policy has taken bold, strategic strides. This is epitomized by the high-level presidential decree to introduce English instruction starting in the third year of primary education, alongside the mother tongue and French—the latter having previously served as the sole primary foreign language.

Through this policy decision, the educational system transitioned from an institutional bilingualism (Arabic and French) to an institutional trilingualism (Arabic, French, and English). This shift has engendered what we term "**linguistic crowding**" (le surpeuplement linguistique / linguistic crowding), whereby an eight-year-old child is confronted with two divergent orthographic systems—a right-to-left script versus a left-to-right script—as well as two distinct phonological systems: Arabic on the one hand, and French and English on the other.

This pedagogical challenge raises significant concerns, particularly since modern language didactics posits that stable foundation and mastery in the mother tongue must precede any intensive transition to foreign languages. Such sequencing is critical to preempt linguistic interference stemming from the collision of distinct linguistic systems at the early stages of formal schooling—such as phonetic conflict, syntactic confusion, and orthographic transfer errors.

Proceeding from this premise, and prior to detailing the specific inquiries of this study, we pose the following fundamental question: How does this tripartite linguistic crowding impact the child in the initial phase of primary education? Does it undermine the efficacy of acquiring and learning the English language? Can the young learner secure a solid foundation in the national language while simultaneously achieving effective acquisition of two foreign languages, English and French?

Furthermore, to what extent is the pedagogical and psychological rationale behind introducing English in the third year of primary school justified, given the incomplete acquisition of Standard Arabic? How can the anticipated linguistic interference among these three languages be mitigated in the Algerian child? Finally, to what degree has the prescribed textbook, *My Book of English*, adapted to the cultural and pragmatic idiosyncrasies of the Algerian learner's environment?

2. An Overview of the Policy Decision

Pursuant to a presidential decree, Algeria officially instituted the English language within the national schooling system, commencing in the third year of primary education. In the immediate aftermath of this decision, the Ministry of National Education convened specialized committees tasked with textbook design, working under stringent deadlines to accommodate the constrained timeframe within which the decree was enacted. Through academic field visits to the National Institute for Research in Education (INRE), we closely observed the development processes of the textbook and took note of the extensive scholarly and pedagogical endeavors undertaken by the designated scientific committee.

The adoption of English constituted a well-founded, strategic choice. English currently stands as the foremost international language of science, functioning as a primary communicative medium that bridges nations across diverse linguistic landscapes. It is equally strategic in that it occupies the leading global position in the international economy and the global linguistic marketplace. Furthermore, this policy aimed to curtail the entrenched hegemony that the French language had exercised over the national educational apparatus for decades, facilitating a smooth and gradual transition toward a foreign language characterized by broader global reach and geopolitical influence.

Given that the decree has been enacted and its underlying rationale firmly grounded—or rather, rendered an imperative—the critical imperative now rests upon meticulous implementation planning. This entails establishing an enabling and well-structured pedagogical foundation to realize the objectives of primary English instruction. Such planning necessarily encompasses the tripartite pillars of the teaching-learning dynamic: the teacher, the learner, and the textbook.

In this context, educational expert Abdelkader Foudil observes: "Among the aspects that must be delineated and methodologically structured is contemplating the prerequisites of strategic planning and creating the conditions necessary for teacher training in this language. This represents the most paramount dimension warranting institutional focus, requiring two essential measures: first, designating the specific grade level for introducing the first foreign language; second, regulating the training protocols for prospective instructors of this language. Such a procedure necessitates reinstating the dedicated pedagogical training institutes that had been previously phased out, establishing training divisions within secondary schools, and devising a rigorous curriculum for the preparation process" (Foudil, 2022).

Indeed, the pedagogical formation of qualified, highly competent educators remains the principal guarantor of effective instructional delivery, learner proficiency, and the attainment of targeted educational competencies.

3. Why the Third Year?

Regarding the designation of the third year of primary education within this policy decision, educational specialist Abdelkader Foudil remarks: "Although I am unenthusiastic about this opinion—viewing it as inappropriate because it represents an excessively early developmental stage—it detracts from the instructional time allocated to the Arabic language. What is fundamentally required is dedicating three full initial years entirely to Arabic instruction, after which foreign language education may be introduced; this implies that foreign languages should not be introduced prior to the fourth year" (Foudil, 2022).

Educational experts maintain that the mother tongue requires a minimum of three full years to be firmly consolidated in the learner's cognitive schema. Therefore, as argued by Foudil, dedicating the first three primary grades entirely to the acquisition of Arabic was imperative, precluding the introduction of any foreign language before the fourth year. This curricular sequencing indeed reflected the pedagogical structure of Algerian schools prior to subsequent ministry reforms—specifically under the former Fundamental Education system (*Enseignement Fondamental*).

Consequently, the premature introduction of English instruction, coupled with its concurrent coexistence with another foreign language in the very same academic year, has raised substantial concerns among educational theorists. Some scholars have sounded alarms, emphasizing that early foreign language acquisition poses distinct cognitive and developmental risks, particularly when the child has only acquired the rudimentary foundations of their primary language—a situation that can adversely affect the child's cognitive processing and psychological development (Doss, 1997, p. 103).

In light of this, experts such as Abdelkader Foudil have recommended deferring French instruction entirely beyond the primary education cycle while retaining English as the sole foreign language taught at the primary level. They argue

that the fourth year serves as the pedagogically optimal threshold for introducing English, whereas the sixth year—which currently falls under middle school education—constitutes the appropriate stage for commencing French instruction.

4. Linguistic Crowding

Any discussion of linguistic crowding must necessarily take linguistic interference as its point of departure. Linguistic crowding fundamentally arises from the convergence and contact among languages, along with the reciprocal cross-linguistic influences that inevitably occur among competing linguistic systems. Historically, no language has existed in isolation from the phenomena of lexical borrowing and lending—processes rendered necessary across historical epochs as diverse civilizations converged and engaged in social, cultural, and material exchange. Such contact typically precipitated a degree of linguistic migration involving lexical items, idiomatic constructs, and expressive patterns across linguistic boundaries.

Nor should linguistic interference be categorized exclusively as a detrimental phenomenon. A language exposed to linguistic contact—regardless of the volume of imported elements—can preserve its structural integrity, eloquence, and distinctiveness. This is well exemplified by the historical trajectory of Arabic, which, despite borrowing from adjacent civilizations and languages, preserved its classical purity (*faṣāḥah*) by virtue of the rigorous philological and morphological criteria established by classical grammarians to distinguish indigenous roots from foreign adoptions (*al-mu'arrab* and *al-dakhīl*).

Conversely, linguistic interference may manifest as an adverse phenomenon that threatens the vitality or purity of languages if their speech communities lack adequate linguistic protections. This dynamic characterizes the contemporary linguistic landscape across the Arab world, extending beyond Algeria. It permeates not only everyday vernacular communication on the street, but also higher institutional strata, including academia, journalism, and formal education. Consequently, concerns arise regarding structural attrition, linguistic erosion, or the near-total marginalization of standard language use in communicative, creative, expressive, and pedagogical spheres. While Arabic has maintained its textual preservation through the language of the Noble Qur'an, structural vulnerability has crept into actual usage, rendering Standard Arabic alienated within environments historically anchored by its own speakers.

Returning to the Algerian school context, linguistic interference long remained outside the primary school sphere under the former Fundamental Education system. Today, however, under the impetus of successive educational reforms, it has evolved into a persistent concern troubling both instructors and learners. Educational policymakers find themselves navigating a tension among three competing forces: an accelerated global reality that necessitates immersion in major international languages; methodical planning mandates dictated by educational linguistics and pedagogical sciences; and the actual linguistic and cognitive capacities of pupils within Algerian schools and society, which cannot be overlooked.

Without dwelling extensively on terminological taxonomy, we address the core of the issue by categorizing multilingualism into two primary manifestations: societal and official. Societal multilingualism emerges naturally across populations as a result of sustained contact among diverse linguistic groups. In contrast, official (institutional) multilingualism designates the linguistic diversity formalised and legitimized by states and governments within their constitutional frameworks.

In Algeria, linguistic interference remains pervasive, with French playing a predominant role. French operates with a degree of operational prevalence rarely observed outside its country of origin. Although devoid of constitutional or *de jure* official status, its functional presence mirrors that of an institutionalized language, occupying protected positions across vital sectors such as scientific higher education, the Ministry of Finance, and macroeconomic administration—frequently competing with Arabic within its primary institutional domains.

In the current educational landscape, this dynamic intersects with the designated grade level for introducing foreign language instruction. After only two foundational years dedicated to the mother tongue—an instructional period widely regarded as insufficient—the learner is abruptly confronted with two foreign languages sharing marked typographical, orthographic, and morphological similarities (Latin-script based). This pedagogical convergence immerses the eight-year-old child in an educational environment defined by acute **linguistic crowding**.

5. English Language Didactics in Light of Learning Theories

Didactics has evolved into an autonomous discipline concerned with the methodologies and pedagogical mechanisms of language instruction. Linguists have designated it through various terms, including applied linguistics, language pedagogy, and the scientific study of foreign language teaching. Subsequently, the loan translation didactics (*didactique*) gained widespread currency, referring specifically to the science of language teaching and learning.

Didactics assumes the responsibility of addressing instructional matters comprehensively and holistically—defining the overarching policy of linguistic knowledge, its structural organization, its relationship to both teachers and learners, modes of acquisition, implementation strategies, anticipated obstacles in achieving targeted competencies, and mechanisms to overcome them (Issani, 2012, p. 301).

Under no circumstances can the teaching of English be conceived in isolation from the empirical findings generated by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, particularly in light of leading international paradigms in didactics and psycholinguistics; the Ministry of National Education cannot operate detached from higher education research institutions.

Briefly, two foundational theoretical paradigms cannot be overlooked: Behaviorism and Cognitivism. Behaviorist theory (inaugurated circa 1912 in the United States) relies on the paradigm of stimulus, response, and reinforcement. From this perspective, a child's language acquisition is primarily grounded in observable verbal and behavioral patterns

governed by stimulus-response mechanisms, where learning occurs through the continuous conditioning of verbal behaviors to achieve planned instructional outcomes. Thus, we are faced with an empirical approach centered on behavioral shaping to achieve target competencies.

Cognitive theory, conversely, emerged in direct opposition to behaviorism, critiquing the reduction of the learning process to mechanical stimulus-response reflexes. Cognitivism posits that humans possess an innate mental capacity—hypothesizing an inherent linguistic faculty or what is termed "deep structure"—which enables the individual to achieve cognitive and linguistic processing innately and generatively.

Accordingly, classroom pedagogical practices for teaching the Algerian child a new foreign language—English—amidst the prevailing linguistic crowding, require an explicit grounding in theoretical frameworks and empirical procedures regarding language acquisition across the four core skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Furthermore, they demand a rigorous distinction between natural, implicit language acquisition and formal, instructed classroom learning within the school environment.

It is equally imperative to draw upon the empirical contributions of psycholinguistics, given the pedagogical insights it offers to address the salient challenges posed by teaching English under conditions of linguistic crowding. Psycholinguistics holds established efficacy in tackling learning impediments in children, as it integrates language across its phonetic and semantic manifestations with psychology in all its conscious, unconscious, cognitive, and affective dimensions (Hamed, 2013, p. 88). Indeed, emphasizing the integration of educational learning theories lies at the very core of psycholinguistic inquiry and its practical applications (Hamed, 2013, p. 90).

5.1. Behaviorist Theory

This theory originated with the Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov, whose renowned classical conditioning experiments laid empirical foundations subsequently integrated into behaviorist psychology. The framework was further conceptualized by John B. Watson and later developed by B. F. Skinner. Behaviorism posits that language is primarily a form of observable, empirical, and measurable motor and verbal human behavior; learning processes are thus explained via the paradigm of stimulus and response coupled with positive or negative reinforcement (Hamed, 2013, pp. 91–92).

Through the lens of behaviorist principles, instructing an eight-year-old child in English within the third primary grade entails the following pedagogical imperatives:

- Viewing language as an inventory of articulatory and expressive verbal habits acquired through repetitive conditioning, structured modeling, and continuous mimicry of the normative speech patterns provided by the instructor.
- Delivering linguistic input primarily in the form of oral-aural stimuli through pattern drills and structural exercises. Here, listening comprehension takes precedence over reading, while writing instruction is deferred until acoustic-phonetic representations are cognitive-behaviorally stabilized. This sequencing yields the foundational audio-lingual pedagogical equation: listening, speaking, reading, and subsequently writing.
- Relying systematically on audio-visual stimuli within the classroom environment—such as flashcards, pictorial representations, and audio recordings—to condition and reinforce accurate verbal responses directly, establishing an immediate link with the foreign lexical item without reliance on the mother tongue or translational mediation.

5.2. Cognitive Theory

To avert the rote habituation of learners—reducing them to passive recipients who merely parrot and reproduce acoustic input—cognitive theory emerged as a robust counter-paradigm to behaviorism. Cognitivism posits that learning is an active, purposive mental process wherein the individual strives to comprehend the surrounding environment through internal cognitive schemas and reasoning faculties (Qatami, 2012, p. 32).

Within the cognitive framework, several foundational premises become central:

- Drawing a fundamental distinction between linguistic competence—conceived as an internal generative system of internalized rules abstractly rooted within the speaker-hearer's mind—and linguistic performance, defined as the concrete surface realization of language across diverse communicative interactions.
- Reframing linguistic error not as a behavioral failure or a deficit warranting punitive measures, but rather as a constructive indicator reflecting active mental processing and internal rule-formation. When young learners produce errors, they are actively engaging in an intricate process of hypothesis testing regarding the grammatical and phonological matrix of English, often constructing an intermediate interlanguage system that mediates between their primary linguistic framework (Arabic) and the target language (English).

While we confine our discussion to these two primary theoretical orientations, other influential paradigms—such as constructivism and functional linguistics—likewise contribute valuable insights to this educational stage.

6. Language Planning

The English language has established itself as a globally hegemonic medium, asserting its dominance internationally as well as within the Algerian context, where it prevails widely across educational institutions worldwide. Faced with the linguistic dynamics unfolding in Algeria, there is an imperative to systematically plan the positioning of this global language within the national linguistic ecology. This requires methodical, scientific implementation to transition English from an emerging foreign language into the primary foreign language in Algeria, without undermining the status of the two national languages.

Comprehensive language planning for teaching English to Algerian young learners encompasses social, psychological, educational, and pedagogical preparation, alongside teacher training and textbook development. Because

introducing English instruction at the primary level extends beyond a routine administrative measure governed by preset regulations, it requires deliberate institutional intervention and an effective language policy anchored in holistic, well-articulated planning.

Language planning for primary English instruction fundamentally requires several core components:

- **Socio-Cultural Preparation:** Successful language planning proceeds from a nuanced comprehension of the learner's social context and linguistic environment. This preparation entails fostering openness toward English as the global medium of the digital era, while safeguarding the learner against cultural alienation that could compromise national identity.
- **Psycholinguistic Preparation:** Introducing an eight-year-old child to a tri-linguistic configuration involving a national language alongside two foreign languages exerts substantial cognitive pressure on an emerging linguistic faculty. This dimension focuses on cultivating positive psychological motivation toward the target language, designing lessons around engaging interactive tasks, and adopting constructive pedagogical strategies for handling communicative errors.
- **Educational and Pedagogical Preparation:** This requires designing structured syllabi and curricula by operationalizing English learning objectives into communicative and procedural competencies suited to this developmental stage. It also demands a balanced weekly instructional timetable that respects the child's cognitive capacity while preserving the primacy of the mother tongue to prevent curricular congestion.
- **Teacher Preparation and Professional Development:** Serving as the cornerstone of the instructional process, the qualified teacher remains decisive for pedagogical success. Instructors must possess adequate oral proficiency to provide sound phonetic and articulatory models, coupled with an informed mastery of language didactics to identify, analyze, and address learner errors.
- **Textbook Development:** Textbook design must align with established pedagogical standards, reflecting the learner's experiential reality through relevant visual materials, authentic contextual examples, and a progressive sequencing of instructional content.

7. English Language Didactics in Light of Linguistics

7.1. Educational Linguistics

The convergence of linguistics and pedagogy gave rise to the field designated as Educational Linguistics, which aims to systematically integrate linguistic theory into language didactics. Bernard Spolsky is recognized as a key pioneer of this discipline, having first proposed the designation in the 1970s to demarcate it from the broader and less pedagogically targeted field of Applied Linguistics (Al-Omari, 2025, pp. 31–32).

Educational linguistics moves beyond formal descriptions of structural systems toward operationalizing linguistic insights within classroom instructional practice. Drawing upon this perspective in analyzing primary English instruction within Algeria's multilingual environment reveals several dimensions:

- **Bridging Linguistic Theory and Classroom Pedagogy:** Educational linguistics does not seek to instruct young learners in formal theoretical linguistics; rather, it uses linguistic principles to guide teachers and curriculum developers. Instructors need explicit linguistic awareness to interpret instructional materials, departing from rigid, normative rote-learning methods.
- **Contrastive Analysis of Phonetic and Orthographic Challenges:** This analysis helps predict areas of transfer and interference encountered by third-year primary pupils, who are introduced to English concurrently with French. While both languages employ the Latin script, they diverge substantially in phonological values, stress, and intonation. Educational linguistics provides pedagogical strategies to mitigate cross-linguistic phonetic interference stemming from native Arabic or French speech habits.
- **Cognitive Progression in Language Use:** Instructional design must correspond to the cognitive development of eight-year-old learners. It systematically advances from concrete, experiential vocabulary—such as family terms, colors, numbers, human anatomy, and household objects—toward simple syntactic constructions, minimizing early abstract linguistic forms.

7.2. Pedagogical Linguistics (Language Didactics)

This subfield synthesizes linguistic and pedagogical sciences, drawing on instructional methodology and educational psychology to analyze interactions between instructors and learners as communicators and interlocutors. Effective pedagogical communication requires instructors to fully assimilate target linguistic content and employ engaging, pragmatic teaching methods (Khuwayyir Al-Shams, 2021, p. 31).

Within this framework, scholars distinguish Specific Language Didactics through two conceptual lenses: "There is a 'specific language didactics' concerned with the particular linguistic rules and pedagogy of a distinct language—such as Arabic, French, or English didactics (la didactique du français). Dedicated academic journals promote this work, such as *Le Français dans le monde* and *Langue française*. Despite an occasional promotional tone, both periodicals reflect a scholarly commitment to linguistic pedagogy. In this regard, we should also highlight the pivotal publication *Linguistique et enseignement du français*, which helped bridge formal linguistics and language pedagogy. French language instruction has likewise received significant attention in *Études de linguistique appliquée*. The rigorous attention historically given to French didactics exemplifies the scholarly contribution envisioned for publications like the *Algerian Journal of the Arabic Language*—namely, providing an empirical platform for specialists examining the pedagogy of Arabic and foreign

languages in Algeria, as well as the prospects of integrating mother-tongue education into the Algerian educational system.

On the other hand, 'specific didactics' denotes theoretical paradigms uniquely formulated around the concrete instructional realities of an individual language, delineating curricular design principles within feasible generalization models. This division between general and specific didactics parallels the classic distinction between general linguistics and the descriptive linguistics of particular languages" (Mezhoud, 2008).

According to Khuwayyir Al-Shams (2021, p. 35), pedagogical linguistics pursues several core objectives:

- Conducting linguistic analyses of instructional content, shifting away from rote recitation toward competency-based frameworks.
- Selecting instructional content aligned with chronological age, developmental stage, allotted timetable hours, and pedagogical goals.
- Optimizing instructional practice through systematic lesson delivery, modern teaching methodologies, varied instructional media, and formative assessment tools.
- Accounting for socio-cultural contexts, community vernaculars, and contemporary communicative trends.

Applying these pedagogical linguistic principles to the third-year primary English curriculum in Algeria establishes key priorities:

- **Curricular Age-Appropriateness:** The curriculum accounts for the developmental capacities of an eight-year-old child by progressing systematically from concrete to abstract elements (from individual phonemes to words, simple phrases, and noun phrases), while calibrating target vocabulary to the allocated instructional hours.
- **Methodological Innovation:** It transitions away from the grammar-translation method and the reliance on intermediary varieties (such as Algerian Arabic vernacular or French) for comprehension. Instead, it prioritizes interactive, audio-lingual methodologies supported by audio-visual aids, illustrated flashcards, engaging imagery, and structured rhythmic chants.

8. An Analytical Overview of the Prescribed Textbook (My Book of English)

The textbook comprises sixty-two (62) pages and features a rich palette of colors alongside continuous illustrations throughout its entirety. The intentional use of color serves to stimulate the pupil's attention, sustain cognitive engagement, and reinforce long-term memory retention. Similarly, pictorial illustrations function as indispensable didactic tools; when conceptual content is abstract or entirely novel to the young learner, illustrative visual representations provide immediate referents that correspond to foreign lexical items in subsequent communicative use.

A critical typographic observation arises, however, on the front cover and the immediately following page. The typographic font employed diverges noticeably from the standard educational script adopted in the main body of the textbook (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). This discrepancy is liable to create cognitive confusion for a learner encountering the Latin script systematically for the first time. The cover's stylized, somewhat ornate typography compromises legibility, whereas early-stage literacy instruction fundamentally requires uniform, standardized, and transparent orthographic models until print-concept mastery is achieved.

Pedagogically, the textbook begins with lowercase and uppercase letter formation, followed by kinship terms (father, mother, etc.), interpersonal greetings, numbers, colors, animals, days of the week, months, and familiar domestic objects such as home furnishings. This lexical progression is contextualized through short, illustrated visual narratives that allow young learners to immerse themselves within meaningful communicative frames, transitioning progressively from discrete letters to isolated words, and onward to full communicative utterances. These instructional choices remain firmly rooted in the child's immediate, tangible environment—a salient pedagogical strength of the design.

A further pedagogical merit lies in the textbook's structured progression across six thematic instructional units:

- **Unit One:**Me, My Family and My Friends (pp. 8–18)
- **Unit Two:**My School (pp. 19–29)
- **Unit Three:**My Home (pp. 30–37)
- **Unit Four:**My Playtime (pp. 38–44)
- **Unit Five:**My Pets (pp. 45–51)
- **Unit Six:**My Fancy Birthday (pp. 52–62)

The textbook incorporates culturally relevant illustrative elements drawn directly from the Algerian milieu. These include the fennec fox character associated with the national flag (Tamrabet & Chenni, 2025, p. 5), the robotic persona Robotkid, localized child names such as Yassine and Meriem, and references reflecting national historical and geographical dimensions.

Nevertheless, manifestations of linguistic crowding emerge visibly within the curricular content. On page 15, Activity 18 prompts the learner through Character 1 to state: "I speak Arabic, English and French". Moreover, on page 24, Exercise 13 requires pupils to match the covers of school subject textbooks—printed in Arabic alongside the French textbook—with their corresponding designations in English. Such multimodal tasks directly immerse third-grade pupils into the core of triadic linguistic crowding within a single instructional session.

Methodologically, the macro-structure of the instructional units proceeds sequentially from aural reception to guided observation, followed by repetition and imitation, and culminating in decoding, handwriting, and rhythmic

chanting. This sequential articulation aligns with the foundational principles of the audio-lingual method. Each thematic unit concludes with two primary instructional components: My Phonics and My Handwriting.

The phonics section reinforces consonant and vowel contrasts. It targets phonemic differentiation—such as contrasting the bilabial plosives /p/ and /b/ through minimal pairs including pea / bee, pear / bear, and push / bush (Tamrabet & Chenni, 2025, p. 35) as well as the labiodental fricatives /f/ and /v/ via rhythmic contextualized patterns such as "A fan on a van" (Tamrabet & Chenni, 2025, p. 60).

The handwriting component focuses on the fine-motor mechanics of manuscript letter formation, progressing from lowercase to uppercase characters. Learners are systematically trained to trace directional stroke sequences kinesthetically in the air or across flat surfaces before transferring them onto notebook lines; examples include vertical and downward strokes for letters such as (i, j, l, t, u) (Tamrabet & Chenni, 2025, p. 17) and ascender patterns for (b, h, k, m) (Tamrabet & Chenni, 2025, p. 28).

Additionally, the curriculum concludes each unit with a manual cut-and-paste activity titled My Project: My Pictionary (pp. 18, 29, 37, 44, 51, 62). In these sections, pupils illustrate, cut, and paste thematic vocabulary relating to kinship, school supplies, residential spaces, toys, and household pets to compile an individualized visual dictionary—an authentic technique rooted in active experiential pedagogy.

9. Manifestations of Interference and Linguistic Crowding in the Instructional Content of My Book of English

Linguistic interference is a cross-linguistic phenomenon that has historically characterized diverse human speech communities; Algeria has not been exempt from this dynamic, shaped by colonial history, post-independence sociolinguistic realignments, and its latest institutional manifestation: aligning three distinct languages within a single, early primary school grade.

Cross-linguistic influence across contacting varieties remains inevitable, regulated by two core sociolinguistic determinants: the socio-cultural and civilizational vitality of the languages involved—which is paramount—and the demographic weight of their respective speech communities (Shaheen, 1986, p. 226). Interference, in this broad sense, functions as an intrinsic outcome of sustained global and intercultural contact throughout linguistic history.

However, the didactic presentation of an additional language requires supportive, structured pedagogical conditions that preserve communicative and instructional clarity for the target language, minimizing concurrent contact with another newly introduced foreign medium. In the current framework, an Algerian child must divide attentional, cognitive, and mnemonic resources across three distinct linguistic systems, frequently encountered within the same daily school timetable. This simultaneous triadic instruction risks diluting instructional quality and precipitating multi-tiered interference across all linguistic domains. This pedagogical friction mirrors what Nihad Al-Mousa identified as adverse cognitive and psychological pressures bearing upon the developing learner, necessitating targeted institutional remediation (Al-Mousa, 2006, p. 118).

A thorough examination of My Book of English must move beyond descriptive evaluations of graphic design and paratextual features to conduct a rigorous linguistic analysis of pedagogical activities, identifying how adjacent linguistic codes intersect within the mental lexicon of third-grade pupils.

Textual analysis reveals several specific manifestations of linguistic crowding:

- **Phonetic and Phonological Interference:** This stratum represents the most vulnerable domain affected by linguistic crowding. Because pupils undergo simultaneous auditory-phonetic conditioning in two typologically adjacent Romance/Germanic languages using the Latin script within the same school year, phonological cross-contamination frequently occurs. Pupils regularly confuse graphemes that share identical orthographic forms but diverge markedly in phonetic realization—such as the grapheme (i), which is acquired in English as a diphthongized letter-name /ai/ or short vowel /i/, whereas French reinforces a pure monophthongal /i/.
- **Orthographic and Graphic Interference:** Learners encounter divergent writing conventions between Standard Arabic literacy classes and foreign language lessons. This divergence manifests in fundamental directional conflicts—navigating right-to-left orientation in Arabic versus left-to-right processing in English and French—as well as managing cursive, interconnected Arabic scripts alongside isolated or semi-cursive Latin manuscript typography.
- **Intrusion of Mediating Languages (L1/L2 Intermediary Transfer):** The reliance on intermediary codes constitutes an intrusive pedagogical variable within the primary English classroom. Constrained by limited weekly instructional time, teachers frequently resort to Algerian Arabic vernacular or French as translational shortcuts to clarify English lexical meanings. Rather than expediting target language acquisition, this pedagogical code-switching exacerbates cognitive dissonance and impedes direct target-language processing in the child's mind.

10- Conclusion

This paper has arrived at a set of core findings, delineated as follows:

- The institutional decision to introduce English into primary education represents an indispensable strategic and scientific measure, reinforced by the global status of English, its worldwide reach, and its pivotal role in the knowledge-based economy and contemporary technology. However, this policy confronts notable operational challenges, principally the constrained weekly instructional timetable alongside deficiencies in accompanying pedagogical training and instructional resources.

- The cognitive burden of linguistic crowding weighs heavily upon the eight-year-old child. The simultaneous acquisition of two foreign languages alongside the mother tongue at such an early developmental stage precipitates acute cross-linguistic interference and substantial disorientation in the pupil's linguistic acquisition process.
- English instruction directly encroaches upon the primary acquisition of the mother tongue, effectively depriving the child of at least three full uninterrupted foundational years—a developmental period widely deemed necessary for learners to firmly consolidate the four basic literacy skills in their native language.
- The authors of the designated textbook (*My Book of English*) have largely succeeded in creating a visually stimulating instructional medium, effectively integrating culturally contextualized illustrations derived from the pupil's immediate sociocultural environment.
- Manifestations of linguistic crowding in primary English didactics emerge across multiple structural strata: the phonetic-phonological stratum, the orthographic-calligraphic stratum, and the syntactic-lexical stratum. In light of these findings, the study advances the following pedagogical and policy recommendations:
- **Re-engineering instructional time allocation:** Curricular authorities should establish a sequential separation between foreign languages by deferring French instruction to the beginning of the lower-secondary education cycle (middle school) and postponing English instruction to the fourth year of primary school.
- **Capacity building and professional development:** Targeted training initiatives must be established for primary English teachers to enhance their applied linguistic competence and pedagogical proficiency, equipping them to systematically identify, analyze, and remediate cross-linguistic interference in classroom settings.
- **Adopting communicative-interactive methodologies:** Instructional delivery should prioritize dynamic, communicative language teaching supported by interactive audiovisual technologies rather than traditional grammar-translation techniques.
- **Inter-institutional coordination:** Sustainable collaborative frameworks should be institutionalized between curriculum developers and linguistic scholars, subjecting textbooks and pedagogical materials to periodic, empirical reviews conducted jointly with university research laboratories and faculties of foreign languages and linguistics.

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» Article type:

This research is a scholarly paper examining the teaching of English alongside the mother tongue and French within the Algerian school system, using the third year of primary school as a case study.

» Confirmation of originality and exclusive submission:

We, the authors, certify that this article submitted to the journal (ROSSIISKAYA ISTORIYA) is an original work and has not been submitted to any other journal for publication.» Any conflicts of interest or ethical considerations:

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We, the authors of this article, declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the research from which this article was derived, nor to its authorship or publication.