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**Gender-Linked Language Differences in Social
Network Communication:
Algerian Facebook Users.**

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English in Candidacy for the Doctorate
Degree in *Sociolinguistics*.

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Declaration

I, hereby, state that this doctorate thesis is the result of my own work as it does not include any material that has been submitted beforehand neither partially nor fully for the fulfilment of any academic degree or other scientific work. I also certify that this work encloses no plagiarised parts and that all the support received in setting up this work and the sources have all been acknowledged.

Mr. BOUDJEMAA Habib

Dedications

In reminiscence of my dear cousins, indeed my brothers, **Sofiane** and **Othmane** whose loss broke many hearts especially mine.

I dedicate this work to:

- The never-ending source of affection and ambition, my lovely parents; my mother, **Fatima** and my dad, **Benabed**.
- My brothers and sisters; **Mohamed, Nourredine, Fatiha, siham and Nabila**.
- My life partner, my beloved wife; **Saida**.
- My children, **Yara** and **Abderrahmane Rayane** and **Alaa**, the sources of my joyfulness.
- My dearest teachers, colleagues and students at the department of English at Ibn Khaldoun University.

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Abstract

This thesis aims at detecting gender-linked language differences in the use of certain hybrid non-standard linguistic features that characterise the discourse of online social network communication on Facebook. It also seeks to unveil attitudes and motivations of Algerian male and female Facebook users towards those innovative features like transliteration, the use of reduced word forms, non-conventional spellings and language alternation processes and the extent to which the co-existing varieties in Algeria are likely to indicate differences and/or similarities in constructing the gendered identities of our participants. To attain these objectives, a mixed method approach consisting in online observation and a content analysis of a corpus of screenshots gathered from a Facebook group created by EFL students at Ibn Khaldoun University in which the target linguistic features are analysed. In addition, a mixed-gender survey questionnaire was administered to a random sample of 161 EFL students from the same university so that to assess their attitudes and motives towards those features and language choice on Facebook with regard to several domain factors. The findings reveal that there is a growing tendency among our participants as active Facebook users to adapt their casual speech styles to the nature of the virtual text-based context in which gender differences are rather hindered. Yet, the research indicates that females are inclined to adopt non-standard linguistic forms and styles due to the communicative constraints of the textual online interactions on Facebook, contesting therefore the androcentric essentialist view of gender.

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List of Abbreviations and Initialisms

ADA: Algerian Dialectal Arabic

CMC: Computer-Mediated Communication

CMD: Computer-Mediated Discourse

CMDA: Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis

CofP: Community of Practice

CS/CM: Code Switching/Code Mixing

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

Fem: Female

ICTs: Information and Communication Technologies

ML: Men's Language

MSA: Modern Standard Arabic

OSNC: Online Social Network Communication

RA: Romanized Arabic

SNSs: Social Networking Sites

WL: Women's Language

Key to Phonemic Transcriptions

1. Major Vowel Sounds Pertinent to Algerian Dialectal Arabic

Short Vowels			Long Vowels		
Symbols	Examples	Gloss	Symbols	Examples	Gloss
/a/	/ħadʒra/	‘a stone’	/a:/	/ʃa:fni/	‘he saw me’
/æ/	/gæɜ/	‘all’	/i:/	/smi:n/	‘fat’
/i/	/tɔbsi/	‘a spoon’	/u:/	/ħænu:t/	‘a store’
/u/	/tiyu/	‘a tube’	/ɔ:/	/kɔ:fi:rʒa/	‘a blanket’
/o/	/ħofra/	‘a hole’			
/e/	/bent/	‘a daughter’			
/ə/	/χa:jəf/	‘afraid’			
/ai/	/ħait/	‘a wall’			
/ei/	/feida/	‘a benefit’			
/au/	/ɜaud/	‘a male horse’			

2. Major Consonants Pertinent to Algerian Dialectal Arabic

Symbols	the Corresponding Arabic Sound	Examples	Gloss
/ʔ/	ا	/ʔaddar/	‘house’
/b/	ب	/bayða/	‘egg’
/t/	ت	/tmar/	‘dates’
/θ/	ث	/θu:m/	‘garlic’
/h/	ح	/ħli:b/	‘milk’
/χ/	خ	/χrɔ:f/	‘sheep’
/ð/	ذ	/ði:b/	‘wolf’
/n/	ن	/ni:ʃæn/	‘exactly’
/r/	ر	/roħna/	‘we went’
/m/	م	/ħamra/	‘red’
/l/	ل	/la:mba/	‘lamb’
/z/	ز	/ħæwzu:na/	‘they chased us’
/s/	س	/si:mæna/	‘week’
/ʃ/	ش	/ʃi:ba:ni/	‘old man’
/š/	ص	/šbor/	‘be patient’
/ħ/	ھ	/ħadra/	‘talk’ (n)
/w/	و	/warda/	‘flower’

/g/	غا (ADA)	/galb/	‘heart’
/k/	ك	/kæmyo/	‘lorry’
/q/	ق	/tlæqi:na/	‘we met’
/f/	فا	/ħafla/	‘party’
/ð/	غ	/ðodwa/	‘tomorrow’
/ʒ/	ع	/bʒi:d/	‘far away’
/dʒ/, /ʒ/	ج	/(d)ʒæt/	‘she came’
/t/	ط	/ʒta:ni/	‘he gave me’
/d/	د	/du:da/	‘an insect’
/d̥/	ض, ظ	/d̥alma/	‘darkness’
/j/	ي	/lju:m/	‘today’

3. Relevant Conventional Sound Representations in the Romanized Arabic:

ي = y	س = s, c
ج = j	ذ = dh (sometimes ‘d’)
غ = gh	خ = ʃ, kh
ق = ʒ, q	ح = 7, h
ص = s	ث = th (sometimes ‘t’)
ش = ch, sh	ط = t, 6
ض, ظ = dh (sometimes ‘d’)	

General Introduction

Since the early beginnings of the gender-linked language studies in offline settings, disparities in males' and females' conversational styles have been given different interpretations by different researchers from different academic disciplines. Early scholars have blatantly embraced androcentric or patriarchal beliefs to explain such kind of linguistic variation, asserting that women's language has deviated from that of men, simply for the reason that such societies are men-made. From this perspective, women have been deprived from exercising any sort of social power in the public sphere, or at least, to make use of language in the same way as men do as best illustrated by the 'female deficit' and 'male dominance' theories. Hence, feminist linguists have condemned such sexist attitudes and the negative social stereotyping of women's language as being deficient, powerless, and handicapped in comparison to that of men. As a means to remedy the social positioning of women, thus, other researchers have adopted a third essentialist belief that gender-linked language differences are the result of the distinct socialization processes that boys and girls go through during their early stages of childhood as if they belong to or have been raised into two different non-overlapping socio-cultural worlds.

Furthermore, it is worth pointing out those major early theories to gender-linked language studies are tightly correlated with gender essentialism; an ideology which asserts that males' and females' socio-cultural and linguistic practices should not deviate from the rigid gender roles already assigned to them by the normative belief system of their speech communities. That is to say, it views gender as a fixed binary social variable and an essential identity that exist in prior to any social behaviour, as it does not set this notion and its counterpart biological 'sex' apart as exemplified in many early feminist as well as variationist studies. Therefore, the essentialist view of gender leaves no room for gender-preferential linguistic features but it gives legitimacy to gender binarism and reinforces the production of implicit as well as explicit gender stereotypes and androcentric perceptions to a large extent.

However, the essentialist belief that men and women speak two different 'genderlects' appropriate to the social roles they have been allotted to perform within a given social order has been challenged by a more dynamic context-bound research paradigm that views gender identity (ies) as something that is negotiated, constructed and performed locally. It is the social constructivist perspective of gender that sees this latter as a complex sociolinguistic phenomenon tightly linked to the context of the interaction, and thus, is likely to be affected

by other non-linguistic factors like the participants' age, level of education, social class, ethnicity, topic of the interaction, setting, degree of solidarity, etc. In this respect, discursive critical discourse analysts, mainly social constructivists and post-structuralist feminists, assert that males' and females' features of their genderlects are likely to overlap at given moments since interlocutors may choose whatever linguistic recourses available to them to communicate appropriately within a specific social context as best exemplified in the community of practice framework.

Gender-linked language research has in fact become a challenging task for linguists due to the ubiquity of a variety of communication technologies equipped with diverse Internet services by the late of the 20th and the early beginnings of 21th centuries. The problem has become more salient when those online text-based modes of computer-mediated communication are concerned such as instant messaging applications, Short Messages Service, emails, social networking sites, etc. Unlike in face-to-face interactions, eliciting differences and/or similarities in males' and females' linguistic behaviour in such virtual contexts is actually constrained by several factors like anonymity, gender identity deception, confidentiality, and the lack of physical presence so that to convey a non-verbal cue to transmit a particular social meaning. Besides that, one should bear in mind that such modes of communication technologies have been successively updated so that to provide its users with attractive digital affordances and services satisfy their needs and to represent themselves in the cyberspace in the way they prefer most. Hence, online participants can freely perform a wide range of social identities ranging between real and fake ones in such virtual contexts, especially as far as their personal data are concerned like email address, phone number, age, gender, occupation, etc.

Moreover, the development of text-based communication media in the era of globalization has deeply revolutionized human-to-human communication within the digital world. Countless online communities of practice identified by their specific aims and linguistic practices are being constantly constructed. Billions of online participants from almost every part in the world are making up today a worldwide multiplex social network known as a 'global village' (Crystal, 2001). In fact, the socialization character of the 'online social networking communication' has made this latter not just a mere tool of sharing beliefs, ideas, and thoughts, but also a means for building and strengthening offline as well as online long-lasting social and cross-cultural relations at the local and global scales. More importantly, novel linguistic and non-linguistic practices have emerged as people ought to accommodate their offline languages and/or dialects in a way that fits best the nature of the digital text-based

context due to the interactive and global character of the Internet (Crystal, 2001). This linguistic revolution has consequently fuelled controversial debates among researchers questioning the extent to which such impact has altered the shape of human languages in the cyberspace.

In view of the abovementioned state of affairs, the present thesis is purely a sociolinguistic-based research, as it is intended to probe differences and/or similarities in Algerian males' and females' online text-based linguistic practices on the social networking site Facebook. According to statistics, this latter is considered as one of the most heavily visited websites in the world nowadays; to become, therefore, an indispensable part in people's day-to-day social practices especially amongst the younger generations like university students. Interestingly, this website is attracting the interest of wide range of researchers from various academic disciplines especially those concerned with linguistic analysis and the (re) construction of online social identities.

This doctoral thesis is entitled '*Gender-linked Language Differences in Social Network Communication*' and it targets the linguistic practices of '*Algerian Facebook Users*' particularly EFL university students at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret-West of Algeria as a case study. By way of explanation, the expression '*social network communication*' is used to refer to those technological devices equipped with Internet-based services that people have implemented so far in their daily lives as effective means for establishing social ties at the local as well as the worldwide levels, making therefore a large complicated online social network, as best exemplified in social networking sites like Facebook and others.

Moreover, one of the ultimate objectives of this study is examining the impact that these communication technologies has brought to people's proper usage of their languages and/or dialects. Our online observation of Algerian people's linguistic behaviour for nearly 10 years now has revealed that the type of language used on Facebook by Algerians is taking a different path, especially when Algerian dialectal Arabic (hereafter ADA), the mother tongue of the majority of Algerians, is concerned. This stigmatized spoken variety has invaded the domain of written communication after the ubiquity and spread of text-based communication technologies in Algeria. More importantly, we have observed that this variety is not restricted to informal spontaneous written online communication, but it is also being used in formal interactions on Facebook to a certain extent. Hence, this hybrid multi-faceted e-variety is becoming characterized by its own creative morpho-syntactic, scriptural and paralinguistic features besides language mixing/switching practices as requisites to adapt to the nature of the virtual context and satisfy the communicative needs of its users. To our knowledge, rare

studies have been done on this issue from a gender-related perspective within an Algerian context.

By and large, the foremost objective of this research is threefold. It seeks first to deconstruct and describe the most unique linguistic features characterizing informal hybrid text-based communication on Facebook within the Algerian context, and to identify any gender differences and/or similarities in the communicative functions that those innovative features are intended to accomplish. Second, the study aims also at assessing our respondents' attitudes towards those features and interpreting the socio-cultural dimensions associated with them as far as gender identity construction is concerned. The third objective of this investigation is planned to assess males' and females' motives and attitudes towards the usage of the existing languages, dialects and codes in Algeria, namely Modern Standard Arabic, ADA, Tamazight, French, English and even the 'Romanized Arabic' on Facebook.

For the sake of attaining the aforesaid objectives and exploring the core problematic issue of the present thesis, the following research questions have been put forward:

- What are the foremost innovative linguistic features characterizing the discourse of text-based social networking interactions on Facebook in Algeria?
- Are Algerian males and females inspired by different motives in the use of these features when interacting on Facebook?
- What factors may affect males' and females choices and attitudes vis-à-vis the use of the existing language varieties in Algeria on Facebook?

In view of these research questions, we hypothesize that:

- ✓ Online text-based social networking communication Among Algerian Facebook users is characterized by informality and non-standard linguistic features; assuming that these usages are associated with the younger educated generations regardless of their gender. Hence, innovative morpho-syntactic, scriptural, semiotic as well as code switching/mixing practices may be used to serve a variety of functions.

- ✓ Algerian male and female Facebook users might be influenced by the same motives in using those innovative features when they interact on Facebook simply for the reason that they are both required to accommodate their linguistic behaviour to the nature of the digital text-based context on Facebook.
- ✓ Males' and females' attitudes and choices in using a particular language variety over another on Facebook might be influenced by socio-cultural, linguistic, and psychological, and contextual factors.

Interestingly enough, with the ubiquity of the social networking site Facebook in Algeria and becoming used by nearly all social categories, thanks to the technology of smart phones, the ADA has rapidly seized a position in the domain of writing within the virtual context, although it is neither codified nor standardized by Algerian language planners yet. This accommodation and/or adaptation is more salient and radical when the Roman alphabets are employed by Algerian Facebook users, mainly by the younger educated individuals, to communicate in the ADA variety. Therefore, exploring this online phenomenon from the perspective of gender identity construction adds significance to the current investigation since this subject has rarely been tackled within the Algerian context.

As far as the methodological framework of the present research is concerned, the researcher opted for the adoption of an empirical case study research design which is primarily based on collecting relevant data to attain our research aims. Since this research focuses on analysing the novel linguistic characteristics typifying text-based informal discourse of Algerian Facebook users and probing the major factors that prompt their occurrence on the one hand, and the attitudes held towards them from a gender perspective on the other hand, a computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) is then adopted within the practical framework of this study as a research approach that is primarily concerned with the analysis of online discourse at the micro as well as macro sociolinguistic levels (Herring, 2004).

In this respect, the relevant 'screen data' have been collected from Facebook through our long-term online participant observation as a Facebook user for more than seven years. As for the 'users-based data', a self-designed mixed gender survey questionnaire is administered to a random sample of 240 EFL students at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret in order to assess their linguistic choices, opinions and attitudes towards the novel features of Facebook communication in Algeria on the one hand, and to measure the extent to which they make use

of the existing language varieties in Algeria to negotiate particular meanings related to their gender on Facebook on the other hand. For the analysis of the data, a mixed-method approach has been adopted, through which a qualitative content analysis and quantitative-based analysis have been implemented to analyse the two types of data respectively.

Concerning the structure of the present thesis, three main chapters make up the bedrock of this research. Chapter one is entitled '*Understandings of the Field of Gender-linked Language Studies*'. It is devoted for the discussion of the major key concepts, theories, research paradigms, and the major findings of early offline researches dealing with gender and language from a feminist as well as non-feminist perspective. Most importantly, it sheds lights on the shift of interest from gender essentialism that sees 'gender' as something which is innate and pre-determined rigid socio-cultural category set by the speech community; to the social constructivist and the community of practice frameworks that both view gender as a complex context-bound dynamic identity that is constructed locally within discourse. Moreover, it reviews issues related sexist language, stereotypes, and the androcentric beliefs held towards men' and women' speaking styles, leading therefore to gender dualism.

The second chapter, which is entitled '*Situation Analysis*', consists of three main parts. The first one is devoted for a succinct description of the world of online social networking communication, particularly the discourse of CMC and its diverse modes like synchronous, asynchronous, one-to-one, one-to-many, text-based, audio-visual, etc, and the impact that Internet-based communication technologies has brought to human languages. It focuses also on the ubiquity and assimilation of social networking sites, particularly Facebook, in people's daily social as well communicative practices. Part two describes the current sociolinguistic situation in Algeria and the major historical, socio-cultural, political, and economic factors behind its diversity complexity, and its multi-diglossic nature. Hence, the major existing language varieties in Algeria today as well as the chief outcomes of language contact phenomenon are all discussed as brief as possible. The third part of this chapter sketches the key elements related the overall research methodology opted for the study through which the research approach, design, sampling framework, instrumentation, data collection procedures and the methods of data analysis are outlined and justified.

Chapter three is simply practical since it is meant for '*Data Analysis and Discussion*'. It therefore presents and interprets the main research findings obtained from the qualitative and quantitative data that were collected through our online participant observation and the survey questionnaire respectively. In fact, this chapter is intended to answer the research questions, test the hypotheses that have been put forward, and finally to draw conclusions

with respect to the obtained results and the pertinent theoretical framework of the current research.

Chapter One: *Understandings of the Field of Gender-linked Language Studies*

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1.1. Introduction

Up till now, differences in the speech behaviour of males and females have been given different interpretations from the time when the field of gender-linked language studies turned to be more prominent within sociolinguistics by the late of 1960s. While the main objective of women's movements was to improve the socioeconomic and political conditions of women at the moment western societies treated them as a voiceless social group lacking power; feminist linguistics has developed as a reaction to the androcentric ideas and sexist stereotypes that depicted the woman as a handicapped powerless human being in comparison with the man. Hence, feminist and even-non feminist linguists have all endeavoured to solve the puzzle concerning the linguistic and stylistic variation from the perspective of the speaker's gender/sex; adopting diverse methodological approaches, research techniques and different conceptualisations of the key variables.

Therefore, the present chapter casts light on the basic notions and key terms related to the field of gender-linked language differences and studies. It starts with a quick glance at the theoretical background of the development of gender studies in sociolinguistics by taking into account the major contributions of pre-feminist, feminist and variationist studies. It also reviews gender essentialism and its relation to the speech community model in examining differences in the speech behaviour of males and females, since it has had as intense impact in influencing past and even recent thinking in human and social sciences in general. In addition to this, we attempt also the shed light on the most renowned essentialist and constructivist theories and models to gender and language and their conflicting views in explaining differences in the speech of males and females.

The last section of this chapter begins with a brief overview concerning the distinction between the terms 'sex' and 'gender' and the relation of the later with 'identity (ies)' construction from the essentialist and constructivist perspectives. Furthermore, we felt the necessity to have much ins and outs about the roles of gender stereotypes, androcentricity and sexism in affecting language use and diminishing women's status and subject positioning in the public sphere.

1.2. The Evolution of Gender-linked Language Studies

In response to formal linguistics which have always approached language as a abstract homogeneous system of human communication isolated from the socio-cultural context in which it is used, sociolinguistics has grown in a swift pace in order to enlighten the mechanisms of linguistic variation and the correlation between language and non-linguistic factors that affect its use in various social contexts. Early linguists such as De Saussure (1915) and Bloomfield (1933) followed by the influential emergence of the Chomskyan generative approach (1957, 1965) - characterized by models of formal analysis of language structure and its acquisition namely Generative Grammar, Universal Grammar and Transformational-Generative Grammar – have all built their hypotheses “on the grounds of ‘ideal’ data consideration and their theories are constructed on the basis of the analysis of language as an autonomous self-sufficient system with no appeal to the context in which it is used” (Dendane 2007, p.01).

What was the core interest of formal linguistics is also the representation of language structure in the minds of individuals, that is, the unconscious knowledge of the language rules and the intuitions they have about it; or what De Saussure and Chomsky referred to as “*langue*” and “*competence*” respectively. While their counterpart concepts namely “*parole*” and “*performance*” were put aside since those linguists were concerned only with the cognitive capacities of the human mind and its unique properties in the acquisition process of one’s native language, with no reference to external factors that they have discounted. What makes, however, “*langue*” different from “*competence*” is that the former, according to De Saussure, is ‘social’ as it represents the subconscious knowledge that is shared by the whole speech community; whereas the latter is, for Chomsky, an innate ‘individual’ phenomenon, that is, only one ‘ideal’ speaker/listener, instead of the whole community, could supply the sufficient data for a systematic description of the rules governing the way language works.

At the moment “*parole*” and “*performance*” were not given any priority or interest by formal linguistics and were neglected to some extent, some linguists felt the necessity to prove that language is rather a complex unstable social phenomenon that is likely to diverge according to some relevant social factors that, in a way or another, have a significant impact of the actual use of language (*parole* and *performance*). Hence, once putting the abstract language system into social practice, the field of sociolinguistics takes the lead then. In light of the linguistic theory proposed by formal linguistics, sociolinguistics attempts to explore,

describe and generalize conclusions a propos the relationship between language and the social structures, and how it is used to fulfil certain social functions for the community using it. Unlike sociology which focuses mainly on social structures and how language helps in understanding the social behaviour of people, sociolinguistics studies the influence of social structures of different social traits such as age, social class, gender, race, etc, on linguistic behaviour. Besides that, it studies larger sociolinguistic phenomena such as bilingualism, multilingualism, code switching and mixing, diglossia, language planning and policy, etc.

With the advent of sociolinguistic research in the 1970s, the area of gender studies has flourished within the Western context as a controversial sub-field in sociolinguistics when linguists became aware of the existing differences in the way men and women use language. As soon as women's movements appeared successively in the second half of the 19th century, feminist (socio) linguistics came then to prominence especially with the publication of Robin Lakoff's influential book in gender studies "*Language and Women's Place*" (1973, 1975). Since then, many research papers have been conducted adopting different methodologies and paradigms to understand the nature of language variation between men and women. Even those within the sub-area of sociolinguistics, referred to as variationist studies led by William Labov in the late of 1960s in United States and Peter Trudgill (1972) in England, have endeavoured to find valuable explanations for men and women speech variation as will be elucidated later. Ronald Wardhaugh (2006) validates the importance of gender-linked language studies in sociolinguistics. He writes that "A major topic in sociolinguistics is the connection, if any, between the structures, vocabularies, and ways of using particular languages and the social roles of the men and women who speak these languages" (p.315).

At the same time as the scrutiny of language and gender turned to be more sophisticated and more complex than before, and especially with the smooth shift in terminologies from the biological 'sex' to 'gender' as a socio-cultural construct, the questions asked swung from the micro-level of sociolinguistic research which sees gender/sex as independent social variables besides other variables like age and race, to a broader level of inquiry that consider 'gender' as an identity negotiated in the course of social practices and interaction. In this respect, gender and language research can be divided into two main streams: 'essentialism' which explains gender differences in terms of quantifiable measures related to biological factors and 'social constructivist' - best represented by the community of practice framework - which views gender as a dynamic concept used in different contexts to negotiate different sorts of femininities and masculinities. This idea is explained by Coates (1998) who asserts that doing/performing gender is to present oneself as a 'gendered being'.

As time went through, gender and language research started to attract scholarly voices from different academic disciplines such as sociologists, psychologist, discourse analysts and educationalists. All of their efforts were provided to find logical answers to questions such as: are men and women different? And what makes them different from one another? Moreover, most research studies in the 1970s and 1980s was split into two area of research, either on gender and language differences (speech styles) or gender bias (sexism) in language as an abstract system as it has mainly focused on the vocabulary i.e. single words (Sunderland and Litosseliti, 2002). The social dialect research has also contributed in the development of the gender and language studies. Labov's (1966, 1972a) and Trudgill's (1972a) empirical studies of language variation are particularly of a considerable significance here. They have shown the systematic divergence between social variables mainly age, gender and social class and linguistic variables, precisely the phonetic and phonological ones as will be seen later on in this section. These studies, however, have isolated the linguistic behaviour from the context in which it takes place and have frequently explained gender differences by simply looking at the informants' biological sex (Wodak, 1997).

The period between 1970s and 1980s is historically credited as a conflicting one in gender studies. The reason is that most research in gender and language has interpreted differences in men's and women's language in terms of male dominance and female subordination. The renowned theories that have greatly corresponded to this view are 'female deficit' and 'male' dominance theories. The former, which is best represented by Jespersen (1922) and Lakoff (1975), is regarded as the oldest version of the latter as it focused on women's language and its features and described it as deficient, powerless and unassertive. The latter theory, which is better exemplified by West and Zimmerman (1975, 1983), Spender (1980) and Fishman (1983), explains gender differences in terms of social power and authority granted to men in patriarchal societies and which kept women silenced and invisible through language. Another critical, but different, approach that was introduced by Maltz and Broker (1982) is the 'two-cultures' model or as Deborah Tannen (1990) termed it as the 'difference' theory. Both models share the same view that men and women are equal but different because they were socialized differently in two different cultural worlds in which they have learned to do things differently since their early stages of childhood. These theories will be reviewed in many details later in this chapter.

In fact, 'dominance' and 'difference' theories fell within the trap of 'essentialism', the ideological androcentric view which sees gender as fixed attributes that should not be exhibited interchangeably by both sexes. That is to say, those renowned theories have had the

propensity to depict ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ as ‘binary’ opposites through which flexibility and variability of gendered identities had been neglected to a great extent. Such theoretical approaches “see language as a closed system with internal rules, and not as a dynamic entity influenced by external social factors and used variably by real speakers and writers” (Litosseliti, 2006, p02). In other words, this view imposes binary categories on individuals, either feminine or masculine and nothing between.

In fact, past research approaches and paradigms have been characterized by a “static conception of distinct male and female identities, apparently fixed once and for all in childhood” (Talbot, 1998, p.144), and the manners in which linguistic behaviour, social context and identity act together have been taken no notice of until recent times. As a challenge to this perspective and with the growing demands by feminists for gender equality and fairness, a new research paradigm, the social constructivist precisely, has been materialized for an in-depth examination of the way gender as an achieved social construct interact with other variables like age, race, social class, etc. This perspective defines masculinity and femininity as context-bound dynamic processes and practices, not essences or fixed and already determined attributes given to someone as Freed (1996) puts it “Masculinity and femininity should be seen as a characteristic of the context or the situation, rather than an attribute of individuals” (p.65). Within the same context, Wodak (1997) describes gender as the understanding of “how what it means to be a woman or to be a man changes from one generation to the next”, and illustrates how this fluctuates among users of language, i.e. “between different racialized, ethnic, and religious groups, as well as for members of different social classes” (p.04). That is to say, gender and gendered identities are not only conceptualized as social and individual constructs shaped by means of agency and diversity in human communication, but also as variable in the sense that “they vary from one generation to the next, from one situation to another, and among language users who belong to different groups in terms of age, ethnicity, race, religion, class, sexuality, or education” (Litosseliti, 2006, p.01).

Along the same line of thought, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet’s ‘Community of Practice’ (1992) (hereafter CofP) framework has revolutionized the field of sociolinguistics in general and gender studies in particular for “its compatibility with current theories of identity” (Bucholtz, 1999, p.203) or as Holmes and Meyerhoff described it as “a corrective to unsatisfactory approaches to language and gender” (1999, p.180). In a general sense, the CofP model stresses that gender identities are local meanings developed and negotiated in a range of social contexts in which individuals are likely to be found in various local communities

such as family, sport team, workplace, etc. It also emphasizes fluidity and flexibility in identity construction, that is, men and women are welcomed to shape the gender identity that matches up with the context of interaction, i.e. according to their membership in a particular local community. Therefore, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992, 1995, and 1998) recommend, in light of their seminal works on CofP, researchers to not over-generalize their findings and to avoid abstractions, and to ‘think practically and look locally’. This has certainly boosted the understanding of the range of manners gender identity is linguistically constructed in altered communities (Coates, 2004).

By the same token, the sociolinguistic research has gone beyond the traditional association of linguistic forms and with features social categories as best represented by the speech community framework in variationist sociolinguistics. At the beginning of the 21st century, modern gender and language research is not examining just the spoken form of language (e.g. casual and formal speech) as it was apparent in the past decades, but is also investigating written data for the sake of having methodical understanding of the mechanisms of negotiating multiple, often contradictory, gender identities in daily life and of assessing the function of language in the production and maintenance of fashionable femininities and masculinities. In addition, there is also a growing tendency by contemporary research to look for similarities and differences as well between men’s and women’s speech styles, along with the aim of emphasizing the multiplicity of femininities and masculinities.

By and large, there is no suspicion that men’s and women’s language differ at many linguistic levels and that “male and female conversational styles are quite distinct” (O’Loughlin, 2000, p.02). Surprisingly, it is women’s language that has been widely observed and analysed as ‘deviant’, while that of men has long been deemed as the ‘norm’, ‘the correct’ and ‘the standard’ from which women’s language deviated and to which it has been evaluated and measured. So far, we have endeavoured to cast the light on the motivations and the circumstances behind the evolution of gender studies as a sub-field in sociolinguistics as brief as possible. Now, we will try to have a quick glance at the emergence of feminist linguistics and its relevant manoeuvres to enhance the status of women and combat the trends that have defined them as secondary to men.

1.2.1. Feminist Linguistics: Early Works and Contributions

As a purely political movement, feminism has evolved for the first time in western communities in the early years of 19th century as a result of the pressures exercised on women by a patriarchal social order which rendered them oppressed and marginal in terms of roles and power relations. It is an ideology that rests in the assumption that women have the potential to hold social power that they have been deprived of by men. The chief goals of feminism have always been calling for gender equality, contesting any kind of sex discrimination (sexism) and working for improving women's rights at the institutional and the socio-economic levels. In a brief sense, "feminism has tried to render women's experience visible and to both identify and combat the sources of gender inequalities" (Litosseliti, 2006, p.02). Feminism has profoundly impacted thinking in the field of social sciences and humanities in general and linguistics in particular during the past three decades. By the late of the 1960s, the scope of feminist philosophy has spread rapidly and become more diverse as soon as the second women's liberation movement emerged to fight against gender bias.

It is worth noting that feminism is an umbrella term that covers a variety of feminist perspectives with different tendencies and natures. Besides feminist linguistics which is much concerned with gender differences and bias in language; there are also radical, liberal and socialist feminisms. Radical feminism, for example, places "the notion of patriarchy as primary in women's struggle" (Sunderland, 2006, p.21). The key scholar embracing this view is the radical feminist Dale Spender (1980) who stipulates that language (precisely English) is man-made and that women are linguistically silenced and subordinated because of men dominance and power, as she has also written about sexist language and contested it for rendering women unseen through the use of the generic 'He' that will be reviewed later.

Historically, the era, that preceded pre-feminist linguistic research, dates back to centuries before the release of the first ever piece of unsystematic research about sex differences in language by the Danish linguist Otto Jespersen in 1922. We refer here to those unscientific and prescriptive 'folk-linguistic' beliefs and ideas constructed through popular explicit proverbs and sayings such as the Sudanese proverb 'three women make a market' or the English one 'a woman's tongue wags like a lamb's tail' (Sunderland, 2006). In a point of fact, most of those folk-linguistic ideas have always stereotyped women as chatterboxes, that is, as talkative and gossiping.

As far as the topic of gender and language differences is concerned, early pre-feminist linguistic research alternated between the perception that gender differences in language are essentially related to biological factors, and the view that it indicates men's and women's distinctive social gender roles as sponsored by modern feminist linguists (Cameron, 1997). In the former approach, the distinction between the terms 'sex' and 'gender' was not drawn yet, since those pre-feminist linguists (e.g. Jespersen, 1922) "focused on gender from the perspective of the speakers' biological sex" (Litosseliti, 2006, p.13). In view of this, the association of gender with biology pays no heed to men's and women's positions and roles in society, that is, it embraces notions of cultural determinism, essentialism and androcentricity. As one would have thought, modern feminist linguists have robustly condemned the biological perspective of early pre-feminist linguistics for perpetuating gender stereotypes, myths and inequalities that are eventually harmful for both sexes.

As pre-modernist feminist linguistics focused on the individuals' biological sex/gender as static notion in explaining why language is used differently by men and women, modern feminist linguistics emerged as a result of the second wave of women's movement in the late of 1960s and early 1970s. Whereas women's movements are more political in nature, feminist linguistics is a purely linguistic domain of inquiry triggered by the issue of sex discrimination and imbalance of socio-political power between men and women in patriarchal societies.

Additionally, Talbot (1998) asserts that feminist linguistics is mainly interested in discovering and resisting the ways language and other social practices produce, reflect and maintain sexist attitudes, gender differentiation and disparities in a given society. It revolved chiefly around male dominance and women oppression and contesting the norms that rendered women's status inferior to men and the way language has been used by sexes to reflect such reality. In fact, gender-linked language studies in the 1960s, the 1970s and the 1980s focused for the most part on the oppressed group, that is, 'women's language' instead of that of men; a tendency which can be recognized as "an understandable and necessary response to the sustained historical exclusion of women in a patriarchal world order in general, and their exclusion in androcentric research in particular" (Litosseliti, 2006, p.23). Furthermore, this trend of feminist linguistics is historically credited for its theorization of language and gender under three conflicting models namely the 'deficit' (Lakoff, 1973, 1975), 'dominance' (Spender, 1980) and the 'difference' (Maltz and Broker, 1982, Tannen, 1990). By way of explanation, the second feminist movement has gone through different stages of

development which are deemed as the driving force behind generating those theoretical models in language and gender research, as stated by Cameron (1995b, p.39)

Both dominance and difference represented particular moments in feminism: dominance was the moment of feminist outrage, of bearing witness to oppression in all aspects of women's lives, while difference was the moment of feminist celebration, reclaiming and revaluing women's distinctive cultural traditions

(Quoted in Sunderland, 2006, p.21)

The book of Thorne and Henley (1975) '*Language and Sex-Difference and Dominance*' besides that of Lakoff (1975) '*Language and Women's Place*' are of an influential reference, being the best representative pieces of research highlighting these two models of explanations and with the aim of picturing men dominance at all linguistic levels and to assess any gender differences in talk as the by-products of socio-cultural differences and early childhood socialisation. However, these theories tend to support and reinforce a dichotomous categorization of males and females by merely posing questions that take for granted the co-existence of binary oppositions (Bing and Bergvall, 1998).

By the late of 1980s and early 1990s and along the third-wave feminism, modern feminist linguistics made a step forward to analyse gender differences from a post-structuralist and a social constructivist points of view. Unlike past approaches which see language as "a closed system with internal rules, and not as a dynamic entity influenced by external social factors and used variably by real speakers and writers" (Litosseliti, 2006, p.02); recent post-structuralist feminist linguistics is more critical, complex, constructivist and dynamic than past essentialist approaches, in the sense that it sees "language as a social practice" (Litosseliti, 2006, p.03) and is more interested in "how women and men are constructed through language" (Litosseliti, 2006, p.03). In a similar vein, Mills (2002) points out that post-structuralist feminist linguistics is characterized by notions of complexity, performativity, multiplicity and the negotiation of diverse gendered identities in specific social contexts and communities of practice. From this perspective, presenting oneself as a gendered being through language, i.e. as masculine or feminine, is not bound to any ideological beliefs and norms, but rather to individuals' agency and flexibility in selecting any linguistic resource available to them to signal their membership in a particular social practice. For Butler (1990), to be identified as masculine or feminine, people make choices amid language norms that are considered as suitable and intelligible for the performance of

masculinity and femininity. In this respect, “identity formation is an ongoing and dialectal process, rather than a set of attributes: who we are is being constantly shaped by the taken-for-granted concepts and assumptions embedded in discourses, and vice versa” (Litosseliti, 2006, p.03).

Moreover, post-structuralist feminist linguistics adopts more recent, discursive and critical analytical frameworks such as discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis as helpful tools to dissect the way individuals relate ideology and power together to negotiate and construct their gendered identities in talk and through larger linguistic units like discourse. The basic assumption held by such critical approaches is that gendered identities are not determined by any trait of biological maleness and femaleness, but it sustains the conception that gendered identities refer to the set of performative multiple choices one makes when he/she engages in various social practices. In doing so, ideological norms and power relations may be either maintained or violated. Hence, the notion of ‘competing identities’ summarizes the situation in which a woman switches back and forth between what to be a powerless homemaker and what is meant to be a powerful public leader. Therefore, people construct and activate their gendered identities immediately when interacting in a given social context, as they sometimes follow and in other moments confront power relation beliefs and gender ideologies (Litosseliti, 2006).

Standing on the assumption that “gender is perceived by feminist linguists as something that one performs in an interaction rather than something which one has or possesses” (Bassiouny, 2009, p.128); the term ‘gendered identities’ has been just recently used in its plural form by feminist linguists to stress that there exist a range of miscellaneous masculinities or femininities within the same man or woman. As put by Antaki (1994), thinking of language as a dynamic and complex phenomenon subjected to variation and change presumes that whenever we make use of language, we perform making meaningful choices and selections from the linguistic resources available to us.

Feminist linguistics has become more complicated but fruitful when Judith Baxter (2003) have coined a fresher, critical, and discursive analytical framework known as ‘*Feminist Post-structuralist Discourse Analysis*’ (hereafter FPDA). This approach shares a lot of critical conceptions with other approaches like discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, and social constructionist feminism. In a brief sense, the FPDA examines gendered discourse and the systematic co-construction of gendered identities within a multifaceted setting in which power relations and gender ideologies are critically analysed in terms of practice and meaning. As elucidated by Lazar (2005), it seeks to put emphasis on “how

gender ideology and gendered relations of power are (re)produced, negotiated and contested in representations of social practices, in social relationships between people, and in people's social and personal identities in texts and talk" (p.11).

The foremost objective of this comprehensive analytical framework is to apply a critical and a discursive psychological analysis of the ways men and women perform gender and negotiated multiple meanings of gendered identities and power relations through discourse. In contrast to past traditional feminist approaches, the FPDA approach to the examination of gendered discourse demonstrates social agency and an assortment of subject positioning of men and women in competing discourses. That is to say, both genders are interchangeably presented as powerful and even powerless social agents within the same talk in a cross-sex group. In her discussion and analysis of competing discourses within mixed-sex conversations in a classroom setting and business meetings including senior managers, Baxter (2002) found that female speakers displayed marked symptom of powerfulness, in spite of being frequently silenced by the dominant group. For Baxter (2003), an interlocutor may "be positioned as relatively powerful within one discourse but as relatively as powerless within another, perhaps competing discourse" (p.9).

For example, Baxter (2003) found in her study of a mixed-sex UK secondary classroom that girls are contained by competing classroom discourses, sometimes as powerful and other times as powerless. She avers that girls' 'collaborative' and 'gender differentiation' discourses portray them in conflicting modes, that is, as skilful cooperative listeners who stick to the rules of classroom, and at the same time as powerless interlocutors in the sense that "...girls are stereotypically expected to be good listeners [...], which often diminish a positive assessment of the contributions" (Baxter, 2003, p.16). From a post-structuralist point of view, Baxter argues that female students are likely to be in less powerful subject positioning by their conformation to the rules of classroom, as they show more collaborative support than they get in interaction and which efficiently serve the male students' concerns.

The scope of post-structuralist feminist approaches to gender-linked language studies has called for the necessity to examine not only differences, but also similarities in men's and women's talk and the ways in which meanings of masculinity and femininity overlap in discourse. However, recent approaches have rather made it quite difficult to form generalizable statements about the linguistic behaviour of men and women as past essentialist approaches (deficit, difference and dominance) did. That's because, according to Johnson and Meinhof (1997), if gendered identities are conceptualized as changeable constructs built in the

course of social actions, then their production and accomplishment in discourse will differ from one setting to another.

Another sub-area of sociolinguistic research has also contributed to the evolution of gender and language studies from the perspective of social dialectology or variationist studies pioneered by the (socio) linguist William Labov in the late of 1960s. However, this area of research does not share the same view of gender with post-structuralist feminist linguistics as we will see next.

1.2.2. Variationist Studies

Unlike formal linguistics which sees language as an abstract homogenous closed system, variationist sociolinguistics (known also as social dialectology) views language as a social phenomenon that varies in a systematic way among social groups and categories. It examines the methodical linguistic variation, its causes and principles in relation to social factors or non-linguistic variables such as age, gender, social class, race, and so on. Variationist sociolinguistics originated with the American linguist William Labov, in light of his decisive socio-phonological surveys of Martha's Vineyard in 1963 and New York City in 1966, and it turned to be more prominent in the early 1970s.

As far as the theme of 'sex/gender' and language variation is concerned from the Labovian perspective, early social dialect research focused on gender as a demographic data, that is, from the angle of the informants' biological sex as a sociolinguistic variable; a view which is in agreement with the essentialism view that imposes rigid categories and binary oppositions on people. In view of his speech community model to gender and language differences, Labov introduced the sociological notion of 'prestige' in order to clarify the mechanisms of socio-phonological variation, laying emphasis on language attitudes as a contributory factor in such variation. To do this, Labov (1966b) brought in the sociolinguistic interview as an investigation tool of gathering consistent and genuine data required for his study, and cautiously designed for the aim of eliciting diverse speech styles (casual/formal; standard/non-standard, etc). The results of his studies illustrated an immense stratification of certain phonological variables correlated with a range of social factors like gender/sex, age, socioeconomic status and situational context.

In light of his quantitative phonological surveys, Labov stressed two aspects of the human linguistic behaviour. First, women of all social class categories and age groups tend to use more standard and prestigious variants than their men counterpart, and secondly, the

lower middle class (LMC), particularly women, ‘*hypercorrects*’ its linguistic behaviour by means of copying more standard features associated with the middle class (MC) in order to achieve social prestige, that is, to become MC itself. Consequently, Labov considers this as “evidence of the linguistic and social ‘insecurity’ of this group, and also a sign that these people often lead in linguistic change” (Kerswill, 2007, p.55). For him, women are more status-conscious than men; as they tend to secure their social status through the use of more standard and prestigious speech features, while more vernacular and stigmatized forms were exhibited by men. Hence, those women who are socially insecure i.e. having no access to social power, are found more sensitive to their linguistic behaviour and more conscious that the standard forms are typically associated with the elite, that is, with people of higher and powerful social positions. In his seminal paper ‘*The Intersection of Sex and Social Class in the Course of Linguistic Change*’ (1990), Labov observes that while male informants tend to make use of more non-standard immobile forms than females, but concerning linguistic change; women will lead it, in part by preferring more innovative and standard forms. In this context, women are linguistically less conservative than men, but this is not always the same, because his studies of the two diphthongs /aw/ and /ay/ in Martha’s Vineyard island (1962, 1972b) demonstrated that it is men who tend to lead the linguistic change, that is, being less conservative than women.

By analogy with the Labovian tradition, the British linguist Peter Trudgill (1972a) conducted a quantitative study on sex differences in language use. In his paper ‘*Sex, Covert Prestige and Linguistic Change in the Urban British of Norwich*’, Trudgill (1972a) linked linguistic variables, precisely phonological ones, with social class and status, age, and stylistic context. Not surprisingly, he had the tendency to look at the biological ‘sex/gender’ of his participants as a sociolinguistic variable as Labov did. However, Trudgill was more interested in highlighting the sociological explanations of the already detected gender-linked language differences and variation in Labov’s works, wherein men showed higher proportion of using stigmatized variants than women did. To do this, the British linguist adopted Labov’s (1966b) sociological notion of ‘*covert prestige*’, a term which is associated with those users of non-standard or vernacular forms, typically with masculinity.

As far as methodology is concerned, Trudgill used a quantitative technique consisting in a large-scale interview and random sampling of sixty informants in Norwich, England. His target linguistic variable was the ending phonological sound /**ing**/, for which there are two variants in Norwich English: the more prestigious form ‘walking’ and the less prestigious one ‘walkin’. Overall, Trudgill (1972a) found that women exhibited a strong tendency in using the

prestigious variants than men, and they were inclined to over-report their way of talking. In other words, when enquired about their ways of pronunciation, declared they create more 'prestigious' speech forms than they did in fact. In this respect, Trudgill (1972) writes that "Women in our society are more status-conscious than men, generally speaking...and are therefore more aware of the social significance of linguistic variables" (p.182). This implies that women are enthusiastically more conscious of social status and are likely to diminish their disadvantaged social positions, by way of utilizing more prestigious linguistic forms in their utterances. Moreover, he states that women have to get hold of social status and secure it only through the use of standard and overt-prestigious speech forms as they lack access to other recourses of power in society, while men can get it simply through their professional positions and earnings. In this respect, Trudgill (1972, p.91) points out the following "The social position of women in our society is less secure than that of men...it may be...that it is more necessary for women to secure and signal their social status linguistically"

In light of this, he presumes that men are mainly judged and evaluated in terms of the works and activities they execute, whereas women are appraised according to their appearance, including their linguistic behaviour. Therefore, the observed higher quantity of non-standard forms exercised by male speakers can be interpreted as an inclination to the covert prestige of working class vernacular forms, which represent toughness and hardiness; traits that are generally combined with the life of working class people and with masculinity and machismo as well.

The findings of Labov and Trudgill concerning 'sex/gender' and standard language fuelled the research curiosity of other linguists like the Milroys (James Milroy and Lesly Milroy). In her analysis of phonetic variation in the speech of three working class communities in Belfast city, Milroy and Milroy (1978) and Milroy (1980) introduced the notion of 'social networks' as a micro-sociological analytical framework that was put forward by the Milroys in order to observe internal linguistic variation in terms of the relationships and ties an individual has with other people and the types of interaction he/she has with them in a certain community. In this vein, Dendane (2007) writes that "What is interesting about the method is that it offers a way of observing how an individual speaker behaves in a variety of ways according to the role relations and the ties knitted with other individuals within the network" (p.41).

The social network model gives emphasis to the social bonds that certain individuals have with each other, and analyses the way these bonds affect individuals' linguistic behaviour (Mullany, 2007). Unlike the speech community model of Labov and Trudgill

which is based on social class stratification, the social networks framework is rather measured in terms of its 'strength', that is, it is assessed by categorizing whether a person's networks are 'dense' or 'loose' and whether they are 'multiplex' or 'uniplex' as well (Milroy, 2001, p.550). On the one hand, a strong network is dense if the members that an individual interact with; relate to and interact with each other, and at the same time is it multiplex when those members are linked to each other at several dimensions such as living in the same neighbourhood, working in the same company and sharing leisure doings. On the other hand, a uniplex network is loose when an individual is connected to others only through one bond such as workplace or family.

Interestingly, Milroy (1980) found that those participants with stronger and highest networks tend to preserve vernacular localized linguistic norms. By way of explanation, dense and multiplex social networks tend to support and reinforce localized social and linguistic norms which are sustained by the members of the network, whereas loose and uniplex networks promote linguistic change due to the deficiency of norm reinforcement. Likewise, the work of Lesly Milroy in Belfast showed that in those working class communities, there is a division in gender roles and a sharp polarisation in men's and women's activities.

Along her participant observation technique, Milroy (1980) avers that this gender role polarisation is manifested in communities with high density social networks, especially in the first working class community- '*Ballymacarrett*' situated in East Belfast- wherein the rate of male employment is higher than the other two areas; '*Hammer*' and '*Clonard*' situated in West Belfast. In the first working class community, males had social networks characterized by strong density and multiplexity as they regularly demonstrated heavy use of vernacular linguistic norms due to the close social relations they have with each other, that is to say, "such networks indicate strong social cohesion, produce feelings of solidarity, and encourage individuals to identify with others within the network" (Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2015, p.71)

Likewise, females in Clonard community also tended to display a high rate of recurrence of vernacular norms for the same reason. In view of this, we would avow that men's and women's close and strong social networks in these distinct industrial areas function as mechanisms of enforcing and reinforcing linguistic vernacular norms which are "perceived as symbolizing values of solidarity and reciprocity rather than status, and are not publicly codified or recognized" (Milroy, 1980, p.35-36).

Although the Milroys' 'social networks' approach is more flexible in nature than the speech community model in analysing the variety of interactions a speaker may perform depending on his/her social practices and relations with others, Lesly Milroy, however,

considered 'sex/gender' as a given social category like age; the same way as Trudgill (1972a, 1974) and Labov (1966) did in their studies. In spite of this, her work is rather groundbreaking and innovative in terms of its methodological demonstration that women do not essentially use more standard linguistic forms than men, which consequently challenged the stereotypical belief that women are more status-conscious than men.

To conclude, neither Labov, nor Trudgill and even Milroy claimed that they are conducting a feminist analysis in their studies. Hence, their variationist research paradigm was not concerned with the more recent and dynamic understanding of gender as something which is built and enacted through language behaviour in a very complex way. These studies have also overlooked the reality that differences between men and women entail differences in their orientations to other social groupings, and then effects of gender in language variation should not be lessened to the essentialist perception of male/female talk as 'more or less conservative' (Eckert, 1989).

1.3. Essentialism and Speech Communities

Due to its profound and pervasive impact in persuading thinking in early and even recent research of gender and language differences, essentialism is considered as a traditional movement in sociolinguistics in general and gender studies in particular. Researchers from different scholarly fields like variationists (Labov, Trudgill and Milroy) and some early feminists (Lakoff and Jespersen) have had the tendency to show approval of essentialist thinking. The latter is documented through the related literature as the belief that the individuals' demographic data such as social class, age, gender, ethnicity, etc are 'given' attributes which are determined either by nature or nurture. More importantly, traditional dialectologists and even social dialectologists have adopted this view in studying 'speech communities' in terms of geographical and social variations. Hence, the speech community framework has been mainly built on the basis that individuals are socially categorized and 'essentialized' according to some independent sociolinguistic variables such as age, gender, ethnicity, etc. That is to say, it follows a static conceptualization of those variables as fixed traits differing among social groups and, hence, they use language differently as we will see next.

1.3.1. Essentialist View of Gender

To think of gender from the essentialist perspective is simply to “conflate sex with gender, and which treat gender as a relatively fixed trait or ‘essence’ that resides in male and female selves” (Speer, 2005, p.33). From a general viewpoint, Bucholtz (2003) points out that essentialism is “the position that the attributes and behaviour of socially defined groups can be determined and explained by reference to cultural and/or biological characteristics believed to be inherent to the group” (p.398). Said differently, essentialism is the ideological belief which stresses that the social traits like gender identity that an individual possesses are essentially ascribed to him/her either by biological or cultural factors. In this respect, a division is made between biological essentialism and cultural essentialism.

While the former “claim sex differences due to nature” (Lindsey, 2016, p.39); the latter “claim gender differences due to nurture” (Lindsey, 2016, p.39). Either from biology or culture, the essentialist perspective is fruitless and unproductive in the sense that it is deterministic. That is because it treats ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ as equally “pre-given traits or ‘natural facts’, that resides in individuals and which determine the linguistic recourses men and women use to speak” (Speer, 2005, p. 12). Therefore, what is problematic in essentialism is the assumption that gender roles and power relations are inevitably produced and pre-determined by natural and cultural forces. This resulted in an androcentric cultural world and a patriarchal social order in which males are socialized and more expected to exhibit dominant and authoritative roles while females are blatantly confined to inferior social positions and roles because they are biologically powerless.

Moreover, the essentialist view imposes rigid social categories on people and stresses a gender polarization lens, i.e. gender dualism. In other words, it places those men and women who conform to the conventional norms of their speech communities in the column of ‘authentic’ members, while it puts those who go astray from its normative beliefs and expectations in the column of ‘deviant’. At the same time, it does not provide any chance and leave no room for gender overlapping and agency as advocated by the social constructivist and post-structuralist approaches to gender and language studies like discursive psychology and social identity theory.

According to Bing and Bergvall (1998), a range of feminist linguists have problematized the essentialist views for sustaining, maintaining and reinforcing ‘binary thinking’. Gender theorists like Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992), McElhinny (1996), Talbot (2003) and Bucholtz (2003) emphasize that the central point of these views in

sociolinguistic research in general and gender studies in particular has been founded on the grounds that social groups like men and women are defined as homogenous binary oppositions through which “ideas about gendered speech styles are applied in a uniform way to all men and all women, which ignores differences among men and among women” (Speer, 2005, p.33). By this token, early popular theoretical feminist models namely ‘deficit’, ‘dominance’ and ‘difference’ are deeply rooted in essentialism in the sense that they have all endorsed the over-generalized claim that women’s language is different from that of men’s and both are principally constrained by biological factors on one hand, and determined by socio-cultural norms set by the society on the other hand. Accordingly, essentialist research, unlike social constructivist, reinforces the hypothesis that males and females are basically like chalk and cheese, seeing that such type of research holds the belief that the speakers’ sex/gender both produces and gives account of differences in males’ and females’ talk.

In brief, essentialism sees men and women as dichotomous rigid social categories in their speech communities, while it does not account for the systematic construction and negotiation of multiple context-sensitive masculinities and femininities as advocated by anti-essentialists. What is also problematic, in light of this view, is its subjective fashion to describe women’s language as stereotypically deficient, lacking power and assertiveness, while it ignored that of men’s simply because it is the ‘norm’ against which women’s linguistic behaviour has been measured for the most part.

1.3.2. Language, Gender and Speech Community

As the essentialist theorists struggle to sustain, a speech community-based sociolinguistic research interprets gender-linked language differences in terms of ‘sex differences’, that is, from the perspective of the individuals’ biological sex/gender. More importantly, language is therefore “seen as shaping or more constructing gender, not simply as a characteristic of it” (Abdelhey, 2008, p. III). In addition, language and gender research within a speech community framework celebrates uniformity, fixedness and firm adherence to the conventional norms by which men and women signal their membership to their peer groups.

As a macro-sociological framework of examining language variation in relation to external factors, the speech community is rather controversial in the sense that it has been defined differently by different linguists throughout the sociolinguistic literature, but nearly all of them drew attention to language and the shared sociolinguistic norms regarding its use

by a given community. For example, Bloomfield (1933) defines it as “a group of people who interact by means of speech” (p.42). Moreover, Romaine (2000, p.23) delineates the speech community as “a group of people who do not necessarily share the same language, but share a set of norms and rules for the use of language” (Quoted in Dendane, 2007, p.30). In a similar vein, Labov (1972) elucidates this concept further when he says “a speech community cannot be conceived as a group of speakers who all use the same forms; it is best defined as a group who share the same norms in regard to language” (p.158).

Although the speech community model emphasises heterogeneity and diversity at the level of social structures and language usage as shown in the Labovian paradigm, it, however, celebrates homogeneity and sameness regarding social adherence to the norms and conventions of appropriate behaviour. Thus, this model neglects flexibility in interaction and ignores the importance of the social contexts in constructing identities and the diverse roles and practices that speakers are likely to perform interchangeably when engaged in a particular speech event as highlighted by the social constructivists, mainly the community of practice framework. For this reason, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) assert that the main limitation and problem with the speech community model is not only restricted to the diminution of gendered identity to ascribed sociolinguistic norms; they affirm also that those essentialist theorists tend to use a kind of generalizations and large-scale statements vis-à-vis the way men’s and women’s talk should be, not how they are constructed through it.

Methodologically speaking, the essentialist character of the speech community is distinguished from the social constructivist character of the community of practice framework by its keenness to adopt a ‘variables and effects’ analytical model of linguistic variation, which involves “correlating linguistic forms (such as interruption or tag questions) with pre-existing features of context, like sex or gender” (Speer, 2005, p.33). That is to say, it theorizes sex/gender-linked language differences from the perspective of normative beliefs which determine what is socially and culturally appropriate and correct for men and women and what is unacceptable for their own gender. This can be better illustrated in the pioneering work of Robin Lakoff (1973, 1975) in light of her ‘female deficit’ and ‘male dominance’ models, in addition to the one proposed by Maltz and Broker (1982) the ‘two-cultures’ which has a similar stance to Tannen’s (1990) ‘difference’ model. As far as these models are concerned, speakers have been utterly split into two discrete categories in calculating quantifiable gender differences in the observed linguistic behaviour of men and women.

Additionally, these scholars tend to formulate questions that strengthen a male/female dichotomy and presume the occurrence of a dual gender (Bing and Bergvall, 1998). In fact, what all these feminist models have in common with the speech community framework, which best represented by the works of Labov and his followers, is their allegiance to endorse essentialist thinking through which “men and women are treated as belonging to two relatively homogeneous groups” (Speer, 2005, p.33). In doing so, the researcher uses methods and investigation tools that conceptualize the informants’ demographic data such as gender as relatively fixed, determinate, and context-independent variables which, as stated by Speer (2005), “exist prior to, and outside language, and which contain or determine our actions’ (p.34), and subsequently, “language use is treated as a direct reflection of one’s sex and gender identity” (Speer, 2005, p.33). From a speech community perspective, being linguistically a masculine is to speak in harsh voice, argue a lot, use impolite vernacular forms, and interrupt other interlocutors. By contrast, being feminine is to speak softly, use polite and more standard forms, and showing conversational support and cooperativeness. What characterizes such ‘variables and effects’ model of sex/gender-linked language differences is perceiving the variable gender/sex as an explanatory causal factor of language variation in the speech styles of men and women; something which is biologically and culturally determined by a set of social norms to which men and women should stick when involved in interaction. In this vein, this model will without doubt prohibit the fieldworker from envisioning gender as a dynamic process and practice that is negotiated in the course of the individuals’ interaction as advocated by the social constructivists.

On the whole, the underpinning of normative beliefs by essentialist thinking and speech community model did only not produce binarism and dualistic gender categories regarding differences in language use. More importantly, relative issues like gender roles and power relations are also worth considering when dealing with such sociolinguistic subject matter, for the reason that such language differences have been historically explained in terms of women’s subordinate roles and men’s powerful social positions.

1.3.3. Gender Roles and Power Relations in Speech Community

It is worth pointing out that most early gender-linked language studies have measured differences in men’s and women’s speech styles with reference to the roles they were expected to fulfil in a given social order; a system through which stereotypes and power relations have been (re)produced, organized and maintained in terms of male dominance and

female subordination. By gender roles, we refer here to the set of prescribed socio-cultural norms, activities and expectations that are reckoned to be characteristics of being feminine or masculine. Gender roles differ from one society to another, from culture to culture, and from one historical context to another. By means of language, boys and girls are, hence, instructed and socialized by their parents and peers since infancy to execute the normative gender roles which correspond to their maleness and femaleness respectively as highlighted by Coates (2004)

Language is an important part of the socialization process, and children are socialised into culturally approved gender roles largely through language. Learning to perform masculinity or femininity in our society means among other things learning to use gender-appropriate language (p.169)

Language is undeniably an effective tool of performing social functions for its users. It is perhaps the only medium through which males and females learn the norms associated with masculinity and femininity. Besides that, the reinforcement of gender roles within the child is likely to be accompanied by an unconscious acquisition of different speech styles depending on the nature of the instructions addressed to him/her by the social environment.

Taking into account the speech community framework as a “static model, one in which the social order remains largely unaltered and where the group is being privileged over the individual as the unit of analysis” (Bucholtz, 1999, p.201), the distribution of social roles and power between men and women has been based on the notion of gender role ideology, that is, the conception of women as homemakers and men as breadwinners. Even the social status explanations provided by Labov and Trudgill in their relevant studies on sex differences in language use demonstrate the extent to which women have been positioned in marginal social roles, a situation which urged them to signal their status only through the use of more standard, prestigious and hyper-corrected speech features as we have seen earlier. Within this context, Labov (1990) laid emphasis on the child rearing function of women as a leading factor behind women’s heavy use of prestigious forms than men have shown in their linguistic behaviour. Along the same line of thought, Holmes (2013) stressed the role of women as guardians of the society’s norms and values. She further explains that “Women are designated the role of modelling correct behaviour in the community...society expects women to speak more correctly and standardly than men, especially when they are serving as models for children’s speech” (p.168).

Moreover, the normative belief system of gender polarization which celebrates “the ubiquitous organization of social life around the distinction between male and female” (Bem, 1993, p.02), has resulted in stereotypical gender roles prescribed as “mutually exclusive scripts for being male and female” (Bem, 1993, p.80). More importantly, these androcentric gender roles and expectations limited women’s experiences at the social and institutional levels and guaranteed more power and more legitimacy to men at the expense of women subordination. Such distinction has been significantly based on the idea of difference instead of sameness since the beginning of social life, and which in turn “transform male/female differences into female disadvantage” (Bem, 1993, p.192). In a point of fact, various instances of the way the system of gender polarization can effortlessly confine women’s chances to get access to authoritative social status in the public sphere.

From a sociological point of view, the linguistic differences that were documented in the speech of men and women in the 1970s and 1980s have been intensely based on an androcentric view of gender roles and power relations. Traditionally, women’s social roles have been limited to private professions, mainly to indoor works, as they were deprived from entering the public sphere; the men’s world in which no room is left for women to occupy any powerful or sensitive work positions side by side with men. Thus, it is not surprising to us that the two central themes that had been the main concern of western gender and language research during the same period was the issue of sexist language which rendered women linguistically invisible through the use of generic terms on one hand, and the explanation of gender differences in language from the perspective of men’s greater social power and women’s disadvantage as demonstrated by the deficit and dominance theorists.

As for the difference theorists, they have been chiefly concerned with examining women’s language in their speech communities and reconsidering it as ‘equal’ to that of men’s but ‘different’. Moreover, they have hypothesized that such linguistic differences in the speech of men and women are consequences of individuals taking part in different feminine and masculine ‘subcultures’ since their early stages of childhood, and being “socialised into gender roles which place them into a polarised structure of difference and opposition, that is masculine versus feminine as exclusive categories” (Simpson, 1997, p.201). Within this context, Tannen (1990) argued that male/female miscommunication is particularly caused by the different socialization processes that boys and girls went through, as they have learned to do things differently in their speech communities; including varied communicative strategies and speech styles such as ‘rapport’ and ‘report’ talk.

The study of gender-linked language differences with reference to men's and women's social roles and to the nature of power relations between them in their speech communities have been the core subject of feminist research during the 1970s and 1980s as a part of political atmosphere. In fact, the deficit, dominance, and difference theorists have explicitly demonstrated a sense of generalized stereotypical assumptions and binary thinking vis-à-vis the position of men and women in the social structure. The pioneering work of Lakoff (1975) has overtly implemented a gender-based power imbalance explanation in light of her deficit model which will be reviewed in much more details later in this chapter. For example, the use of tag questions, according to her, is a means of seeking out acceptance by using polite forms, whereas rising intonation is rather perceived as weakening women's partaking and minimizing their powerful subject positioning in serious interactional contexts.

In addition, Lakoff brings to light matters of difference related to the socialization process as well. One noteworthy issue of these matters she stresses is that girls are taught from an early age how to behave linguistically as 'little ladies' through avoidance of offensive talk, which produces a more polite speech style. This is in contrast to boys who are in their turn instructed to be more assertive and directive in their talk. In spite of her 'deficit' perspective towards women's language which was criticized for the lack of empirical data on one hand and for reinforcing the androcentric ideology (men as the norm and women as deficient) on the other hand, Lakoff's *Language and Women's Place* is credited as the most influential piece of research conducted from a feminist point of view; seeing that it clarifies the inaccuracies of what she has labelled as 'women's language' in political and cultural wordings, instead of spotting them as natural sex differences (Cameron, 1990). Yet, the radical feminist Dale Spender (1980) condemned Lakoff's findings specifically for portraying men's language as the norm, and representing women's language as deficient, powerless and unassertive. For Spender (1980), what is at stake is the deficiency of the social system which depicted women as deficient and lacking power in comparison with men.

As far as her dominance model is concerned, she argued that (English) language is made by men and for men, as a consequence of the patriarchal and androcentric gender roles and unequal distribution of social power among men and women. Besides the sexist generic terms which rendered women linguistically imperceptible, dominance theorists like Zimmerman and West (1975) and Fishman (1983) focused on certain interactional features only such as interruptions, tag questions and hedges, minimal responses, topic initiation and control; neglecting the importance of the specific parameters of the context which effect language use as the deficit theorists did. In brief, the dominance model stresses that any

gender-linked language differences are markers of males' dominance and control over women in communication, and the modes through which the two sexes interact both reproduce and maintain male manipulative way of behaving (Litosseliti, 2006). This androcentric vision was criticized for its rigid conceptualization of gender and for associating it with certain features of interaction, by viewing them as the major resources available to males to display dominance and victimize women.

Contrary to the deficit and dominance models, the difference theorists have attempted to equalize women's language with men's, that is, to depict them both as a 'cultural products' instead of adhering to the already established 'norm-deviant' ideology. In fact, the difference model was put forward in 1980s in order to offset the harmful judgements of women and their language and to simply correlate differences in men's and women's talk only with the different socialization processes that they went through since their early years of childhood, neglecting the aspect of power relations and its significance in affecting language use. In essence, the difference model neither takes into consideration similarities in men's and women's linguistic behaviour nor the miscellany of speech styles among one intra-sex group, as it also ignores the specific social parameters of the context of interaction between men and women and the existing power relations between them. But, according to Uchida (1992), it is unsuitable to view 'power' and 'culture' as unrelated independent notions, since social communication is fairly affected by social hierarchy, and more importantly, it takes place in a patriarchal socio-cultural context. Therefore, a mixture of those essentialist models would be more practical for the sake of having a multi-dimensional perspective of gender-based language research (Uchida, 1992).

With the advent of social life around the globe, gender roles are overlapping to some extent not only within the western context, but also in the Arab world. In Algeria for example, women are nowadays sharing the workplace with men in nearly every public domain such as education, health, military, industry, administration, etc. The proliferation of the public life in recent times urged, therefore, contemporary gender-linked language researchers to ask research questions that do not reflect the existence of gender dualism as shown by the speech community-based research. Instead of this, they are now more likely than before to formulate questions that do not treat gender as a pre-given demographic variable which determines how men and women use language differently, but as an achievement which is constructed dynamically through language or discourse as advocated by social constructivists and feminist post-structuralists in the late of 1980s and 1990s. According to Litosseliti (2006), this process has been variously represented as a 'discursive accomplishment' of gendered identities, and

which highlights that performing gender is an endless process where individuals are rather considered as active social agents who can choose, or not choose, to defy certain normative beliefs concerning their gender identity production. Similarly, Lazar (2005) points out that “Accomplishment suggests that people, through their linguistic (and non-linguistic) behaviour, produce rather than reflect a priori identities as “women” and “men” in particular historical and cultural locations” (p.12).

Indeed, the social constructivist and feminist post-structuralist approaches have offered a critical standpoint and a chief challenge to the essentialist nature of the speech community model, as they have marked a turning point in developing a brand new theorization of gender and gendered identities. By going beyond traditional power paradigm which prevailed in most early works in 1960s, 1970s and 1980s; post-structuralism of 1990s up to the present has called attention to the way men and women construct multiple gendered identities as they got engaged in different social practices which may or may not correspond to the normative roles set by their speech community. In her study of males’/females’ voice quality in an Algerian context, Abdelhey (2008) illustrated, from a community of practice perspective, the way speakers are pushed to exhibit and maintain power through the use of linguistic and even non-linguistic strategies such as voice to interact proficiently in a given social context. For this reason, many researchers deduced that gender-linked language differences might be better explained from the perspective of gender-preferential instead of gender exclusive, due to men’s and women’s communicative competencies to make use of diverse linguistic features depending on the given social parameters available in a specific local context of interaction.

1.4. Major Competing Models and Theories to Language and Gender Studies

Interestingly, it is worth pointing out early renowned models to gender- linked language studies have had a tendency to interpret sociolinguistic gender differences from diverse perspectives. While the *deficit* and *dominance* models explain such differences in terms of male social dominance and female powerlessness, the *difference* and *two-cultures* models associate gender differences with the socialization processes that boys and girls went through during their early stages of childhood; a life period where they were raised in two, but different, cultural worlds. Yet, subsequent ‘*dynamic*’ approaches have a propensity to lay emphasis on the contextual factors that influence the negotiation of a particular gender identity in a given socio-cultural context.

1.4.1. 'Female' Deficit Theory

As far as the mainstay of this theory is concerned, the fundamental issue raised here turns around the assumption that women's conversational strategies and speaking modes are rather weak and unassertive, that is, as being essentially '*deficient*' and lacking power in comparison to that of men's counterpart (Sadiqi, 2003, p.4).

To begin with, it is historically acknowledged that the American feminist Robin Lakoff is the pioneer linguist to deal with gender differences at the morpho-syntactic and lexical levels of the discourse of women, as she launched a comprehensive analysis of what she referred to as 'Women's Language' (hereafter WL). Furthermore, with her well known and famous publication and paramount study in the arena of gender and language concerns, '*Language and Women's Place*' in 1973 as an article and in 1975 as a book, Lakoff's work has attracted much attention and curiosity of a bunch of linguists from various academic disciplines in general and those within the area of gender and language studies in particular. More to the point, a shift had occurred in the domain of gender studies from examining the language behaviour of males and females under the umbrella of what was and still known as folk linguistic stereotypes or beliefs towards a more scientific approach which was initiated by Lakoff (1973) in her potential paper, although the hot criticism it had attracted due to the lack of empirical data which support her sweeping claims on the one hand, and for her consideration of the language used by men as the 'norm' against which WL was scrutinized on the other hand.

As far as the roots of this model are concerned, a host of historians claim that the essentialist view was the bedrock and the origin of the deficit theory. One of the main universal principles of the essentialism ideology is that it does not regard the notion 'gender' as a dynamic socio-cultural construct differing from one social context to another, but rather as a biological and static categorization of males and females and not completely different from the notion 'sex'. In support of this view, Sadiqi (2003) adds that unlike the social constructionist view which conceptualizes the notion of gender as a fluid category, that is, it interacts with other social variables such as age, social class, educational level and ethnicity, the essentialism perspective regards gender as a totally independent category and studies it in isolation from other social categories. Along this line of thought, Babou (2012) writes that

... the speech community framework states for the assumption that a group of people, mainly women and men, are likely to be confined to certain ambits of their speech community norms, and if one tries to transgress those limits, they would be, most of the times, judged as aberrant (p.7-8)

In view of Babou's statement and according to the female deficit theory, the relationship between language and gender seems to encounter a serious problem in cross-sex communication because of women's deviation from what has been called the norm. Since women are restricted to follow the expectations and the norms of their speech communities which put them in a subordinate social position, we find it inappropriate to deal with gender differences in language use by simply defining gender as a binary fixed opposition on the one hand, and denying the fact that girls and boys are grown up and socialized distinctively into their communities on the other hand. From early childhood, girls are most of the time instructed linguistically by their parents to use polite linguistic forms and to avoid uttering taboo expressions and offensive words, whereas boys learn things related to their masculine identity which reflects toughness and power in their speech. By way of explanation, we would consider the female deficit theory as being deficient in itself since it neglects the fact that men and women create multiple identities through their language behaviour in various social contexts inside their communities.

From the essentialist view point of gender and language, it is worth mentioning that gender is principally characterized by three significant clusters of features which are: innateness, strict binarism and bipolarization. The first immense feature highlights that gender was said about as being innate for the reason that biological endowments were innate; it was, secondly, regarded as binary in the sense that all human beings are essentially classified into two categories, i.e. males and females (Sadiqi, 2003). In other words, the essentialism framework supports the biological view of gender as an innate endowment which we are born with, rather than is acquired through the socialization process in the course of the humans' social life. Briefly speaking, gender is described as a biological concept and not as socio-cultural one from this perspective. As far as the third feature of gender within the essentialist view is concerned, the term bipolarization was used in order to put much emphasis on the idea that the human beings are either "males" or "females" and that these binary categories are in a rigid complementary distribution relationship (Sadiqi, 2003); that is to say, a human being should belong only to one gender category, either that of males or that of females.

Albeit the fact that there had been a growing concern to discern the features of WL in a more objective way, the female deficit model failed to make fair judgments about women's conversational styles unfortunately, only for the reason that they were deprived from social power in their social environments. In a more strict sense, because of their subordinate roles, as Lakoff believes, and the claimed unfair power distribution at the political and cultural levels between men and women in their own communities, especially the western ones, women's deficient modes of interaction were said about as being the drawbacks of "female deviance from what is called the 'norm'" (Babou, 2012, p.11). That is to say, men's ways of using language were given much more privilege over that of women just due to their inferior social roles and status imposed on them by their communities' norms.

Talbot (1998) pointed out that those advocates of the deficit framework portray women as being disadvantages users of language deviating from the original norm which is of men. Within the same line of thought of the essentialist view, the theory under discussion represents WL as deficient and powerless; it treats women as a deprecated gender category and portray them as subordinate to men. In tune with what has just been mentioned, Cameron (1990) adds that "women's ways of speaking are, either by nature or nurture, deficient in comparison to men's" (p.14). On the basis of Cameron's statement, one should not lose sight of the fact that, within the deficit model, the most significant aspect of it is taking into account the ideological beliefs towards women which expressed bias in favour of men. The history of these beliefs goes back to centuries and they were, and still, known as 'folk-linguistics' or 'folk linguistic beliefs' which are manifested in a set of stereotypical and ideological assumptions about a marginal woman and a tough man.

Moreover, it should be noted here also that within the female deficit model, women are faced by a '*double bind*' situation according to Lakoff (1975). As far as this situation is concerned, Lakoff claims that those women who feel that their linguistic styles are powerless and lack certainty attend training sessions which offer subjects like assertive speaking, and which actually instruct them to speak like a man, that is, to be more assertive in expressing their ideas and wishes.

As a consequence of this, the situation we have just referred to, can be summarized into two basic aspects. The first one is related to the public criticism directed towards those women who do not speak like a lady, and at the same time, - which is the second aspect of the double bind situation- using a linguistic style of a lady deprive, in a systematic way, the female speaker from access to social power. For that reason, Lakoff (1975) recommended that females are urged to speak and know both women's and men's language; that is, to be

bilingual. However, it seems somehow a misleading idea since the concepts ‘language’ and ‘bilingualism’ do not have clear cut definitions and they mean different things for different researchers. In view of this, Babou (2012) states that

..the term “bilingualism” was too strong as a solution for filling the gaps of the different styles of women and men. In tune with theories that claim language differences as embedded in cross-Sex communication, we can point out that the differences between the speaking styles of both males and females may be two distinct registers of the same language, but not different languages.

(p.17)

As mentioned earlier, Lakoff is historically credited as being the first feminist to dissect WL and to delineate its features in terms of lexical choice, phonology, and the syntactic construction of their utterances (Behm, 2010). Despite the fact that her primary findings were based on her own observations and intuition, Lakoff (1975) concluded that women’s talk is characterized by a set of linguistic features which she believes to be characteristics of women’s talk, and she argues in this respect that "Women's Language shows up in all levels of the grammar of English” (p.08). She further continues that the linguistic style used by women “submerges a woman’s personal identity, by denying her the means to express herself strongly and encouraging expressions that suggest triviality in subject matter and uncertainty about it” (Lakoff, 1975, p.07). In her view, the features of women’s language include:

- ❖ Lexical hedges or fillers, e.g. *you know, sort of, well, you see.*
- ❖ Tag questions, e.g. *she’s very nice, isn’t she?*
- ❖ Rising intonation on declaratives, e.g. *it’s really good.*
- ❖ ‘Empty’ adjectives, e.g. *divine, charming, cute.*
- ❖ Precise colour terms, e.g. *magenta, aquamarine.*
- ❖ Intensifiers such as *just* and *so*, e.g. *I like him so much.*
- ❖ ‘Hypercorrect’ grammar, e.g. consistent use of standard verb forms.
- ❖ ‘Super polite’ forms, e.g. indirect requests, euphemisms.
- ❖ Avoidance of strong swear words, e.g. *fudge, my goodness.*
- ❖ Emphatic stress, e.g. *it was a BRILLIANT performance.*

(As cited in Holmes, 2013, p.302-303)

According to Holmes (2013), the ten aforementioned linguistic features are characteristics of WL, which are further divided into two groups. On the one hand, there are particular linguistic devices that may be used as indicators of hedging or reducing the strength of an utterance. On the other hand, there is the category of some linguistic features that can be used to increase the strength of a proposition's force, more precisely i.e. to boost it. Lakoff explains that these two groups of modifiers are characteristics of the speaker who lacks confidence in his/her speech. In other words, she considers the use of hedging devices as a sign of the lack of confidence, whereas the boosting devices reflect the speaker's expectation that the other interlocutor may not be convinced and, for this reason, he may need more reassurance (Holmes, 2013).

Ultimately, Lakoff (1975) observed that women's use of the hedging devices indicates and signals their uncertainty; whereas, they use the boosting devices to be taken seriously by the other conversational interlocutor. For her, women tend to intensify and strengthen the force of their utterances in order to get the attention of others, especially men, and, however, she concluded that both kinds of devices are evidence of women's lack of confidence in their speech (Holmes, 2013).

To sum up, the female deficit theory, which is in tune with essentialism flow as discussed earlier, was proposed in the field of gender and language studies as an explanation and an answer to the question why males and females use language differently. In addition, the main weakness of this model is that it gives more legitimacy to gender stereotypes that treat WL as being handicapped and requiring remediation by which, in a way or another, puts women in an entirely inferior social position on the one hand, and, on the other hand, is portrays men's language as the norm and the standard to which women should accommodate their speech as Lakoff suggests.

1.4.2. 'Male' Dominance Theory

As its name indicates, dominance is generally linked from the first glance to power and authority which are enacted on the weak people by keeping them submissive and oppressed. In the field of gender and language studies, the dominance theory has to do with men's power and independence and women's submission and subordinate status at the political, linguistic, and socio-cultural levels in a patriarchal society. In other words, this approach deals with the unequal distribution of power between the two gender categories which is reflected to a certain degree in their conversational styles and word choice. That is to say, women are perceived to use powerless linguistic forms which portray their subordinate

status in society. In contrast, men tend to preserve their own powerful social position through language too. So, this theory was presented as an alternative interpretation of the differences in language use among men and women and it was pioneered by the feminist Robin Lakoff (1975) as she argues that the differences in the linguistic styles of men and women are interpreted and viewed in terms of the unequal distribution of power between them.

Not surprisingly, the 'male' dominance model is regarded as the weaker version of the female deficit theory since both of their interests run with the same vein of thought. That is to say, as the 'female' deficit theory strives to sustain the idea that the linguistic features of WL are deficient and weak as its main focus of investigation, the 'male' dominance theory pays basically its attention to men's language (hereafter ML) and portrays its linguistic characteristics as being simply the 'norm' and 'powerful'. In view of the aforementioned state of affairs, Coates (2004) avers that the dominance model "sees women as an oppressed group and interprets linguistic differences in women's and men's speech in terms of men's dominance and women's subordination" (p.06).

In fact, the 'male' dominance model is not only a reflection of the social discrimination at the institutional and political levels enacted upon women in a patriarchal society where power is unequally distributed among men and women in terms of social practices and status; but this kind of social injustice has predominantly invaded language too. By way of explanation, there had been growing concerns from scholars; especially the feminist ones in the 1970s and 1980s, of the way gender and power are portrayed through language use taking into their considerations the social roles and structures attributed to both genders on the one hand, and the social norms and stereotypes imposed on them by a patriarchal society on the other hand.

As far as the proponents of this model are concerned, West and Zimmerman (1975, 1977, and 1987) influential quantitative studies of interruptions in mixed-sex conversations is a prominent illustration of the 'male' dominance approach. In the light of their investigation, they found that most of the interruptions that manifested in male-female interactions were performed by men rather than the reverse. It is high time now to define interruption as "a device for exercising power and control in conversation" (Zimmerman and West, 1983, p.103). Furthermore, they argued that interruption is highly used by men in order to keep women silent and dominated in mixed-sex interactions, and they inferred also that as male dominance is manifested in their control at the macro-institutional level in the society, it is also being exhibited by their control of the micro-institutions, at least one part of it.

But their results were later disconfirmed by subsequent comprehensive works on interruption which highlighted that this feature is not universally generalizable. For example, James and Clarke (1993) reviewed about fifty-four researches that addressed the hypothesis that men are more likely than women “to use interruption as a means of dominating and controlling interactions” (James and Clarke, 1993, p.268). Actually, they report that most of the works reviewed have found no noticeable differences between men and women in terms of interruption, and they add further that both gender categories interrupt one another. (Quoted in Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2015, p.325). In addition to West and Zimmerman’s study of interruption, Pamela Fishman (1983) reported that in naturally occurring speech situations among heterosexual couples, women tended to perform more of the interactional ‘support work’ as a requisite to maintain the conversational interaction with their interlocutor. She says that “Women do support work while men are talking and it is the women who generally do active maintenance and continuation work in conversations” (Fishman, 1983, p.98. Quoted in Sunderland, 2006, p.18).

Another contribution to this area of research is the grounding work of Dale Spender’s ‘*Man Made Language*’ (1980) which was published in UK. As the book’s title indicates, Spender (1980) is credited for enforcing the belief that language is men’s property. As Lakoff did, Spender also addressed the issue of sexism in the English language from one side, and gender-linked languages differences from the other side. For her, men’s power is sustained and maintained in language itself; whereas women are compelled to follow the linguistic norms of men, rather than attempting to create their own words and expressions. Spender suggested also that men interrupt women much more than women do. This claim was the main topic of two researchers named Don Zimmerman and Candace West in 1975. Their interest was to analyze who interrupts more in conversations within a college community.

Although the overall explanation of the linguistic differences in the speech of men and women was interpreted in terms of variations in the so called social power assigned to them by the speech community norms, and which particularly places women in a subordinate status, it is, however, believed that such interpretation is not enough and cannot be relied on to a great extent for the reasons that it neglects the role of the social contexts which play a vital role in linguistic variation. In other words, as the essentialist view deals with gender as separate social category from other social variables such as age, ethnicity, educational level, occupation and the socioeconomic class of the interlocutors, the dominance theory has a similar stance with the essentialist paradigm; that is, it does not give a paramount significance to these social factors which, in most cases, work together in cross-sex communication in

particular, and the social interaction in general. In view of this, Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015) assert that “Context is important in how we use language. Men and women’s speech is not the same in private and public spheres, and different roles within an interaction also lead to different ways of speaking” (p.325).

Moreover, the ‘male’ dominance framework overlooked another important dimension in interpreting gender differences and communication problems in mixed-sex conversations which is the socialization processes of males and females that vary in its scope and goals. This view was highly supported by a successive theory that will be discussed later on called the ‘Difference’ or the ‘two-cultures’ theory. The latter criticizes the parameter of power inequality between men and women in a patriarchal society and sees gender differences in language use and the miscommunication that arises in cross-sex conversations related to the assumption that boys and girls were socialized differently and that they grew up into two distinct cultural worlds, as stated by Tannen (1990).

The general criticism directed towards works adopting the ‘male’ dominance approach can be summarized in Jane Sunderland’s statement (2006) who writes that “ Work in the ‘dominance’ tradition has further been accused of representing women as passive and as victims and of using women’s ‘subordination’ as a complete and ‘pan-contextual’ explanation for characteristics of mixed-sex talk ” (p.19).

In a nutshell, although the tremendous emphasis put on ML as being privileged and powerful in the view of the dominance approach to gender and language studies, the implementation of the social power division in interpreting gender differences in linguistic behaviour was credited as being clearly biased and somewhat subjective in terms of power distribution from feminist perspective and in terms of sexist linguistic structures from linguistic point of view. For that reason, the dominance approach was criticized for its appreciation of gender as an essentially fixed variable; that is to say, it does not correlate and interact with other social factors in a particular social context. Moreover, most studies conducted within this framework lost sight of other indispensable elements and components of the conversation which are very necessary to analyze a discourse such as topic, interlocutors, social distance and formality of the context. For that reason, it is recommended by some successive researchers like Schegloff (1997) and Stokoe and Smithson (2001), to adopt a more fluid analytical approach, precisely a *conversational analysis* method, to the study of gender and language in a more objective way, taking into account not only the speech community’s norms obliged on the two sexes, but also the social attributes of the individuals taking part in conversations.

1.4.3. Difference Theory

As its name implies from the first glance, the subsequent theory which was formulated in the 1980s takes a totally distinct perspective in interpreting gender differences in the linguistic styles of men and women. That is, it stresses that variation in the speaking styles of males and females is neither resulted from women's deviance from the 'normativeness' of men's language nor from the unequal social power which strengthens men's language and weakens that of women, but, quite simply, from being socialized and grown up in two different cultural worlds since the early stages of childhood, during which both genders have learned how to use language in a way that fits the norms, beliefs and attitudes of their cultural worlds. Besides that, the process of transmitting the community's standards is not solely the task of the children's single-sex groups; however, family, the most important social group, has a huge effect in the construction of the masculine and feminine gender identities of their little boys and girls. It is the responsibility of the parents who socially instruct their children how to behave appropriately with the family members and even outside this context. We often notice our parents and even elder brothers and sisters giving different instructions to children (boys and girls) and teaching them what is socially correct from what is incorrect.

Furthermore, the major advocates of the difference theory like Maltz and Borker (1982) and Tannen (1990) assert that works on the dominance approach and social power failed to present reasonable and logical answers and justifications to the problematic of male/female miscommunication in cross-sex interactions by expressing bias analysis and sexist attitudes towards WL from one side, and because of taking a negative stance towards WL as being deficient, powerless and wrong in comparison with that of ML from the other side. In this regard, Freeman and McElhinny (1996) confirm that the difference approach to language and gender takes a positive stand towards women's language as a reflection of the culture they belong to. In view of what has been mentioned, Talbot (2010) discerns that in their early years of their childhood, boys and girls are grown up through which they spend most of their time playing single- sex groups. She writes:

Boys and girls group seem to be rather different, so that children grow up, of an extent, in gender specific cultures; they learn about such things as how to interact in friendly way from their peers rather than from adults. Consequently, learning cross-sex talk can be a big problem in childhood

(Talbot, 2010, p.80)

More importantly, the ground breaking potential work of the American linguists Maltz and Broker (1982) is publically well approved in the sphere of gender and language studies by forming a cultural approach which they labelled the ‘two-cultures’ model. Maltz and Broker’s (1982) influential paper, which is entitled ‘*A cultural Approach to Male-Female Miscommunication*’, was in fact influenced by the sociolinguistic study of Gumperz (1982) which was conducted in order to understand the problems and difficulties in cross-ethnic communication. Their main endeavour consisted in unearthing the distinctive roles of males and females in informal cross-sex communicative events in American English and to find out the factors leading to miscommunication.

By doing so, Maltz and Broker (1982, p.162) highlight that their basic interest is to ponder the problems in cross-sex interaction by tackling two related aspects of the same “larger phenomenon” that are cultural difference and miscommunication. That is to say, the overall objective of their investigation was mainly formulated to comprehend how; firstly, the different linguistic styles of men and women reveal the norms of their own cultures, and secondly, why their conversations fall prey to unwanted miscommunication. In this regard, Crawford (1995) writes that “men and women are fated to misunderstand each other unless they recognize their deeply socialized differences” (p.1). As Henley and Kramarae (2001) point out, the study of Maltz and Broker is considered as one among the first published papers on gender-linked language differences and similarities to deal with systems of conversation instead of searching for collection of certain variables. That is to say, they interpreted the variation in boys’ and girls’ speaking styles as consequent of having learned to perform distinct plays during childhood in their single-sex peer group. To illustrate, the cultural world of boys is primarily characterized by words and linguistic expressions that refer to hierarchy, power and dominance as its main features; that is, it is more ‘*competitive*’. Concerning girls, they generally live in a cultural world where equality, creating and maintaining intimate relationships take place during play; that is, it is more ‘*cooperative*’. On the whole, women’s conversational style is said to be more interactive and supportive to their conversational

partner; whereas men's speaking mode is characterized by showing disagreements, verbal posturing and narrating stories (Maltz and Broker, 1982).

In the light of her best-selling book entitled '*You Just Don't Understand*' (1991), Deborah Tannen, a major contributor in the difference approach to gender studies, postulates the same idea as Maltz and Broker that boys and girls are predominantly socialized and raised up into different cultural worlds in order to exhibit different roles in society. Tannen left a remarkable fingerprint on the topic under debate. Her well known 'difference model' goes basically with the same flow as Maltz and Broker (1982) 'two-cultures' perspective. Tannen (1990) elucidate that the socialization process, which takes place during the early ages of childhood, plays a vital role in explaining gender differences which might lead a cross-sex interaction to communication failure. This view is clearly demonstrated in her statement as she affirms that "Girls and boys grow up being socialized so differently, and with different conversational expectations; that communication between them is like communication between two different cultures" (Tannen, 1990, p.12).

Tannen (1990) says that the language used by women is characterized by notions of connection, support and intimacy, whereas men tend to use a language style that reflects hierarchy, status and independence. She describes a mixed-gender conversation as 'cross-cultural communication' where two different subcultures come into contact.

Additionally, Maltz and Borker (1982) listed a certain number of linguistic features that essentially characterize and differentiate women's linguistic style from that of men in a mixed-gender conversation. On the one hand, the features of women's conversational style consist in: asking more questions than men, being active in making the conversational flow going on by linking one's utterance to the previous one, using more minimal responses, get silent when they are interrupted as an expression of dissatisfaction, and ultimately, showing sympathy in sharing problems and giving advice . On the other hand, men's linguistic features are summarized as follows: interrupt a lot, raising challenges and disputing the other participant in conversation, paying no attention to the comments provided by the conversation partner, competent in managing a topic with more mechanism, and giving more direct statements.

Maltz and Borker (1982) justify that these features, by the way, are real and cannot be ignored, since men and women have been raised into two different sub-cultural worlds, and therefore, their linguistic styles are, in a way or another, not the same. They add that girls and boys were socialized and learned to acquire different linguistic styles, because of integrating themselves in much more interactive and communicative activities in their single-sex peer

groups where they have created and built their own culture and, simultaneously, distinguishing themselves from the opposite gender peer group. In view of the aforementioned states of affairs, Tannen (1987, p.125) writes that

Women and men have different experiences....boys and girls grow up in different worlds...and as adults they travel in different world, reinforcing patterns established in childhood. These cultural differences include different expectations about the role of talk in relationships and how it fulfils that role

In spite of its sociolinguistic significance in the examination of the relationship between gender and language use, the “cultural” difference theory is such a controversial topic since it encounters certain flaws that are rather worth mentioning in this regard. First and foremost, by denying the co-existence of power and culture in a mixed-sex interaction in the view of this theory and treating the two constructs as having no effect on each other is not only inappropriate, but it is rather harmful for women (Uchida 1992, Cameron 1992, Freed 1992). The second flaw of the theory under debate lies in the problematic nature of the notion of ‘separate cultures’. To assume that boys and girls are socially raised separately from each other is not always true because no matter the amount of time both genders spend playing and interacting with their peer groups, we can feel and notice the contact of these ‘separate cultures’ at home, outside home and even at school, since boys are not totally discriminated from girls or vice versa (Uchida 1992).

Last but not least, like the dominance model, advocators of the cultural differences theory also dismissed the intervention of the other social variables such as social class, age, race and educational level with gender (Cameron 1992, 1996), because gender identity is not simply a matter of being male or female in terms of physical properties and sexual orientations. To state it differently, men and women are quite essentialised via unintentionally neglecting the interaction of gender with the other social traits (Uchida, 1992).

1.4.4. The “Dynamic” Social Constructivist Approach

By the late of the eighties, a shift in gender-linked language studies was registered in its history as a sociolinguistic subfield. To briefly depict this alternation, Sara Mills (2003) has pointed out that at the same time as the Second Wave feminist linguistics considered gender as being already determined and pre-existed the linguistic interaction and thus it

affected the way that communication developed, feminists of the Third Wave paid more attention to the mechanisms and the process of constructing gendered identities along the interaction by the participants. In a brief sense, the social constructionist theory came as a reaction to the essentialist model of gender, and women started to feel that they have their own socio-cultural values and identities; that is, they are not socially maltreated by the community norms anymore and they particularly refuse to go along with their subject positioning.

As a consequence of the hot criticism launched towards the essentialist ideology of gender-linked language differences whose interpretations in this matter have been demonstrated as ineffective and lacking satisfaction (Abdelhay 2008; Bucholtz, 1999; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992), it was high time then for scholars, not just for those working within the field of gender and women studies but also for others from different disciplines like sociology, anthropology, psychology and discourse analysis, to smoothly shift the research paradigms from the essentialism view and adopt a more fluid and context-bound research approach which is historically known as the social constructionist. The latter is of a central significance and value to the present investigation just because it mainly criticizes the universal assumptions about the linguistic strategies of males and females and the principle of binarism on the one hand, and it gives more considerations to all the dimensions of social contexts in which the communicative events occur on the other hand. That is to say, it highlights the systematic construction of what is referred to as “multiple identities” that males and females are so likely to execute when engaging in interactions in their communities, and hence, gender-preferential sociolinguistic features are warmly welcomed rather than being stuck only to those exclusive features.

According to the advocators of the social constructionist framework, gender identity is predominantly seen as a “social construct rather than as a ‘given’ social category” (Coates, 2004, p.06). We do agree with this statement for the only reason that the community members, especially women, are no longer tied to the essentialist orders of their speech communities, and its norms, if not all, became a myth in gender and language studies. To support this view, Abdelhay (2008) writes that “the essentialist view based on the determinism of the speech community has proved inadequate in dealing with issues of gender identity as agency and fluidity in identity construction are discarded” (p.244).

Mostly all people around the globe are aware of social changes that happened in modern societies in terms of the social relations and roles, workplace and job opportunities; expect in some conservative small communities. In fact, women are competing men in every

social domain nowadays, and with the advent of globalization, things have tremendously turned around. As a consequence of this change, gender roles became somehow more dynamic in nature than ever before. In this regard, West and Zimmerman (1987) state that the expression 'doing gender' is more privileged than the one which is referred to as 'being' a certain gender category. In addition to this, Crawford (1995) puts that the term 'gender' must not be conceptualized as a noun but rather as a dynamic verb, since speakers perform and construct different and contextually dependent gendered identities whenever and wherever they participate in conversations.

Within the same line of thought, Butler (1990, 2004) coined the concept of 'performativity' by which he perceives gender as a constructed socio-cultural performance and a systematic process of shaping social identities, relations and meanings in interactions between and among males and females. By the same token, femininity and masculinity are no longer universalized in all social milieus as opposed to the determinism principle of the essentialists who sustained the assumption that gender identities are ascribed not achieved in interaction.

On the basis of the aforementioned state of affairs, language users, males and females, are more likely to construct different 'masculinities' and 'femininities' during the interaction, instead of being firmly adhered to the prescribed norms of the speech community. Moreover, the concept of essential gendered identities of males and females has long received solemn critical remarks and certain linguists have profoundly attempted to understand through their researches in what way men and women multiply their gender identities in social life.

Eventually, the universal homogeneity of men and women in terms of what gender roles they should play and what linguistic features they must use in their respected communities were mainly determined on the basis of the biological traits of the speakers and no regard is given to the social contexts in which the interactions take place. However, Leaper and Smith (2004) put that gender is predominantly defined as a context-dependent social concept; besides that males and females enact voluntary gendered identities and they choose the right identity that fulfill the requirements of the social context. Concerning the level of language use, those linguists working along the social constructionist perspective believe that male and female speakers are not restricted to a certain linguistic style; however, they tend to shift from one style to another and from one gendered identity to another depending on the social context of their communicative practices (Coates and Johnson, 2001; Leaper and Smith, 2004).

1.4.5. The Community of Practice Framework

In parallel with the core idea of the dynamic social constructionist tradition in explaining the way men and women tend to construct variety of flexible gendered identities in interaction to signal their different masculinities and femininities respectively, the notion of 'community of practice' (hereafter CofP) was in fact influenced by that tradition to a great extent since both perspectives have rejected the generic binary categorization of the essentialists and their inadequate presupposed universal assumptions concerning the sociolinguistic profiles of men and women in all communities and cultures.

As far as the origins of CofP are concerned, the concept was coined for the first time ever by the educationalists Lave and Wenger in 1991 in their decisive publication entitled '*Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*' through which they had scrutinized the dynamism of social learning in small-scale social groups identified by practice. Later on, the CofP framework was then introduced to the field of sociolinguistics in general and in gender studies sub-discipline in particular by the prominent linguists Eckert and McConnell-Ginet in 1992 in order to appreciate the variability of the gendered identities in more local and specific social loci characterized by the notion of 'practice'. Generally speaking, the latter is principally used to refer to the social activities and practices in which speakers within certain 'community' participate in, such as workplace, family, street, gyms, school, etc. In each of these specific local communities, members are greatly predisposed to develop diverse linguistic patterns and identities when interacting and communicating with one another. To enrich our understanding of the nature of CofP, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992, p.464)-following Lave and Wenger (1991) - define this notion as:

An aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour, ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavour. As a social construct, a CofP is different from the traditional community, primarily because it is defined simultaneously by its membership and by the practice in which that membership engages

In view of this definition, the CofP framework is fairly flexible, rich, quite complex, and even more compatible with the previous dynamic framework than the essentialist perspective regarding identities construction. Quite importantly, this is because the CofP perspective stresses the effectiveness of being engaged in a given social activity on one's linguistic styles besides his/her site within the community he/she belongs to. That is to say, in a certain speech community, individuals come together to constitute verities of local CofP with shared goals, values and attitudes and hence, all members of these community are equally equipped with the opportunities to identify themselves linguistically in a way that fits the requirements of the social context in which they take part. As Holmes (2013) points out, this dynamic ethnographic approach stresses the degree to which language is utilized in constructing multiple identities in diverse social interactions and how the members of these communities 'perform' certain aspects of their social identity in particular loci. She further adds that

Communities of practice develop around the activities which group members engage in together, and their shared goals and attitudes. We all belong to many communities of practice which share particular goals and ways of interacting – family, sports team, work group, hiking group, drama club, church choir and so on
(Holmes, 2013, p.200)

As a matter of fact, the CofP paradigm was introduced to the field of gender and language studies by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) as an endeavour to confront with and remedy those universal stereotypical suppositions generated by the speech community framework. Likewise, the CofP model supports and permits the use of diverse context-bound linguistic patterns which add significantly specific meanings and values related to identity. The two criteria 'membership' and 'practice' of these local communities signal that social attributes like gender, age and ethnicity should all work together while engaging mutually in a particular social practice. For this reason, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) argue that before undertaking any sort of research in language and gender, the social setting is the first and the utmost premise that one should never lose sight of, since it offers unique values and special connotations of what we do (practice), what positions we stand in and what relations we have with others in the community.

So, all these aspects are supposed to contribute in constructing multiple identities while we change our positions from one community to another and ultimately, the ideological gender roles are then challenged by the social context. By this token, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) state that the chief problem of gender and language inquiry is that it has been isolated to a great extent from the social activities in which both language and gender are produced and; therefore, obscuring the intricate system of which gender and language are intertwined together in interaction. They also advocate that researchers are required to tie language use to the social setting in which participants interact, for the sake of analyzing cautiously the systematic production of certain linguistic aspects in local communities.

As far as gender conceptualization is concerned within the CofP framework, it is; then, worth mentioning that, according to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's (1992), gender is theorized as a fluid social variable which is shaped by the social activities that individuals exhibit in varied communities in which they participate. It is the association of gender (being male or female) with our sense of who we are as members in a certain CofP, what roles we perform and what relationships we have with the rest of the community members. In view of this, the sense of membership becomes more significant in gender identity construction since individuals are simply governed by the rules of the practices they take part in, not with the speech community standards.

Additionally, Wardhaugh (2010) sees gender as a practice; that is to say, what people do, not what they have. In other words, the notion of gender is conceptualized in terms of the social endeavours and attitudes originating basically from the hypotheses we form about what sort of 'masculine' or 'feminine' identity is best suited in a particular social context. Along this line of thought, Wenger (1998) describes identity as spatio-temporal, which signifies the thought that identity construction is a never-ending process which is in a constant change from one social context to another, from culture to culture and from a particular moment in time to another, since identity "is the everyday word of people's sense of who they are" (Ivanic, 1998, p.10).

According to Wenger (1998), it is not always an easy task to constitute a community of practice without considering a set of helpful criteria. To make up a community of practice, there are principally three central dimensions that are quite worth defining so as to form a 'community of practice': mutual engagement, a joint negotiated enterprise and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). We will briefly review these three components in order to understand the mechanisms of constructing a CofP.

As far as the first dimension is concerned, 'mutual engagement' is acknowledged as being the utmost criterion that any community of practice is built upon. It refers to the planned, instead of random, construction that implies from the members of any CofP to have direct connections with each other while engaging in a particular activity. Moreover, mutual engagement allows each member to negotiate various meanings of his/her identity with others, of course, according to common objectives that the practice strives to realize. For Wenger (1998, p.94), this dimension is of a huge importance and the crucial ingredient that performs a vital role in any social activity, because it sustains and maintains action by means of 'regular interaction'. In other words, engagement in a particular practice necessitates motivation and eagerness to initiate it. As for our context of investigation, we do believe that men and women are in constant communication and relationships on Facebook site through which they can get the chance to visit hundreds of online pages and groups characterized by distinct aims and purposes. By doing so, mutual engagement is very likely to manifest in high rates as long as Facebook users possess a strong desire and motivation to negotiate enthusiastically aspects related to their personal needs like sports, cooking, clothing, fashion, education, etc.

Secondly, the CofP is also typified by a joint enterprise negotiated by its members, which is an essential requisite to constitute a CofP as well. A joint enterprise is chiefly illustrated in terms of the social practices by which the members negotiate different aspects related to their workplace. These aspects are represented in the shared goals towards which each member is performing his role to achieve them during a particular enterprise. Quite simply, what makes the community of practice framework different and unique from the notions of speech community and social network is its joint enterprise since without it; it is somehow impossible to coin the term 'community' with 'practice'.

Finally, the third dimension of the CofP framework consists in a shared repertoire required for negotiating a joint enterprise. This criterion refers, for the most part, to the shared styles of speaking including jargons, slangs and registers that become ordinary through time among the members during practice. However, a shared repertoire does not consist in the linguistic behaviours solely, but it incorporates also "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence which has become part of its practice" (Wenger, 1998, p.83).

A shared repertoire is principally created by the members in a way that meets their mutual engagement on the one hand, and sustains their joint negotiated enterprise on the other hand. That is to say, any and practice in a community requires specific habits, linguistic expressions, actions and attitudes appropriate to define and negotiate it. Through these shared repertoires, members of the CofP create meaningful and expressive styles of interaction that best intermingle with their identities and membership as members (Abdelhay, 2008). Interestingly, since language is exposed to variation and change either at a particular point in time or through time, it should be pointed that the repertoire-including both social and linguistic aspects-is not protected from variation and change as well. For this reason, latest studies in the arena of gender and language have been conducted within the CofP analytical framework, because it consents to the multiplicity and flexibility of identities that men and women uphold in response to their joint enterprises.

On the basis of the aforementioned states of affaires, we should remind that Eckert and Mc Connell-Ginet (1992) ‘borrowed’ this model from Lave and Wenger and used as a gun trigger to put an end to gender ideological beliefs and stereotypes which were simply represented in a ‘powerful man’ and a ‘weak woman’ as homogenous social categories. As a fruitful theoretical framework, the CofP has been analytically implemented in the arena of gender studies to elucidate explicitly the way men and women perform a bunch of diverse gendered identities, i.e., multiple ‘masculinities’ and ‘femininities’, via flouting the boundaries drawn by the essentialist speech community perspective which yield them from the chance to behave socially and linguistically as active social agents, not as hostages.

1.5. Theorizing Gender and Sex

Anatomically speaking, every human being is born either a male or female. To classify people on the basis of their gender/sex is not a big deal. For example, if someone is asked to categorize a certain group a people into males and females, he/she may accomplish this task in a very short time, simply because he/she considered some biological and anatomical traits that differ between males and females such as hair, beard, sexual organs and the tone of the vocal cords, besides extra things like the way of dressing. However, this distinction has been marked unsatisfactory in the area of gender studies, especially after the swing in research paradigms, shifting from the essentialism movement to the social constructivist approach of gender and language research. In this part, I will theorize briefly the notions “gender” and

“sex” as two complementary interrelated social variables from the essentialism perspective on the one hand, and from that of the social constructivist on the other hand, besides a clear cut division between gender and sex that will be drawn in the course of the following review.

To start with, essentialism is undoubtedly certified as an old-fashioned model of analysis in the history of feminism, although it is still used in current variationist sociolinguistic researches. It upholds the view that gender is a firm attribute of one’s essence and a way of grouping individuals into males and females. That is, essentialists perceive gender as the possession of certain linguistic strategies that must be executed by the two sexes (Babou, 2012). It should be pointed out that essentialism is conceptualised as “a belief in true essence—that which is most irreducible, unchanging and therefore constitutive of a given person or thing” (Fuss, 1989, p.2).

This definition stresses obviously that essentialism endorses the belief in one’s essence, from which it derives its name. By essence, it is meant the unique and essential characteristics that objects possess and which significantly differentiate one person or thing from another. Concerning gender differences, masculinity never overlaps with femininity or vice versa at any certain moment or place, given that gender essentialism embraces firmly the idea that men and women never exchange the social roles or the identities ascribed to them, and even the linguistic behaviours that they should use when interacting, either in a single-sex communication setting or in a mixed one.

As far as the essentialism perspective is concerned, gender is relatively theorized in terms of the prescribed roles, norms and behaviours that are compelled on men and women in their societies. It is also conceptualized as a solid social category, not differing from the other notion ‘sex’. In this vein, Speer (2005) writes that in numerous social studies adopting an essentialist paradigm of analysis, researchers deal with the individuals under examination as possessing relatively rigid ‘traits’, ‘attributes’ or ‘essences’ inherited inside them and which stipulate what they should do or say. She further elucidates that from the essentialist viewpoint, “Sex and gender are treated as pre-given traits or ‘natural facts’, that reside in individuals and which determine the linguistic resources men and women use to speak” (Speer, 2005, p.12).

In a strict sense, the essentialists perceive gender as a ready-made identity which is represented in a set of stereotypical and ideological assumptions and generalized norms about the roles of men and women in their speech communities. Along the same line of thought, Abdelhay (2008, p.21) affirms that “essentialism gives legitimacy to both gender differences and gender dominance by virtue of biology, culture stereotypes or all together. This quotation

reflects explicitly the overall ideological belief of the essentialism which gives men the extreme priority to exhibit all kinds of dominance in society at the expense of women, including language of course. Besides that, since females are universally stereotyped as biologically and physically weak human beings and males as the toughest, the essentialism supports the view that biology is a major determining factor on which gender roles are distributed. That is to say, gender is conceptualized as an innate trait, something which is given, rather than achieved during the interactional process. Babou (2012, p. 07) avers that

A host of essentialist theories in language and gender studies have so far discerned gender as a possession of a set of behaviours which is imposed by the speech community upon women and men as adhering to two different categories

To sum up, essentialism avers that gender identity should be designated and constructed according to the ideological norms and expectations of the speech community, which place individuals into two binary gender categories opposed to one another. It treats gender as a fixed invariable notion that never intermingles with other aspects of one's identity including social class, age and ethnicity; in addition to the specificity of the social context in which the interaction takes place.

The consecutive theoretical framework, the social constructivist, has been recently adopted as a critical approach of analysis in feminist studies in the late of 1980s and during the 1990s. It has emerged as a counter research tradition to the essentialism movement, through which understanding of gender as a notion has taken totally a different analytical perspective. Researchers adopting this approach treat social attributes and traits like gender as identities that are constructed dynamically through language use. Moreover, Bijeikienė and Tamošiūnaitė (2013) stress that the social constructivist draws attention to the significance of language in understanding social relationships and social categories and, therefore; encourages the investigation of language attitudes, beliefs, judgments and reactions about language. They add that social constructivists wished for shifting the focal point from language itself, i.e. its structure and system (as in the case of variationist studies) to the participants themselves, i.e. what they do with whatever linguistic resources available to them to define and construct themselves as social agents in certain contexts. From the social constructivist perspective of gender differences, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003, p.305) provide a comprehensible definition to the notion of gender. They state that

Gender is not a part of one's essence, which one is, but an achievement, what one does. Gender is a set of practices through which people construct and claim identities; not simply a system of categorising people. And gender practices are not only about establishing identities but also about managing social relations

Quite contrary to the essentialist view, gender is defined as a dynamic social construct, a set of identities that are neither innate nor pre-determine in the way that represents the expectations and norms of the speech community. It is defined as an active process of accomplishing multiple social identities and meanings that are produced and negotiated in interaction as the social context changes. That is, social constructivists do not visualize gender as a fixed social variable and a category of classifying speakers into males and females as homogenous groups. For Butler (1990), gender is defined as a performance instead of an essence, a practice instead of a system of categorization, a dynamically produced performance instead of a pre-existing role.

Dissimilar to the biological view of gender essentialism, Coates and Johnson (2001) advocate that language and communication are essentially bond to and dependent on the social context in which they take place. In this vein, a host of social constructivists recommended that gender-linked language differences may possibly be analyzed and described much better at the level of gender preferential than gender exclusive. By gender exclusive features, we refer here to the assumption that certain linguistic expressions are reserved only to one gender, whilst gender preferential denotes that men and women are probably predisposed to make use of whatever linguistic recourses and forms accessible to them so that they could manage the interaction and construct particular gendered identities and social meanings according to the social contexts which differ in terms of topic, purpose of interaction, interlocutors (including their social traits like age, ethnicity social status, etc), setting, degree of formality and solidarity. Hence, the concept of gender, according to Holmes (2013), provides flexibility and variability in explaining masculinities and femininities in terms of continua instead of rigid categories. In other words, it is the social context which determines what linguistic features and strategies should be associated with masculinity and femininity in interaction not the speech community's ideological norms. Along this line of thought, Holmes (2006) states conspicuously that what we choose, adopt and prefer in interaction including the linguistic forms, discourse strategies and even

pronunciation may all contribute in the creation of a certain social identity. She further says that

Both interactional socio-linguistics and social-constructionist approaches emphasize the dynamic aspects of interaction, and the constantly changing and developing nature of social identities, social categories and group boundaries, a process in which talk plays an essential part. Individuals are constantly engaged in constructing aspects of their interpersonal and intergroup identity, including their professional identity and their gender identity (Holmes, 2006, p.12)

So far, we have theorized gender as a dynamic social practice, an identity which is locally achieved in different manners through our interactions and relationships with others, in response to the specificity and needs of the social context. Now, it is high time to shed the light on the distinction that social constructivists has recently made between the terms 'gender' and 'sex' as a dichotomy in contemporary social studies.

To briefly depict this division, the British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1989) clarifies that 'sex' is a term which is used to distinguish males from females, or vice versa, in terms of biology and anatomy, whereas 'gender' is a cover term that encompasses all the socio-cultural and psychological differences between men and women. In addition to this, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (200, p.10) point out that "Sex is a biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potential, whereas gender is the social elaboration of biological sex". Put simply, the term 'sex' refers here to the biological traits and physiological qualities that people possess, and which essentially place them into two binary categories, either males or females; while 'gender' is rather used to refer to and describe how the social meanings of masculinity and femininity are produced and reproduced in daily interactions in various social contexts.

To conclude this section, sociolinguists have just recently shifted from dealing with sex-based language differences to gender-linked language differences for two main reasons. The first one consists in the criticism launched towards the universal ideologies and assumptions generated by the essentialists who merely explain gender differences in language use in terms of biological determinism; that is, biology is the key concept in their researches, although they often use 'gender' interchangeably with 'sex'. The second reason behind this shift has to do with the negative connotations that the term 'sex' carries with it in the public sphere, whereas 'gender' is socially more polite and better employed in social studies, in

order to keep ourselves away from the taboo implications of sexuality. At last, although the term 'sex' is still used in some current social studies, gender theorists have never ceased to look for new methods of analysis to accentuate the superiority of the dynamic social construction of identities (gender) over the biological dichotomy (sex).

1.5.1. Gender and Identity

From a general point of view, the term 'identity' corresponds with many social aspects like our names, occupations, the language we speak, being male or female, young or old, rich or poor, educated or illiterate and so on. It is a sociolinguistic process through which individuals come up to identify themselves as members of a particular social group, a process through which language use plays the most indispensable role in shaping and negotiating our identities in a range of social contexts. Interestingly, the term 'identity' is defined by Kroskrity (2000, p.111) as "the linguistic construction of membership in one or more social groups or categories" (Quoted in Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2015, p.07). Thanks to the sociolinguistic research which has always showed the magnitude of language use and variation in understanding how social identities are constructed through speech. For instance, sociolinguistic phenomena like bilingualism, code switching and mixing, accommodating speech or selecting a certain speech style over another are in fact linguistic processes of constructing speakers' identities in everyday interactions.

As far as the subject of gender identity is concerned, researchers have recognized in recent social studies that gender, as a concept, must not be considered as an 'essential' rigid social category and a contextually independent variable. Yet, gender researchers, mainly the social constructivists, have challenged the notion of 'essential identities', the ideological belief that perceives gender identity as a set of fixed socio-cultural norms and behaviours imposed on individuals in their respective speech communities. But in the current social theory, according to Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015), identities, including gender identity, are not rigid traits of individuals or social groups, but are dynamically constructed features that come out in the course of discourse and social practices.

From this vantage point, Sunderland and Litosseliti (2002) avow that along this challenge, it has appeared the inquiry and the notion of the multiplicity of gender identities, i.e. diverse femininities and masculinities are apparent across communities, cultural contexts and even within individuals themselves. In tune with the social constructivist flow,

femininities and masculinities are conceptualized by Johnson (1997) as “on-going processes dependent upon systematic restatement, which is sometimes referred to as doing identity work” (p.22). In miscellaneous social contexts, men and women are likely to be constantly engaged in several social practices and relationships, through which different social meanings of masculinity and femininity are produced, reproduced and negotiated through their social performances, especially through their linguistic behaviours. According to Weatherall (2002), the lack of a strong connection between the linguistic forms and the communicative functions they perform is one of the reasons why definite answers to the queries of gender differences in language and identity construction have not been unearthed.

A further elucidation of gender identity construction is that the way men and women use and understand language relies deeply on where, when and under what events an interaction is happening. That is, performing gender identity work is itself a continuous and a systematic process of constructing a certain kind of femininity or masculinity, the kind which corresponds correctly to the complexity and specificity of a particular social context. By complexity, gender identity is tremendously affected by other aspects of identity such as age, ethnicity, level of education, etc; whereas specificity means looking at particular men and women in a particular social setting. More to the point, masculinity and femininity are not defined in terms of biological qualities given by nature at birth, but by social, cultural and psychological traits that are acquired all the way through becoming a man or woman in a given society at a particular point in time (Jackson, 1998).

Moreover, Ivanič (1998) advocates that it would be advantageous to make use of the plural form of the term “identity” instead of its singular form, since its plural form consent to a marvellous width of coverage of the plurality and diversity of identities, for the reason that being a man or being o woman adjusts from one generation to another and fluctuates across diverse cultural, ethnic, religious, and social groups. She further extends the idea by stressing that:

The plural word ‘identities’ is sometimes preferable because it captures the idea of people identifying simultaneously with a variety of social groups. On or more of these identities may be foregrounded at different times; they are sometimes contradictory, sometimes interrelated: people’s diverse identities constitute the richness of their sense of self. Identity is a result of affiliation to particular beliefs and possibilities, which are available to them in their social context (Ivanič, 1998, p.11-12)

In contrast with essentialism which sees gender identity as dichotomous and fixed predetermined attributes adhered to individuals on the basis of biological sex and which rejects the social agency and activism of men and women, social constructivists look at gender identity as a chain of choices and possibilities that individuals make about themselves in various situations through their social behaviours, hence; as a fluid process, rather than a stable state or group of personal characteristics. By this token, masculinity and femininity are not assessed in terms of an inflexible binary opposition, but they are in fact two independent facets from biological maleness and femaleness. Put differently, an individual is not either a fully masculine or a feminine being, but he/she is likely to perform and possess both masculine and feminine qualities to a lesser or greater degree in social communication and interaction.

In addition, gender identity does not include solely a set of features of one's persona; it is, however, identified by some extra aspects related to behaviours such as social skills and relations, appearances, likes and dislikes and interests. Along this line of thought, Deaux (2001) reports that gender identity casts "a net far wider than the biological features, including activities and interests, personal and social attributes, social relationships, communication styles, and values" (p. 1065. Quoted in Babou, 2012, p.35). Hence, such understating of gender identity reveals the paramount significance of context-bound research. Linguistic behaviour is always located in given social contexts in which it serves to signal various communicative functions and meanings of one's social identity in general and gender identity in particular.

Nevertheless, loads of classical sociolinguistic studies, especially those related to variationist research, have ignored the importance of context in linguistic variation, and have repeatedly analyzed gender identity by simply looking at the participants' biological sex. Based on the essentialist nature of the speech community model, this sort of sociolinguistic studies is typified by 'variables and effects' framework of language variation and even identity construction. By way of explanation, this model entails the investigator using certain methodologies and research techniques which deals with demographic aspects of the context like the individual's gender as contextually-independent variables which are believed to be the cause of quantifiable gender differences in the conversational styles of males and females. That is to say, linguistic behaviour is rather regarded as a direct signal of the speaker's gender identity which, in turn, overlooks the dynamism construction of multiple masculine and feminine identities in the course of both linguistic and stylistic variation.

Due to this limitation of such kind of research paradigm in sociolinguistics, Connell (1987), hence, suggests a non-unitary model of investigation vis-à-vis gender-linked language differences and identity construction. He avers that both masculinity and femininity diverge as the situational context changes, and recognizing their context-dependent multiplicity is deemed as a requisite of understanding the psychology of gender identity production. Likewise, he argues that in view of the fact that masculinity and femininity coexist in the same individual, they should not be perceived as binary oppositions related to biological endowments, but as separate aspects related to the social gender. Connell (1993, p.179) adds that “Femininity and masculinity are not essences: they are ways of living certain relationships. It follows that static typologies of sexual character have to be replaced by histories, analyses of the joint production of sets of psychological forms”. (Quoted in Wodak and Benke, 1998).

At last, linguistic meanings of gender identities are rather produced and negotiated through our social behaviours and relationships with others. Gender identity is a dynamic and context-sensitive construct which is constantly exposed to adaptation and negotiation in communication.

1.5.2. Gender Stereotypes and Stereotyping

As a matter of fact, thinking of gender identities as either essential or fluid categories is indeed unsatisfactory without having a superficial overview about the range of stereotypes pertained to men and women in social life, especially language use. Stereotypes are used here to stand for the taken-for-granted ideological beliefs and assumptions regarding the social and linguistic behaviour of individuals in a certain situation. More importantly, it is believed that most gender stereotypes were intuitively constituted on the basis of Lakoff’s model (1973, 1975) of the female deficit theory and male dominance which both embrace resolutely the prejudiced conviction that women are a deprived marginal group whilst men are the dominant in all aspects of social life including the way of using language. In fact, gender stereotyping is a cognitive mechanism of prescribing the social roles and speaking modes of men and women, and the way they are supposed to act in a given socio-cultural context; and since popular stereotypes withdraw power and higher social status from women, stereotypes do not illustrate the factual behaviour of women, but they rather lay down an idealized manner of behaviour for women (Abdelhay, 2008).

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010), a stereotype is defined as "a fixed idea or image that many people have of particular type of person or thing, but which is often not true in reality". Gender stereotypes are in fact inflexible attitudes represented in a set of ideological ideas which strictly diminish, naturalize and essentialize differences between males and females. In this vein, Talbot (2003) writes that

Gender stereotypes are closely linked with and support gender ideologies. If we view them as ideological prescriptions for behaviour, then actual individuals have to respond to the stereotypical roles expected of them. Gender stereotypes linked to gender ideology reproduce naturalized gender differences. In doing so, they function to sustain hegemonic male dominance and female subordination

(p.472)

Additionally, Talbot (2003) further continues that stereotyping as a representational practice is at the heart of the notion of folk linguistics, a term which is often used by linguists to refer to "non-linguists' beliefs about language" (p.472). We tend to mean by folk linguistics, the general conceptions, beliefs and public proverbs implanted firmly in the minds of individuals, and which blatantly function to perpetuate harmful stereotyping of particular social categories, especially women. However, these non-linguists' beliefs have not been given much significance by consecutive gender and language scholars for the reason that most of those beliefs, if not all, were not based on any empirical evidence or scientific method of investigation. To illustrate this, the conception that women are like chatterboxes (the negative stereotype that women are talkative) is still under investigation up till now, as it has been concluded in the light of research conducted in a wide range of miscellaneous social contexts such as classroom, workplace, electronic conversations via computer that in cross-sex communication, male interlocutors talk more than their female counterpart.

Despite the fact that gender stereotypes are considered unworthy enough to put them under scientific enquiry, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) believe, however, that stereotypes are the starting point of great deal of research on gender and language. They further validate this view standing on the idea that any research in whatever area of interest starts with a focus or a hypothesis, and that foci and hypotheses should emerge from somewhere. They add in this respect that "If gender stereotypes are part of our sociolinguistic life, they need to be examined not simply as possible facts about language use, but as components of gender ideology" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p.85).

Furthermore, Mills (2003) argues that a variety of gender stereotypes may hold destructive connotations for either gender, as they include some conceptions which may entirely be different from our own awareness and recognition of ourselves. Conventionally speaking, femininity signifies, for the most part, child rearing, home making and looking pretty in front of other women; whereas masculinity is, by and large, associated with features like being aggressive and tough, and is often depicted in terms of “battle and warfare” (Mills, 2003, 188). Such attributes, Mills continue, that are prototypically assigned to women and men are only results of being biologically female and male respectively. Therefore, the stereotypes and expectations that have been produced and exhibited by every society influenced the socio-cultural positioning of both genders to a great extent, without neglecting the tremendous affect caused by those ascribed representational practices on their interactional strategies, perceptions and even attitudes. Actually, the individuals’ attitudes are intimately allied to these stereotypical expectations which have turned out to be focal ingredients of the society’s standards and have controlled the mindset of its members.

In spite of the deep and massive socio-cultural evolution and the improvement of civil life in the general public; our society is, nevertheless, flooded with a collection of stereotypical representations which, in a way or another, depict the mechanism of the social order of human beings in terms of roles, relationships, social status, and significantly our attitudes and behaviours. Surprisingly, loads of detected gender differences in the speech behaviour of males and females are sometimes considered as the by-products of these ideological ideas, instead of the upshot of the tangible existence of genuine differences.

By way of explanation, the cultural norms, that are passed from one generation to the next regarding the way men and women are spoken of and what they should speak, have a tremendous influence in outlining the sights and attitudes of folks in society, directing them to the production and re-production of naturalized gender stereotypes and prejudices which consequently confine their linguistic behaviour to a certain extent. In this vein, Rudman and Glick (2008) state that gender stereotypes symbolize a type of cultural knowledge to which individuals have constantly been exposed as this should have been fairly simple, even if someone, Rudman and Glick continue, does not concur personally with a certain gender stereotype; the latter is apt to stick to his mind. Following the same line of thought, Berryman and Eman (1980) argue that though very small number of real cultural differences in the speech behaviour of men and women are experientially recorded in the sphere of gender studies, stereotypical conceptions, perceptions and anticipations regarding the linguistic behaviour of the two genders are most of the time, if not always, persistent. That is to say,

gender stereotypes are intensely embedded in the society's cultural norms and values, demonstrating this by women's struggle to stand and fight against the negative attitudes exhibited towards them in contexts such as family, workplace, street, social network sites, etc.

We should mention that stereotypes can bear either positive or negative connotations while they hardly ever communicate truthful attributes about others. Whilst positive stereotypes are not problematic for the most part, negative ones generate prejudice and construct a powerful long-lasting male-biased group mentality (Sadiqi, 2003). In her book entitled '*Women, Gender and Language in Morocco*', Sadiqi (2003) divides gender stereotypes in Moroccan culture into two kinds: explicit and implicit. On the one hand, explicit stereotypes comprise explicit gender identity and they emphasize the ambivalent attitude of society in general, and men in particular, towards women (Sadiqi, 2003). For instance, men may display a positive attitude towards mothers and 'good wives', but they may exhibit a negative attitude towards a 'female leader' for the reason that the latter may put at risk their status quo. For Sadiqi, explicit stereotypes strengthen the intimate relationship between women and their homes and resist any association of women with the public sphere (such as street, workplace, etc) by depicting them as "victims, alien beings, transgressing invaders, in public domains" (Sadiqi, 2003, p.124). Actually, this kind of stereotypes can be illustrated in two popular proverbs in Moroccan Arabic variety: /**ʃawər lmra w la ddir brayha**/ (consult a woman but do not take her opinion into consideration) and /**lmra wqualha sghir**/ (a woman's mind is small) (Sadiqi, 2003, p.124).

As far as the Algerian culture is concerned, countless examples of gender stereotypes which grant legitimacy to men over women are evident in the Algerian sociolinguistic profile. In comparison with the Moroccan culture, we repeatedly hear and even say a number of commonplace expressions in day-to-day verbal communication in the Algerian Arabic variety such as /**ydir 3la rai martəh**/ (he follows his wife's opinion) and /**khti:k men hadrət nsa**/ (do not take women's speech into account). In the first example, one can easily notice that although the close relationship between the wife and her husband which is said to be reciprocal from the perspective of Islam religion, there is no escape for women's language, however, from being ideologically confronted by rejection, immaturity and lacking approval. Likewise, the second example shows explicitly the prejudicial attitudes of men towards women's language, representing the latter as powerless, irrational, uncertain and valueless.

In a similar vein, popular expressions like */msənən fe da:r ki nsa/* (he always stays at home like women), */hædæk mrayya/* (that man is womanish), are very often said in our context to men in order to mock them for having feminine propensities. The word */msənən/* socially denotes that male adults and even male teenagers should not spend much time inside their houses, but they should keep up with the ascribed social roles adhered to them as fully independent and brave family members in doing outdoor activities, while females should simply be homemakers instead. Within the same context, the word */mrayya/*, which socially stands for */hædæk mafi ra:dʒəl/* (he is not a man) in Algerian Arabic, is commonly used to describe a male who is suddenly found as deviating from the ‘norm’ if he shows fear, bursts into tears for petty things and sometimes when he breaks his promises. Literally, both words are close to the meaning of the Algerian Arabic term */dʒajəh/* (coward) which is, in turn, used in a pejorative way to indicate weakness and hesitancy.

According to Sadiqi (2003), implicit stereotypes, on the other hand, refer to the overall internalized attitudes and beliefs about the issue of gender as a social category, and that internalization is basically unconscious, resulting from the socialization process and daily cumulative behaviour at home, school, workplace, etc. In the Moroccan culture, for instance, women are implicitly stereotyped as feeble leaders in public, poor interlocutors in religious affairs and lacking wisdom in serious matters (Sadiqi, 2003). Unlike explicit gender stereotypes, implicit ones can be defined, in this respect, as the unconsciously deep-seated prejudicial norms and conventional presuppositions apropos gender roles and expectations. These implicit stereotypes “operate in a way which often escapes conscious control and end up by constituting some kind of symbolic law for the members of a community” (Sadiqi, 2003, p.124). Moreover, such kind of stereotypes is notably one of the most constant reasons behind the growing commonsense of patriarchy and social disparity between men and women in nearly all areas and stages of life. Because of its power in manipulating one’s way of thinking, implicit stereotypes are rather tenacious and harmful to women in particular, as they sustain and maintain the proliferation of positive attitudes towards the linguistic behaviour of men and negative ones towards that of women. Women in the Algerian culture, especially those belonging to conservative families, are socially assumed to talk politely to men, never use taboo words in case a man is around and avoid rising harshly the pitch of their voices in public; otherwise they will be judged as social outlaws and ‘deviants’, i.e. rude and unacceptable if they do so.

Moreover, the Algerian Arabic word /**tradʒlɔt**/ (she became a man or behaves like he does) is often said to the woman who has violated one of the ascribed social norms of femininity and exhibited those of masculinity. In support of this, Abdelhay (2008) explains that males and females perceive themselves by means of the words they make use of. As a matter of fact, Algerian Arabic sentence like /**jabki ki lmra**/ (he cries like a woman), /**khawæf ki lmra**/ (he is frightened like a woman) and /**kh[ɪ:na ki rradʒəl**/ (harsh like a man) are primarily based on stereotypical attributions of men and women, which are implemented in a pejorative way to portray or sometimes to reform the behavioural anomalies in males and females manner of action (Abdelhay, 2008, p.52). We can deduce from the above mentioned state of affairs that gender stereotyping is neither haphazard nor far away. On the one hand, it is not haphazard because it is a culturally ‘norm-governed’ procedure which must apply, in a way or another, to the rigid social norms imposed upon males and females by the speech community, and these norms are effectively acquired through the socialisation process since the early ages of infancy. On the second hand, we tend to mean by gender stereotypes are never far away; the reality that they do live with us side by side at home, apparent to some extent at workplaces and institutions like schools through the educational systems and textbooks and most importantly, in the rapidly developing social network sites like Facebook and Instagram which became nowadays, and more than ever, indispensable factors in affecting men’s and women’s decisions, preferences and tendencies in the public and personal life.

On the whole, it is worth mentioning that our endeavour through the above illustrations was to widen our understandings of some of the prevailing gender stereotypes vis-à-vis their down-to-earth usage and manifestation in the Algerian Arabic variety. What characterizes gender stereotypes in the Algerian society is androcentricity, a notion that will be elucidated in few words in the next section.

1.5.2.1. The Androcentric View of Gender

There is surely no gainsay an extensive range of gender stereotypes and sexist assumptions concerning men’s and women’s verbal behaviour communicate androcentric values and attitudes. Androcentricity (also referred to as ‘androcentrism’) is overtly a gender-biased concept that matches up with the essentialist model of the linguistic analysis of gender differences. For a start, androcentricity functions to espouse and strengthen males’ superior social power and reputation. It advocates that men-centred standards celebrate dominion and higher social value more than those of women at the level of the adhered gender roles and

language use too. This concept is purely ideological in the sense that a cluster of gender stereotypes, as the ones illustrated earlier, depict the female sex in a negative way. By contrast, the male sex is generally deemed to possess full control from which females dig out their staying power to keep living. Likewise, Dealey and Ward (2009, p.127) define androcentricity as

the view that male sex is primary and the female secondary in the organic scheme, that all things center, as it were, about necessary in carrying out the scheme, is only the means of continuing the life of the globe, but is otherwise and important accessory and incidental factor in

(Quoted in Babou, 2012, p.16)

Historically, the term ‘androcentrism’ was coined and came to prominence for the first time ever by the sociologist Charlotte Perkins Gilman in her seminal book ‘*Our Androcentric Culture*’ in 1911. As the book’s heading indicates, Gilman (1911) described, in a brief sense, society as an androcentric culture, a society in which males run and control all human activities and females are rather kept submissive and located in an inferior social position. Androcentric philosophy sustains, maintains and helps the propagation of masculinity as the norm from which everything in society is derived, insisting that civilization was an in-depth man-made product and anything external to masculinity is classified in the column of ‘otherness’ or simply ‘the other’, as the French philosopher Simon de Beauvoir’ discussions in ‘*The Second Sex*’ (1972, 1997) about the way gender differences correspond to hierarchy and patriarchal thinking in androcentric cultures; where males are positioned as gender-neutral principle and the favoured standard, while females are rather positioned as ‘Other’, that is, marked as culturally gender specific. For de Beauvoir (1997, p.16), a woman is “defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute—she is the other” (Quoted in Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 90).

According to Gilman (1911), masculine prototypes and manners of life claimed universality, whilst those of femininity were judged as aberrant and deviant from the ‘normativeness’ of masculinity to which everyone should adhere. Along the same line of thought, Pilcher and Whelehan (2004) argue that androcentricity refers to those practices whereby women’s experiences and behaviours can be arranged and assessed just through the

objective criteria offered by the experiences of men, the ones that are assumed to be generalisable. More to the point, androcentricity does not guarantee gender agency and fluidity in social interaction. It, however, calls for yielding up the individuals' free wills to the essentialized social order and to the internalized bundle of norms by means of putting their sociolinguistic behaviours under configuration by the system of the so-called normative ideological beliefs, as a compulsory condition for prescribing, rather describing, gender roles. We tend to mean by the system of normative beliefs, the commonly shared conventions, values and norms that govern any given social organization and to which social members must conform.

In view of her feminist classical work '*The Lenses of Gender*', Sandra Bem (1993) represented three cultural lenses that implicitly deform and manipulate the perceptions of common people and even researchers concerning the problematic issue of gender differences. These lenses are: biological essentialism, gender polarization, and androcentrism. The first lens is related to the premature interpretations and explanations of gender differences as natural consequences connected with biological factors as revealed earlier in this chapter. The second lens, gender polarization, is a purely biological essentialist concept that categorizes gender into mutually exclusive binary oppositions, i.e. bipolar meanings and aspects related to masculinity and femininity should not overlap at any given social context and members should stick to the norms imposed upon them in a given society.

Following Bem (1993), the third lens, which is also rooted in the essentialist flow, androcentrism refers to "the implicit conflation of maleness with humanity and the consequent attribution of gender differences to females, often to women's disadvantage" (Hegarty and Buechel, 2006, p.377). By way of explanation, Bem (1993) pointed out that the depiction of men as the default gender reflects another bias; the affixation of gender differences to women's natural behaviour more than to that of men. Such attitude may occur due to the universal tendency to correlate intergroup differences (the groups here are men and women) to those groups who are deemed as abnormal and deviant from the default of the larger social grouping. That is to say, it is women's language that has been the core subject of many early gender and language studies during 1970s and 1980s, an undeniable truth which produces the feeling that men's language is the norm (Trechter, 1999). The androcentric thinking has fueled such feeling in a way that seems to someone a matter of common sense along his/her daily social experiences and practices, and scholars within the area of gender and language research have been conscious of such persisting common sense; thus, they have

worked, as in the words of Cameron (1992), “to combat views of women’s language as deficient in comparison to men’s” (p.42).

Up till at least 1980s, the grammatical structures and lexicon of the English language, for example, have witnessed an extensive usage of what is called androcentric generics (the use of male-centered forms as the norm which includes women too such as ‘mankind’) which left women comparatively imperceptible and subordinate through the use of male generics such as the pronoun ‘he’ when used to refer to both sexes and the suffix ‘-man’ as in ‘policeman’ and so on. As a sudden reaction to such sexist language, feminist researchers have then condemned the usage of these generic grammatical units, insisting that such linguistic behaviour reinforces a damaging attitude against woman’s verbal behaviour. The key figure who has addressed this theme extensively is Dale Spender’s pioneering work ‘*Man Made Language*’ (1980). Her book did much in order to make these linguistic features popular out of the academic sphere, especially in the United Kingdom. In parallel with these studies, there had been relative efforts and endeavours to construct and manoeuvres to make use of inclusive, alternative and non-sexist linguistic items, through the suggestion of more gender-neutral terms and expressions such as ‘humanity’ or ‘people’ instead of ‘mankind’, ‘chairperson’ or ‘chairwoman’ besides ‘chairman’, and so on.

As far as the power paradigm is concerned, the deficit and dominance models, as claimed by Lakoff, explain how gendered linguistic differences resulted from the ideology of androcentrism manifested through the imbalance of societal power between men and women in a western context. Many of premature gender studies believed that there is a kind of relationship between men and powerfulness and between women and powerlessness (Lakoff, 1975; Thorne and Henley, 1975; Spender, 1980). Men’s and women’s verbal use of language has been explicated in terms of authoritativeness in men’s language and deficiency in women’s language, as a consequence of the displayed gender inequity in the social environment. According to Lakoff, gender inequality in women’s speech style originated from treating them as inferior social members in society, and this inequality was produced and reproduced in the way women were supposed to talk and the way they were spoken of. For her, women are denied from having access to the ‘powerful speech style’ which does not only typify males’ linguistic creativeness, but also authority and dominance in males’ speech. In short, both models share the view that language is a source of man’s authority and assertiveness; whereas women’s language lacks those properties to a certain extent.

What we should eventually point out is the verity that much early androcentric research concerned with gender differences and variation in language use among males and females illustrated how “language plays an active role in the symbolic positioning of women as inferior to men. It both constructs and perpetuates that reality, often in obvious ways, but at other times in subtle and invisible ways” (Romaine, 2001, p.170).

The chief reason why the majority of early works in gender and language were somehow problematic in nature was that for a quite long time, even within feminist linguistics, they tended to follow the conceptualization of gender as “the culturally shaped group attributes given to the female or to the male” (Humm, 1998, p.84) as discussed earlier in present chapter. In doing so, men and women find themselves squeezed by androcentric socio-cultural pressures that in no way promote for the process of constructing different gendered identities through language, i.e. diverse masculinities and femininities, in the course of their social practices.

Besides that, gender differences from the androcentric perspective were likely to correspond to a kind of biological and cultural determinism, the theory which holds the conception that men’s and women’s speech behaviours are strongly associated with being biologically male and female (Sunderland and Litosseliti, 2002) . This implication rendered the concept of ‘gender’, as a social category, identical to the biological notion ‘sex’, and defined it to appear as a context-independent sociolinguistic variable like age and ethnicity, which almost left no chance for human agency and fluidity to take place, as it suggested a one-way ‘gender then language’ procedure (Sunderland and Litosseliti, 2002). That is to say, it is the gender/sex of the individuals which determine the linguistic behaviour and not the vice-verse. Yet, in order to achieve an in-depth analyses of gender-linked language differences, the majority of researcher, especially those within the social constructivist and community of practice frameworks, concur that the term ‘gender’ should be looked upon as a context-dependent social construct, since it is socially more multifaceted than the term ‘sex’, and only through ‘gender’, men and women are able to negotiate and constructs a range of gendered identities in various context. As Graddol and Swan (1989) say, the numerous but diverse social life experiences of men and women cannot be purely explicated by biological dissimilarities between males and females.

Furthermore, the magnitude of the social context in which language is used was relatively underplayed, if not totally neglected, or what Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999, p.193) labelled as “intragroup differences and intergroup overlap” (the groups here are men and women). In addition, early research of gender differences was to a great extent

conservative and old-fashioned in the sense that it tended to root out differences instead of looking for and figuring out similarities between males and females' conversational styles. This, however, represented the two facets of gendered identity, masculinity and femininity, as inherently binary opposites; a situation in which women find themselves trapped between the normative roles expectations which put them in powerless status from one hand, and the charges of the public slur if they transgress the socio-cultural norms of femininity on the other hand. In other words, women are likely to face a 'double-bind' situation as soon as they start to speak in an authoritative linguistic style which is most often met with rejection and intolerance from the general public.

1.5.2.2. Women and the Double-Bind Situation

As mentioned before, what hinder women from taking part in a public sphere ruled by authoritative men is the negative attitudes shown by the patriarchal social order and its normative beliefs. A woman who often seeks for upward mobility; that is, moving from lower powerless position to a higher powerful one, is socially stereotyped as an outlaw from a man's viewpoint. It is because gender stereotypes and androcentric thinking as previously discussed have a substantial impact in shrinking the linguistic choices available to women when engaged in social practices side by side with men. Due to the lack of assertive communicative strategies in their speech, women are said to face a double-bind situation, a dilemma in which they are pushed to adopt more powerful male-centred discourse styles in the public area, and when doing so, they are however stereotyped as aggressive and offensive. In accordance with this, Kendall and Tannen (1997) and Litosseliti (2006) argue that women in public and more authoritative positions often face a 'double bind', a concept which has been put forward by several feminist linguists like Lakoff (1975, 1990); Coates (1995); Cameron (1995); Crawford (1988, 1995) and Freed (1996) in contexts such as workplace. Litosseliti (2006) defines the concept of the double bind as

the dual constraint that women face when they interact in public arenas. If women adopt a more assertive speech style typically associated with masculine speech, then they will be subject to negative evaluation, being viewed as overly aggressive and unfeminine. Alternatively, if women adopt the speech style typically associated with femininity, then they risk being negatively evaluated as ineffective and weak (p.137)

Following Litosseliti (2006), Lim (2009) describes in brief the double bind as

...traditional expectations of how a woman should behave are mutually exclusive the moment she steps out of the private into the public sphere. The double bind squeezes woman leaders into a practically non-existent bandwidth of what is acceptable behaviour for them. When it comes to embracing ‘masculinity’ as a survival tactic in the public sphere, women are damned if they do, doomed if they do not (p.256)

Ideologically speaking, what expose women to negative social assessment and stigma in public areas like workplaces is probably the stereotype that subordinate groups and lower class people like women and blacks must interact politely and respectfully when speaking to their superior counterparts. A double bind withdraws agency and freedom from women’s speech if they intended to accomplish commanding positions in society. A woman who seizes a high up role in a workplace setting for example and displays her feminine behaviour explicitly is likely to encounter bad impressions from male workers. The occurrence of the double bind in the workplace situation is best exemplified by the works of Case (1988), Crawford (1988, 1995) and Jones (2000). In brief, a female manager, Case (1988) states, who merged and combined feminine communicative speech styles with more masculine authoritative ones was commonly detested and her behaviour was disposed to hostile feedback from her fellow workers.

In his matched-guise analyses, similarly; Crawford (1988, 1995) found that women who exhibited assertive behaviour were observed as less pleasant when compared to men who adopted the same behaviour. In the same vein, Jones (2000) describes the picture of female managers specifically, arguing that if a woman behaves linguistically like a manager (seen as a male attribute), she is then transgressing the social norms of femininity; and as soon as she adopts a lady-like speech style, then she is no longer symbolizing her identity as manager. As argued by Coates (1995), masculine speech styles are the normative measures in public spheres owing to the long history of men dominance of the public domains, where women linguistically find themselves in a double disadvantage. That means if women make use of directive linguistic styles, they are condemned for violating the boundaries of femininity, and as soon as they speak as ladies, they run the risk of being overlooked and uncertain. For Freed, when the linguistic behaviour of individuals “does not conform to society’s

expectations, a set of judgements is formed about them. Their language is seen as marked and they themselves are often seen as deviant ” (Freed, 1996, p.70).

Graddol and Swan (1989) and Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) argue that ideological beliefs of gendered identity stress that the same speech style used by a man is given a distinct meaning and interpretation if used by a woman. This standpoint is in accordance with Bem’s (1993) point of view that there is a lens of gender polarization in society that functions to sustain and maintain the idea that the speech behaviour of males and females is inherently different. That is, when individuals deviate from the already determined norms concerning language use and which are stereotypically considered as proper behaviour for them as gendered beings, a set of negative judgments will almost certainly take place.

In view of the fact that women are stereotypically anticipated to demonstrate full exhibition of cooperative, non-threatening speech patterns, the speech of women in authoritative positions is therefore of interest for the reason that in order to achieve success in such contexts, women are necessitated to go against the stereotype (Baker, 2014). Thus, for the sake of being taken seriously in a territory governed by men, women are required to put aside their feminine traits to become uncontrollable and, therefore, be deemed as rude, unemotional and domineering. Occasionally, the outcome of this complex situation is that women leaders have to negotiate what is referred to as ‘competing identities’. That is, the shift in social roles from a housekeeper to a manager or political leader should be accompanied with an alternation, or at least a minimization, of the linguistic behaviour associated with femininity. These competing identities are relatively paradoxical since they produce “a double bind for women who are socialized into believing they must speak politely and refrain from “man talk” (Lindsey, 2016, p.117). Being socialized to acquire a lady-like persona is of a paramount importance since parents will always make sure that their daughters should avoid adopting men’s talk and even keeping away from talking to foreign boys when being outside home.

The socialization process should never be underestimated for the reason that the parents, even elder brothers and sisters in the family, regularly instruct their little children starting from the first day they made meaningful utterances how they should behave socially and linguistically. Boys are generally taught how to develop skills and capacities of machismo and manhood like toughness, being directive in speech and speaking in a relatively harsh voice. Girls are rather instructed to talk politely, displaying euphemism as females and speaking in a soft voice.

In addition to the family, the peer groups have a crucial task in the transmission of social roles and expectations as well. A child has a strong tendency to behave verbally the same way as his group peers do as soon as he becomes conscious of the need of being sociable. Hence, he/she develops manners, skills and even verbal repertoires that are in harmony with his/her gendered world in order to demonstrate his/her membership to that group. In dialect-related studies, for instance, Labov (1972) states that there is evidence that “children follow the pattern of their peers” (p.364).

As Tannen (1990) points out, the different linguistic choices articulated by men and women are related to ideologies of gender, which typically function to put women at disadvantage. Being considered as the best representative of the difference model besides Maltz and Broker (1982), Tanne’s explanations of gender differences in language use were also related to the idea that since their early ages of childhood, boys and girls were socialized differently with different communicative expectations and that “communication between them is like communication between two different cultures” (Tannen, 1990, p.12).

As far as leadership is concerned in nowadays, the landscape of workforce is no longer male-centred as it was in the past decades. Albeit women in modern days are increasingly positioned as public leaders around the globe at the level of political parties; city governors (mayoress), heads of certain ministries and manageress of some national institutions, etc, many people are still, however, continuing to “think leader, think male” (Holmes, 2006, p.34). In these sensitive authoritative positions, however, women are still struggling to achieve a successful shift from their ascribed feminine identities which they learned through the life-long socialization process to the professional identities as effective public leaders. In this prospect, women “have to negotiate the disjunction between social definitions of femininity and leadership” (Lim, 2009, p.255). Whilst being feminine means being soft, overemotional and submissive; effective leaders are typically characterized as” authoritative, strong-minded, decisive, aggressive, competitive, confident, single-minded, goal-oriented, courageous, hard-nosed, and adversarial" (Holmes, 2006, p.34). Therefore, much research within the sphere of leadership, as a gendered concept of course, pointed out that there has been a remarkable masculine mindset concerning the qualities of an ideal effective public leader.

Within the same area of inquiry, research that adopts a more dynamic approach such as the social constructivist and the community of practice, and which consider leadership as a practice instead of pre-determined attributes, has a tendency to offer a masculine understanding about the way leadership is ideally executed. In view of this research paradigm, the characteristics of leadership consist in “willingness to challenge, ability to inspire,

problem-solving in approach, toughness, and willingness to take risks” (Holmes, 2006, p.35). When it comes to stereotypes and norms of interaction, these unquestionably guarantee legitimacy and dominance to masculine norms, since men’s speech styles have been found to be institutionalized as ideal for authoritative speech in several contexts of workplace. Surprisingly, Tannen (1994a) declares that” the very notion of authority is associated with maleness” (p.167), and hence, women seem unlikely to be recognized as intellectual public leaders, whilst those who step into sensitive leadership positions face a double bind vis-à-vis femininity and professionalism. By way of explanation, Lakoff (1990, p. 206) states that

when a woman is placed in a position in which being assertive and forceful is necessary, she is faced with a paradox; she can be a good woman but a bad executive or professional, or vice versa. To do both is impossible

As a conclusion to this section, we should remind that albeit the social changes of gender relationships, women are still suffering from the negative judgements and stereotypes formed against them once they put a step forward to gain powerful positions in society. Unfortunately, the nightmares and curses of the ‘double bind’ situation are what relatively hinder women from recognizing their inner strength and the potential to hold responsibilities on their own or side by side with men. As Lakoff claims, issues of dominance and authority still remain pertinent in the present day, and while trying to figure out the linguistic features that show favouritism and prejudice against groups of people, we should call for revolutionize the social positions that make those groups powerless (Bucholtz, 2004).

1.5.2.3. Sexism in Language

Prior to the emergence of more systematic and analytical studies of gender-linked language differences, there had been a tendency by early pre-feminist researchers (e.g. Jespersen, 1922) to interpret differences in men’s and women’s linguistic behaviour in terms of biological differences and ideological gender roles ascribed to them by society. The historically created social roles that men and women should fulfil show how these ideological gender roles sustain and maintain gender inequity and discrimination. Therefore, it is worth mentioning in this respect that research into language and gender can be said to fall into two main realms. The first one has to do the gender-based ideologies or folk linguistic beliefs and ‘sexism’ in language (sometimes referred to as ‘linguistic sexism’ and ‘sexist language’) a

notion which was coined in 1960s to stand for “discrimination within a social system on the basis of sexual membership” (Wodak, 1997, p.07) or, as defined by Cameron (1977) “a prejudiced attitude or discriminatory behavior based on the inferiority of women as a social group” (p.340). Whilst the other area has flourished since Robin Lakoff’s publication of *‘Language and Women’s Place’* (1973, 1975) which examines the possible differences in the interactional/conversational styles of men and women in terms of word choice, phonology, communicative strategies and verbal ability. Due to the vast literature written about the theme of sexism in language, we shall then mention few things about how language conveys sexist attitudes and stereotypes.

Language is far away from being a conventionally structured verbal system used for human communication. Its social function cannot be undervalued since it reflects a society’s cultural values, norms and the lifestyles of its users. Likewise, it is pretty normal that it will also produce and reproduce sexist attitudes which are also institutionalized at the level of other aspects of the society, besides language use of course. Interestingly, language can by itself have a remarkable influence on the way society works and shapes its norms and values. In this context, Fairclough (1989) emphasizes that “Language is not merely a means of communication. It is also an expression of shared assumptions. Language transmits implicit values, behavioural modals to all those people who use it” (p.79).

Sexism is the result of the patriarchal systems of certain societies in which men enjoy power and priority at the expense of women’s subordination and inferiority. Patriarchy, by way of explanation, displays and gives legitimacy to androcentricity as elucidated earlier. It has been used by feminist scholars to refer to “the social system of masculine domination over women” (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p.93), that is, male-exclusive norms operate all over social organizations and institutions in a given culture. Thus, sexism is particularly produced and reinforced when patriarchy, hierarchy and androcentricity come together to perpetuate ideological stereotypes and ideas that gender roles are determined by biological factors and are by consequence stable and fixed. In other words, sexist practices proliferate when the relationship between men and women in a given society is built on the basis of the normative beliefs system through which women (and even men in some cases) are abused and constrained because of their biological gender (sex). By this token, Holmes (2013) summarizes in brief the nature of sexism in language when she says

Language conveys attitudes. Sexist attitudes stereotype a person according to gender rather than judging on individual merits. Sexist language encodes stereotyped attitudes to women and men. In principle, the study of sexist language is concerned with the way language expresses both negative and positive stereotypes of both women and men. In practice, research in this area has concentrated on the ways in which language conveys negative attitudes to women (p.325)

As a matter of fact, some early studies done by certain feminist linguists in a western context such as Lakoff (1973, 1975); Spender (1980) and Mills (1995, 2008); have endeavoured to reveal the different ways in which language can be sexist. In view of her deficit model which sees women's language as weak, powerless and lacking authority, Lakoff's work was criticised for reinforcing sexist assumptions and folklinguistic beliefs towards the linguistic features of women's language although she did not intend to do so, and she has also attracted another criticism concerning methodological weaknesses and the lack of empirical data which support her claims. Lakoff (2000) by herself admits that many of her early intuitive hypotheses about women's language have been confirmed inaccurate (e.g. Holmes, 1984; Cameron et al, 1989; Dubois and Crouch, 1975); while other studies supported her claims like the work of Eakins and Eakins (1978) who concluded that the use of linguistic devices like hedges, polite expressions and tag questions reveal women's marginalization in academic contexts. In spite of these criticisms, Bucholtz (2004) writes that Lakoff "is not a failed feminist thinker, as some of her critics have alleged" (p.127). Actually, she has set out the groundwork for many subsequent gender-linked language studies and still continues to influence the area of research nowadays.

Almost five decades prior to Lakoff's groundbreaking work, the Danish linguist Otto Jespersen is historically reckoned as one of the first academic male researchers to deal with language variation according to gender/sex. His popular book '*Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin*' (1922) includes a full chapter dedicated for sex differences in language entitled '*The Woman*' (this chapter is also reprinted in Cameron, 1998c) in which he tackled the phenomenon of sex differences in language in a clearly subjective way since he answered basic questions like 'do men and women speak differently?' from a male-centred

perspective. Moreover, Jespersen (1922) dealt mainly with lexical variation as he intuitively tended to identify a collection of male-female distinctive vocabularies.

In a brief sense, he claimed that women's language is characterized by smaller vocabulary, more conservative and refined than men's due to the wide use of polite forms and euphemisms, heavy use of intensifier (adverbs like 'pretty', 'just', etc), avoiding the use of strong and swear words (verbal taboo), and at last, he averred that women tend to speak in a rather quick pace than men do (Jespersen, 1998). Akin to Lakoff, considerable criticisms were directed by successive feminists towards the self-serving findings of Jespersen's work due to its explicit exaggeration of strengthening linguistic sexism and seeing women's language as secondary to that of men. Since his study stemmed for the most part from traditional folk linguistic beliefs about women's language, it only supplies a purportedly "scientific account of an already-assumed female inferiority" (Cameron, 1992, p.36).

Five years after Lakoff's publication, the radical feminist, Dale Spender, released her most cited book '*Man Made Language*' (1980) in the field of gender studies in general and linguistic sexism in particular, through which she surveyed in much more details the enactment of patriarchal thinking through language use. Considering English as her target language of inquiry, Spender proposed what she has called the 'he/man' language as a reflection of the sexist words and expressions that render women invisible and silent linguistically.

According to Spender, language expresses sexism, because men, who are in authoritative positions in society including politicians, male grammarians and linguists, control the language and have possessed the power to design and name the world from their own standpoint and create a language that satisfies their own needs and signals their social status. For examples, some pairs in English language have different meanings such as: governor/governess (is not the female governor); master/mistress (not the female of master). Semantically, the words 'governor' and 'master' denote 'a person in a charge of something'; while their female equivalents 'governess' refers to 'a woman who takes care of children and housework' and 'mistress' is often used in its sexual sense to refer to 'a woman's (sexual) relationship to somebody, especially to a married man'.

The male-centred terms (governor, master) are either positive or neutral (it can include women too), while the female ones express negative and harmful meanings. Another example is also found at the level of what is called 'generics' or the generic 'He'. The latter refers to the integration of male norms like 'he' and 'man' in compounds such as 'mankind', 'businessman', 'to man (v)' and 'manpower' to include women. Likewise, the generic 'He'

has long been used to as a neutral personal pronoun to include both genders in case the sex of the addressee is anonymous in some linguistic contexts such as ‘the modern traveller can go wherever **he** likes’ and so on. What is required, according to Spender (1980), is a clarification of the source of sexist language and how it grown, how it functions and how it can be reformed. In other words, what is required in an analysis of “patriarchal order” (Spender, 1980, p.31) which emphasizes binary distinction between men as ‘Norm’ and women as ‘Other’.

A bundle of asymmetries between pairs of gender-differentiated words are apparent in the English language such as ‘sir/madam’; ‘spinster/bachelor’, etc. Sexism symbolizes the way a given society is organized in terms of status and how traditional beliefs about masculinity and femininity are crystallized through language. According to Lakoff (1975), sexist language is more of an indication of women’s inferiority to men than a cause of it, as it only mirrors sexism in society. For her, the change should firstly take place within society not at the level of language. Other feminists, like Mills (1995), argue against this point of view for the reason that it sees language as mere ‘talk’ striped from its aspect of ‘action’, seeing that her argument is based on Brown and Yule’s (1983) definition of communication as ‘action-performing’(Cited in Sadiqi, 2003). In support of this, other feminists who, in view of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, assert that language does not only reflect a society’s way of living, but it is a central ingredient in shaping individuals’ perceptions of the world and constructing their thoughts (for more details about this point, see Cameron, 1990). According to the latter group of linguists, making changes in the way people use language may possibly cause a change in the way users of language perceive and think (Sadiqi, 2003).

Along the same line of thought, Frye (1981) stipulates that linguistic sexism is more a matter of strong beliefs and attitudes than of mere language use (Cited in Sadiqi, 2003). In other words, the reduction of sexist linguistic features and the pejorative gender stereotypes embedded in day-to-day communication is a matter of reforming individuals’ way of thinking about language, not simply inferring sexist wordings that highlight men’s superiority over women.

The Moroccan feminist linguist, Fatima Sadiqi (2003), states that, on the basis on these views, the analysis of sexist language does not simply entail analyzing gender-linked language differences that correspond to differences in gender roles, but it goes beyond such point of analysis to a consideration of the linguistic differences which create momentous gender effects and their meanings in a particular socio-cultural context as well. This level of sexist language analysis, according to Sadiqi, has been a core interest to the latest feminist

movement for the sake of rooting out and deconstructing male-biased linguistic forms, attitudes and assumptions in a certain culture.

In her study of linguistic sexism in the Moroccan society, Sadiqi (2003) explains that sexism in the Moroccan languages is evident at three language levels namely the lexical, structural and discursive. Lexical sexism, for instance, has to do with the use and attitudes towards a range of daily lexicon, in which there exist some expressions portraying masculine jobs as “culturally valorized” (Sadiqi, 2003, p.128) while those describing feminine ones are not. For example, male-centred items like /**qaDi**/ ‘a judge’; /**siyasi**/ ‘a politician’; /**munassiq**/ ‘a coordinator’ and /**jifur**/ ‘driver’ generally carry constructive connotations, or as averred by Sadiqi (2003) “are often associated with the notions of leadership” (p.128); while their female counterparts /**qaDiya**/; /**siyasiya**/; /**munassiq**/ and /**jifura**/ do not, as they frequently bear an air of unprofessionalism, lack of seriousness and calling upon mockery (Sadiqi, 2003). Within the same context, she also state that religious professions such as /**imam**/ ‘leader of prayers in a mosque’; /**mufti**/ ‘religious legislator’; and /**muqri?**/ ‘the Holy Quran reciter’ are male exclusive jobs; and although they have their female corresponding items, except the word *imam* for religious reasons of course, people still believe that the male *mufti* and *muqri?* to be the norm. For Sadiqi (2003), the sexist asymmetry between the above mentioned gender-differentiated words “expresses social reticence to accept the presence of women in powerful public spheres, and results in distancing women even farther from these spheres” (p.128).

Another asymmetrical feature of lexical sexism in the Moroccan culture is also demonstrated at the level of insult expressions which stereotypically connote women’s sexual availability more than men’s such as /**bent zanqa**/ which literally stands for ‘daughter of the street’ and it means ‘a prostitute’ or ‘loose women’ in English language; while its male equivalent /**weld zanqa**/ is commonly said to a boy or man for being ‘street smart’, but this is not always true. In the Algerian social context, the latter expression is sometimes said to those males who are found immoral and homosexual (for more details about sexism in the Moroccan culture, see Sadiqi, 2003).

Traditionally, the damaging connotations allied with the former expression reflect to some extent the ideological stereotype that a woman outer of the domestic zone is rather marked as immoral and lacking high merits. In fact, the abovementioned illustrations demonstrate how the mechanisms of the agreed upon connotative meanings function to reinforce gender unfairness, which endorses hegemonic masculine supremacy and feminine inferiority. It also reveals the importance of context in which sexist words are brought into

play, since word implications do not crop up from the words themselves, but has to do with the how our perceptions and impressions are culturally formed towards a particular social group. That is to say, the connotative meanings of items are rather shaped and underpinned via modes of collocation and co-occurrence; through which socio-cultural implications and stereotypical representations, that have been diachronically constructed, are passed from one generation to another.

By analogy to the Moroccan culture, there are plenty of sexist words and expressions found at the level of the Algerian Arabic variety as well. In their study about gender and metaphor in the Algerian culture for instance, Benneghrouzi and Abdelhay (2012) point out that the general understanding of gender-linked language differences is also manifested in the patterns femininity and masculinity are metaphorised. They add further that the metaphorisation of women in the Algerian Arabic culture unveils rugged stereotypes, since a great deal of metaphors about Algerian women” falls under the banner of depreciatory metaphors in so far as they disclose such associations which significantly relate to sexuality, short sightedness and narrow mindedness” (Benneghrouzi and Abdelhay, 2012, p. 5094). Following Lakoff and Johnson’s (1985) metaphorical theory of dehumanization ‘*The Human as Animal*’; Benneghrouzi and Abdelhay (2012) state that weak/domestic animal vehicles (pets) such as /**gata**/ (cat) are mostly associated with weak people; whereas strong/wild animal vehicles such as /**sbaa3**/ (lion) and /**fard**/ (bull) are rather correlated with tough groups.

However, in case a woman is metaphorized as a wild animal, this may connote her as vulgar, nasty and rude. According to Benneghrouzi and Abdelhay (2012), the most popular animal word used in the Algerian Arabic variety is probably the term /**3awd**/ (a male horse) which is most often connoted with a woman being naughty and vicious. The same has to do with the animal words such as /**bagra**/ (a female cow) and /**3agreb**/ (a scorpion), since women are often metaphorised with these animals names if they exhibit manners of stupidity, lack of wisdom and deceiving. What we should pay attention to is how men are metaphorized with those names which do not always connote males in a positive way as well. If we observe the daily use of animal names in the Algerian Arabic variety such as /**fard**/; /**3awd**/ and /**bghal**/ (a mule) to address men, the aim is not only to refer to their strength and enormity; but also for displaying vulgar and rude behaviours. Thus, it is a matter of the context in which such metaphors are used, as it has nothing to do with the form (animal names) and its function (their connotations).

Another widely used metaphor in the Algerian Arabic is significantly the sexist expression /ʔaddar/ (the house) or /ʔaddar marahumʃ hna/ (the house i.e. the wife, is not here) which is generally ascribed to women (Benneghrouzi and Abdelhay, 2012). This also has to do with the notion of ideological gender roles which, according to Korabik et al, (2008), refers to “a set of attitudes and beliefs about the proper roles of women and men in the family or society, which could be considered in a continuum ranging from egalitarian to traditional values” (Cited in Ungaretti and Etchezahar, 2013, p.41). By this token, the collocation of women with the domestic sphere, as the above example, reveals the traditional normative belief that women should be concerned only with indoor affairs such as homemaking and child rearing even if they have a paid work in the public sphere. In a similar vein, the expression /ki:rahom ʔaddar?/ (how is the house. i.e. the wife?) is somehow misleading since it does not incorporate the wife only, but it might cover the other family members such as children, brothers, sisters and parents. On the other hand, the expression /mu:l ʔaddar/, which stands for ‘the house owner’ in English, would indicate that it is the men or husbands who are reckoned as the heads of their houses and the breadwinners of their families; while it would sound ironic if we collocate the word /ʔaddar/ with /lmra/ (the woman or the wife) in the last example phrase, since it denotes the property of the house itself not the woman or wife.

The topic about the nature of sexism and its linguistic features is a never-ending controversial debate due to its historical foundations. Dominance, power and ideology all together have contributed to the rise of patriarchal social order which has been designed by men and for men. As a reaction to such sexist behaviours in language and society, reformist feminists have emerged to counter the discriminatory attitudes exhibited at the level of language usage, and freeing it from bias representations and stereotypes. This process is referred to as language reformation which will be illuminated next.

1.5.2.4. The Reformist Theory

As revealed earlier, sexism is a reflection of the way a social system of a particular community operates to sustain a hegemonic male dominance and female submissiveness, and how the patriarchal relationship between men and women is engendered through sexist stereotypes and representations. As an outcome of this, reformist feminists have expressed a strong disapproval of those who simply claim that language is their property and that it has

been created to serve them only. In other words, reformists believe that language should not be merely designed according to what satisfies the needs of powerful social groups (e.g. men) at the expense of the marginal ones (e.g. women). However, they argue that since language is shared among all social categories as a means of interaction, it should not convey biased and sexist representations of the people using it; that is, to serve and include 'everybody' not 'somebody'.

Language reformation or the 'reformist theory' stresses "accuracy, neutrality, truth and fairness in language with respect to both masculine and feminine words and expressions" (Sadiqi, 2003, p.12). Thus, to reform a sexist language means to replace those gender-exclusive terms, which refer to one gender only and thereby eliminating the other, with more gender-inclusive, neutral and non-sexist terms which include both sexes such as 'humankind', 'he/she' or 'their', 'chairperson', etc. Unlike radical feminists, like Dale Spender, who see language as a cause of women oppression and alienation, the reformist feminists regard language as a symptom of women oppression and subordination. Their chief goal is find answers to two main questions namely: why sexist language is problematic? And secondly: are there any procedures or methods to approach this problem? (Sadiqi, 2003).

Hence, sexist language is problematic because it transmits destructive connotations and biased cultural stereotypes from one generation to the other which may make the reformation process difficult to achieve. Secondly, this long-life process does not call for creating neutral, innocuous and non-sexist alternatives only, but it also stresses that "reform can only be effective if it is accepted and promoted by those in positions of influence" (Mills, 2008, p.17). That is to say, it is the guardians and designers of language, i.e. dictionary compilers, writer of official political speech, reviewers and editors of scientific journals and expert style sheets (e.g. APA, MLA...) and newspapers who are the key effective promoters for a non-discriminatory language and the genuine forces for change. Besides that, a great number of neutral alternatives put forward by the reformist feminists have been broadly approved by those language designers. In this respect, the reformists have successfully made their requests for tangible amendments in both spoken and written language heard during the last three decades or so; and as a response to these requests, several conventions in both formal speech and publications have been adjusted (Sadiqi, 2003). The English language is absolutely one of the languages which has profited from such anti-sexism demands for reformation along the French language.

Furthermore, the idea of language reformation has been put under increased enquiry, being identified by Cameron (1995) as '*verbal hygiene*', that is, "the attempt to change language because of fears about incorrect, irritating or offensive usages" (Mills, 2008, p.06). In light of her analysis of verbal hygiene, Cameron comprises the historical discussions a propos grammar and style besides the debates about what is labelled as political correctness. She further argues that rules and standards of correct ways of speech are essentially ideological, as they disclose information about patterns of authority and superiority in a given society (Mills, 2008). In other words, the traditional norms that govern the way people talk are rather influential in the sense that they have a significant impact on individuals' perceptions and impressions towards others. For this reason and regardless of its popularity, the reformist theory within feminist linguistics has attracted deep criticism and has been relatively discredited as a challenging theoretical model in the sphere of gender-linked language studies. According to Cameron (1992), the reform measures remain ineffective as they cannot get rid of prejudice and stereotypes from daily speech for the reason that what individuals say and mean cannot be manipulated. In this sense, reforming a sexist language is to reform ideologies, i.e. what people believe not what they say, which would make such process unlikely to reach the apex of change for the reason that ideologies are deeply rooted in the social behaviour of people.

In considering the relationship between language and its users, there are two conflicting views that are pertinent to our understanding of linguistic sexism and the nature of reforming acts. On the one hand, language is used differently by different social groups because of who they are. In other words, language is only a reflection of social reality and an interactional tool through which we can define and identity ourselves to others. On the second hand, who people are, is a result of the way they use language. This view

assumes that language does not simply reflect social reality, but is also constitutive of such reality, in other words, it shapes how we see ourselves and the world. If language use is constitutive rather than indexical, then it has the potential to help establish and maintain social and power relations, values and identities, as well as to challenge routine practice and contribute towards social change

(Litosseliti, 2006, p.09)

In view of the abovementioned state of affairs, if sexist language is exclusively a reflection of biased social attitudes and practices, then “changing the social system will lead to sexism disappearing” (Mills, 2008, p.17). However, if sexist language is an effective factor in social oppression, that is, if the language system itself portrays women as subordinate to men, then perhaps “if the language is changed, it will change the commonsense assumptions the people have about women. In turn, social discrimination will diminish” (Mills, 2008, p.17). Both perspectives reside in the very notion of sociolinguistic change, seeing the former as a purely social issue, while the latter is simply a matter of linguistic behaviour. With the interference of culture and its overwhelming influence in shaping our thoughts and controlling the way we should behave socially and linguistically, the reformation process remains constrained by the society’s cultural norms and its patriarchal belief system that have been structured throughout history, and around which individuals understand, organize and construct their lives. As a by-product of this, women have been deprived from the linguistic resources to express their own life experiences as they have been withdrawn from other resources in societies ruled by men.

In short, we would like to say that albeit the obstacles that have always prevented the reformist feminists to make women visible through language, there is a growing public awareness of the necessity to free language from discriminatory practices. With the advent of social life and the integration of women in the public sphere nowadays, sexist language is being reduced; but what people believe in is still problematic.

1.6. Men’s Language and Women’s Language

It is commonly granted that gender stereotypes and folk linguistic beliefs, together with androcentricity and sexism, have all contributed in shaping a patriarchal social order directed by men and governed by their norms and powerful status. The subject positioning of women as a marginal group within this social structure was essentially determined by biological factors and ideological socio-cultural norms as we have revealed earlier. So, much early feminist and non-feminist researchers of gender-linked language differences and variation in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s have celebrated a sense of gender essentialism, that is, the assumption that ML and WL are by essence different in many aspects, viewing them as gender-exclusive instead of preferential linguistic features. In this respect, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992, p.90) state the following

Women's language has been said to reflect their conservatism, prestige consciousness, upward mobility, insecurity, deference, nurturance, emotional expressivity, connectedness, sensitivity to others, solidarity. And men's language is heard as evincing their toughness, lack of affect, competitiveness, independence, competence, hierarchy, control

However, it is worth noting that the abovementioned features listed by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet are in fact previous generalized conclusions made by past essentialist approaches that tended to represent males and females as binary mutually exclusive categories and opposites. That is, the features existing in WL should be either absent in ML or used to a lesser degree and vice versa; standing on the assumption that men and women do not use exactly the same speech style when they interact in a single or mixed-sex group. From this traditional perspective, men and women are said to speak two different linguistic varieties, or simply 'genderlects'.

By analogy with other 'lects' like dialect, sociolect, idiolect, etc; the term genderlect was coined and introduced to the field of gender-linked language studies for the first time by Cheri Kramer in 1974 to merely stand for the differences found in the verbal and even non-verbal behaviours of men and women; precisely the taken for granted modes of using language as documented in the relevant sociolinguistic literature. The concept became more fashionable and broadly used by the feminist linguist Deborah Tannen, the founder of the 'difference' model; in light of her influential book *'You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation'* (1990). The notion of 'genderlect' is defined as a "linguistic variety or code used predominantly by one sex/gender" (Holmes, 1996, p.720). Likewise, it is also conceptualized as "a set of linguistic features that characterizes language production of a socially defined gender category (typically woman/girl and man/boy)" (Johnson, 2009). In view of these definitions, men and women are claimed to be using two different linguistic varieties of the same mother tongue language in a given speech community. In addition, each gender group has been reckoned to exhibit patterns and modes of correct linguistic behaviour appropriate to their sex, and which most importantly run parallel with the normative socio-cultural roles set by the speech community to which they belong, and with the values they have acquired from the agents of socialization inside their communities.

In its traditional sense, a genderlect is by essence defined in accordance with the range of early gender stereotypes and folk ideas, beliefs and assumptions regarding men's and women's way of using language as shown in the pioneering works of early researchers like

Jespersen (1922) and Lakoff (1973, 1975). These studies were in fact androcentric and sexist in the sense that they tended to conceptualize 'women's language' as deficient and powerless when compared to men's, and viewing them as two mutually exclusive stable genderlects. In other words, they have scrutinized gender-linked language difference by considering men and women as hegemonic rigid social categories belonging to binary socio-cultural worlds, which resulted in the notions of 'men's language' and women's language' or simply, dichotomous essential gender identities.

The reason why contemporary sociolinguistic research of language and gender have condemned past essentialist theoretical frameworks and challenged the existence of binary notions such as men's and women's language is without any doubt their "insufficient contextualization of gender and the failure to view gender as part of a complex system of intersecting social variables" (Litosseliti, 2006, p.41). That is to say, gender as a concept was treated as a rigid context-free demographic category, and these genderlects reflect explicitly the essentialist understanding of social variables as determinate traits existing prior to the context of interaction.

Moreover, the idea that men and women speak two distinct gender varieties is problematic since the two genders do not form different speech communities in most cases, and they will reciprocally partake in at least one of the same key social institutions such as the workplace and the family, whilst being placed in dissimilar positions and roles within them (Cameron, 1997). By way of explanation, the idea that boys and girls spend their childhood stage segregated from each other as advocated by the two cultures and difference paradigms is misleading to some extent, because in many Western and Arab societies today, men and women are likely to interact freely in diverse social contexts with each other more than ever before. Therefore, current gender theorists shifted from the traditional study of rigid genderlects to examining gender as a dynamic context-bound identity constructed with relation to other variables and with regard to the kind of social practice the male or female individual takes part in.

The work done by O'Barr and Atkins in 1980 illustrated the extent to which men's and women's linguistic behaviour is influenced by the context of situation and the social status or power and not by gender. In taking Lakoff's linguistic features of women's language as their target variables, O'Barr and Atkins observed language behaviour of male and female witnesses in a courtroom context for thirty months. They further argued that what Lakoff referred to as features of 'women's language' are not limited to female witnesses only but also to males, and that such features are strongly linked with the context of situation, social rank

and power; an addition to the speaker former courtroom experience. In view of their context-sensitive approach, O'Barr and Atkins (1980) concluded that Lakoff's correlation of such linguistic features with women's language is inadequate and was mystified with 'powerless language', that is, the differences are between powerful and powerless linguistic styles used interchangeably by both genders.

In a nutshell, while early feminist and non-feminist works of gender-linked language differences see men's and women's language as dual binary opposites; modern investigation of the same issue correlate the differences founded in the speech of males and females to the process of gender identity (ies) construction which is influenced by the social context, the participants' demographic data and their relationships to each other. In spite of this methodological and theoretical progress, early gender stereotypes and myths are still influencing current gender and language research, given that most people in our society still bear the idea that men's and women's linguistic behaviour should correspond to the socio-cultural norms agreed upon by the general public.

1.7. Conclusion

In general, the content of this chapter was devoted to enhance our understanding of the basic issues, research paradigms and keys notions allied to the interdisciplinary area of gender-linked language differences in sociolinguistics. Thus, the relevant historical background, major early and recent research approaches and theories besides the keys concepts have all been documented in brief details as far as the purpose of the present research is concerned. The enrichment of the readers' knowledge of the circumstances that helped the proliferation of gender and language research within sociolinguistics is methodologically of an overriding importance in order to reveal the weaknesses and strengths of early works and past essentialist approaches to gender studies and to demonstrate the contribution of the more recent and constructivist paradigms in reshaping the pertinent area of inquiry.

In fact, gender and language research has gone through various stages of progress since the moment it marked its emergence in social and human sciences. Aside from the folklinguistic beliefs and stereotypes that corresponded to the notions of androcentricity and patriarchy, essentialism has been prominent in investigating differences in the speech of males and females. It has always celebrated a sense of gender dualism and polarization, that is, men and women are by essence different in many aspects besides their biological traits. However, the terrain of gender-linked language research have reached another level with the integration

of more advanced and critical constructivist approaches such as CofP, FPDA, etc that sees gender as a dynamic practice and an identity which constructed depending on many social and linguistic parameters when engaged in a particular conversation. Although there are few studies out of the Algerian context, research dealing with gender-linked language differences in social network communication via the use of electronic sites such as Facebook is still not investigated up till now in Algeria as far as our knowledge is concerned.

Chapter Two: SITUATION ANALYSIS

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2.1. Introduction

While the study of gender/sex differences in the spoken ‘offline’ language started since decades ago, sociolinguistic research concerned with investigating how social identities in general ,and gender identities in particular, are constructed in online social network communication has gathered pace just recently. The dawn of the Age of Information by the late of the twentieth century has marked a turning point in people’s day-to-day social interactions and interrelationships, as it has eventually led to the emergence of new modes of online text-based and audio-visual communication as will be discussed throughout this chapter. This latter is therefore dedicated for a thorough situation analysis and description of the research context in general. Hence, this chapter introduces first the terrain of online social network communication, through which major relevant key notions are defined, and a special focus on the social networking site; Facebook, is also stressed. As far as the linguistic context of the present investigation is concerned, the second part of this chapter is devoted for the description of the current Algerian sociolinguistic situation; while the third part will discuss the research methodology opted for the study, through which the research instruments, setting, and target participants are described.

2.2. Introducing the Terrain of Online Social Network Communication (OSNC)

The international network, or simply the Internet, is undeniably one of the major outstanding human-made inventions which have remarkably revolutionized every aspect of people’s way of life worldwide. Individuals can easily now make contacts with other people regardless of their geographical locations and the distance between them. This World Wide Web (hereafter WWW) can be depicted as one of the marvellous observable facts of recent time because of its numerous facilities which people has never witnessed before, together with the latest updates of social media of communication they provide such as e-mails, text messaging, chat rooms, videoconferencing, social networking sites, etc. This has also become much easier with the development of the so called Information and Communication Technologies (hereafter ICTs) which have in turn gone through various stages of development since their first appearance up till now.

Due to their extensive use around the globe, these technologies, such as smart phones, laptops and computers, are in fact functioning as effective tools in shrinking the world and making its heterogeneous inhabitants much closer than ever before. Consequently, a complicated system of online social networks and virtual communities has been created and evolved in a rapid pace, as online users have become relatively addicted to the modern technology, especially those equipped with diverse Internet services. In this regard, the notion of online social network communication (hereafter OSNC) is coined as a reference to those web-based computer programs and smart phone applications that humans have utilized so far with the aim of building and strengthening social ties and to keep up updated to the latest local and worldwide events. It is further conceptualized as a global network that facilitates social communion establishment among Internet surfers and bloggers, and help them to construct a range of social connections with other people with the same or different socio-cultural backgrounds, share ideas, feelings, interests and life experience as well. By this token, Walther and Burgoon (1992) argued that communication via networked computers is no longer a novelty but an interactional channel through which much of our dealings and social contacts comes about; as such transformation is likely to persist in due course.

Indeed, OSNC has grown to be an indispensable part of people's daily social practices due to its ease of access, low-cost Internet services, and most importantly, its nature of socialization and self-presentation. In light of this, Zahali (2020) asserts that digital communication is no longer bounded to information exchange and accomplishing task-based objectives solely, but it has developed into a primary method for setting up and sustaining long-lasting social relations and friendships.

2.2.1. Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

Face-to-face discourse has always been the primary medium of human communication for eternity. However, with the technological advancements of computer science and the invention of the Internet, distant communication has become the most convenient, dynamic and popular interactional channel that can easily fulfil the needs of its users locally and even around the globe. That is to say, such radical change in the domain of human communication has fascinatingly adjusted the way individuals interrelate by means of social networked digital devices. Therefore, researchers from different academic disciplines consider these web-based social networking communication environments as fruitful areas of investigation, since online

users regularly get access to them in order to execute diverse activities and functions in such digital world.

As far as communication in distance is concerned, various interchangeable technical notions like online communication, virtual communication, distant communication, cyber communication, electronic communication, etc have been coined so far, as a reference to the most renowned and early term 'Computer-Mediated Communication' (hereafter CMC). This later was coined for the first time ever by Hiltz and Turoff (1978) in their investigation of computer conferencing. Interestingly, it is worth pointing out that at its early stages of development, distant communication was mediated by networked computers only, while other more advanced digital devices like smart phones, iPads, tablets, etc came into play just recently. These hand-held devices have considerably gained greater popularity over computers among people, as this shift of interest has been elucidated by the statement that mobile technologies are much better in terms of accessibility and practicability (Bicen and Arnavut, 2015). By way of explanation, mobile technologies, mainly smart phones, are deemed today as the most heavily utilized electronic devices over the world, since they offer manifold services and practical applications on their digital screens. Because of their pocket-sized shape, exploitability, multi-practicability, allowing a quick Internet accessibility, low-cost Internet promotions, and their social significance as they are essentially employed to accomplish given social purposes instead of conceiving them as mere digital tools (Bicen and Arnavut, 2015; Al-Otaibi, et al., 2016). In light of this, some fieldworkers begun speaking of other notions like Electronically-Mediated Communication (hereafter EMC) as an umbrella term for the assorted modes of online communication achieved through the different instruments of ICTs.

If we consider, for instance, Susan Herring's classical definition of CMC which avers that "CMC is communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers" (Herring, 1996, p.1), this would be somehow misleading for the reason that humans can now communicate electronically via multiple networked technological devices. Hence, with the evolution of such mobile technologies, researchers within this field started to talk about ICTs as an umbrella term that includes all the instruments and machines themselves that humans have used to communicate in distance. In this respect, December (1996) describes CMC as "the process by which people create, exchange, and perceive information using networked telecommunications systems that facilitate encoding, transmitting, and decoding messages" (p.1). A more recent definition of CMC introduced by Bodomo (2010)

would be more exhaustive in the sense that it covers all those technologically web-based human communication tools and not only computers. He says that CMC is

The coding and decoding of linguistic and other symbolic systems between sender and receiver for information processing in multiple formats through the medium of the computer and allied technologies such as PDAs, mobile phones, and blackberries; and through media like the internet, email, chat systems, text messaging, YouTube, Skype, and many more to be invented

(p.06)

In its wider sense, CMC is now achieved through a variety of communicative forms such as electronic mails, blogs, text-based chats, social network sites, video/audio conferencing, instant messaging, etc (Tanaka, 2015). In contemporary related studies, therefore, more comprehensive notions like electronically/technologically-mediated communication (hereafter EMC/TMC) were brought in for accuracy and precision. But in some case, all those notions are rather used interchangeably among scholars concerned with the brand new linguistic branch labelled as 'Internet Linguistics'. This area of inquiry has in fact flourished in recent language sciences, and has developed as an outcome of people's wide use of and the addiction to web-based services in their daily activities. As a result, the Internet "has created a virtual world specific with its own communities, identities, relationships, and more importantly with its own linguistic behaviours that require scientific investigation to understand language use in the digital environment" (Zahali, 2020, p.100). In (socio) linguistic studies, however, the term CMC is generally referred to as 'Computer-Mediated Discourse' (hereafter CMD) (Herring, 2004), as this latter is more focused than the former concerning the systematic observation and description of language use in online communication and its innovative features. Unlike CMC, the notion of CMD is rather defined as "the communication produced when human beings interact with one another by transmitting messages via networked computers" (Herring, 2004, p.612). In short, CMD is an approach to the linguistic, socio-cultural, and the psychological analysis of the various types of discourse produced when humans interact in the sphere of OSNC. It is also concerned with investigating the impact and the role of technology in language variation and change and how social meanings, relationships, and identities are negotiated and constructed online.

2.2.1.1. Modes of CMC/CMD

As the gamut of ICTs develops incredibly, various forms and modes of CMC/CMD have been introduced so far in the favour of human-to-human distant communication. As far as this latter is concerned, some human-based social networking communication technologies support only a text-based and/or a written exchange of information as in the case of emails, Short Message Service (hereafter SMS), and instant messaging. Besides this, other technologies are also based on audio, audio-visual, and graphical facilities as in the case of the popular social networking website, Facebook. This latter is in fact representative in the sense that it has gone through various updates to incorporate all those aforesaid modalities of online communication. Hence, it is up to the Facebook user to select the appropriate service, of course with regard to the nature of message or content to be communicated, whom the message concerns, the context of interaction, etc. At the macro level, however, Baron (2002, 2010) proposes two main dimensions for the categorization of the diverse human-based communication technologies; temporality and audience scope.

Temporality, or synchronicity, stresses that online communication among interlocutors can take place either synchronously or asynchronously. Unlike face-to-face communication which occurs in the same time and place, synchronous communication arises when online users exchange pieces of conversation and get in touch in '*real time*', that is, in the same time but not necessarily in a different place. In other words, it is the immediate process of sending and receiving of whatever kind of online content at the moment interlocutors are available online. Synchronous online communication can be found in various audio-visual and text-based technologies such as videoconferencing and instant messaging. Interestingly, this latter has been cultivated just recently, as it is realizing greater admiration and popularity among online users thanks to those assorted android-based applications like Messenger, Viber, Imo, WhatsApp, etc.

On the other side, asynchronous technologically-mediated communication does not occur simultaneously, but it takes place in a rather '*delayed time*' as opposed to its synchronous counterpart. Said differently, time-delayed forms of online communication do not necessitate the presence of all interlocutors at the same moment of sending and receiving messages. Instead of this, addressees are not required to reply instantly to other interlocutors' queries and interventions, but responses can be sent by the participants in due course (Ryan et al., 2000). The most popular technologies that illustrate best this mode of online

communication are emails, SMS, blogs, Facebook posts and comments, etc. In short, users of asynchronous communication technologies may be inclined to take enough time to read others' messages to get better understanding of them and then think carefully about suitable responses and send them as soon as they finish their production.

In spite of what has been mentioned above, Baron (2008) assumes that it is not suitable to talk about those two types as if they were two bipolar opposites. In other words, this synchronous/asynchronous dichotomy is not always rigid, but in some cases, these two modes are likely to overlap. For example, many online users tend to respond to their emails once they get notified, that is, immediately; whereas replying to messages sent by other users through the various applications of instant messaging may possibly take place in a delayed time specially at the moment an interlocutor send a message and the addressee is offline (Baron, 2010).

As far as the second dimension is concerned, the classification of the miscellaneous modes of EMC depends also on the number of the participants taking part in either synchronous or asynchronous online communication. That is, if this latter occurs between two interlocutors only, it would one-to-one, but if it arises between or is intended for more than two participants, it is then one-to-many. As clarified by Tanaka (2015), while certain media of online communication are restricted like emails since the addresser chooses when and to whom the message will be delivered, others can be open to a large audience as in the case of blogs. The following table summarizes some instances of CMC/CMD modes with reference to the four-way schema, that is, synchronous versus asynchronous and one-to-one versus one-to-many.

	Synchronous	Asynchronous
One-to-one	Instant Messaging apps, video calls.	Emails, SMS.
One-to-many	Videoconferencing, Messenger group discussions.	Blogs, Youtube, twitter.

Table 2.1 Modes of CMC/CMD

Even though it seems fairly compulsory to have much ins and outs of the two major parameters of categorizing the various technologies of CMC/CMD, there are, however, some limitations associated with those two clear-cut dichotomies. As argued by Crystal (2001), certain asynchronous text-based modes of CMC, mainly e-mails and SMS, require some re-assessments. Online users may come in touch with one another via these two forms in a relatively short period of time as explained beforehand. In a similar vein, Crystal (2001) also clarifies that even synchronous forms of CMC do not resemble to a great extent face-to-face verbal communication for the reason that the former is moderately restrained by the swiftness of typing messages. As for the audience scope dimension, the social networking site 'Facebook' along its instant messaging app 'Messenger' covers both one-to-one and one-to-many modes of CMC. While on the Facebook homepage people can react to and comment on others' posts either synchronously or asynchronously, Messenger allows for the creation of online group discussions that can consist of more than two active participants, that is, one-to-many; although it has been originally designed for one-to-one 'private' communication.

2.2.1.2. The Impact of Communication Technologies on Language Use

The ubiquitous progression of human-based digital communication technologies and the upgrading shift from page to screen have in fact stimulated academic curiosity to understand the mechanisms of language use, variation, and change online. In view of the fact that the assimilation and socialization of the various multimodal communication technologies into the individuals' habitual social practices in today's world is greater than ever before, the study of the way human language (es) has been affected by and accommodated to the virtual context and how it is innovatively used to convey assorted thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and real-life experiences of its online users has become a must. Of course, no one would ever deny the truth that online communication has unprecedentedly alleviated people's interactional routines and has improved their sociability to a great extent. In parallel with this, an upgrading linguistic change or precisely, a linguistic revolution, is taking place in the domain of CMC as this latter is marking the birth of fashionable fresh technologically-based linguistic varieties observed online. Hence, numerous sociological, psychological and linguistic studies have been carried out since the dawn and extension of communication technologies in 1980s and 1990s to understand and classify the use of language in those digital environments.

Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that a wide range of linguistic research has been concerned with analysing texts and examining the type of language that is used for interactional purposes (Locher, 2010), instead of observing the electronic version of those texts that we encounter in real life situations such as billboard, newspapers, magazines, etc. Within the field of linguistics, CMC is recognized as the applied study of sociolinguistic research since it affords a large amount of novel academic data for the sake of analysing and scrutinizing the mechanisms of linguistic variability in constructing social identities on the Internet (Androutsopoulos, 2014). More to the point, language is the basic unit of analysis in CMC-based research as this latter tends to focus, for the most part, on the creative uses of language online and how its innovative features are leading to a linguistic change in order to come up against the challenges of communication technologies (Locher, 2010; Hwang, 2014).

As argued by Crystal (2001), computer-generated communication represents an ideal platform that authorizes human-to-human contacts through a variety of discrete ways. It has profoundly taken the richest legacy of the human race, that is; language, to an entirely brand new stage of development simply to overcome some deficiencies caused by digital communication technologies, especially those text-based ones. This is clearly stated by Crystal (2006) as he asserts that “internet users are continually searching for words to describe their experiences, to capture the character of electronic world, and to overcome the communicative limitations of its technology” (p.71). Indeed, the limited but diverse scripts and symbols that are integrated within the phones and/or computers keyboards’ writing systems have offered online users the capacity to interact with others rather effectively, in spite of the reality that it was hard to transmit and interpret the non-verbal cues of the interlocutors’ interactions (such as facial expression, voice tone, body movement, etc) in online text-based contexts.

Accordingly, the relative absence of those non-verbal cues when interacting via text-based communication technologies was considered as a barrier for online users, simply for the reason that such paralinguistic displays contribute in encoding and decoding exact meanings and avoiding misunderstanding at the same time; the same way as body language does in face-to-face communication. For that reason, many studies within this sub-area tended to focus on the absence and/or presence of social context cues and stated that this sort of communication is likely to lessen the chances to sufficiently convey and realize social as well as emotional content.

Even though CMC is somewhat deficient in terms of facial expressions and (audio) visual cues that generally emerge in traditional real-life communicative events, it still, however, manage to satisfy its clients in getting their online contents accommodated well (Dino and Gustilo, 2015). That is to say, unlike face-to-face communication which requires the physical co-presence of interlocutors within the same context of interaction, the language of online text-based communication technologies is now being used side by side with several multimodal components such as pictures, colour effects, emoticons, stickers, unconventional spellings, non-standard use of punctuation marks, and distinctive signs in order to compensate the lack of social presence and produce more dynamic online messages in more sophisticated fashionable ways. Therefore, for a thorough comprehension of online linguistic behaviour, it is crucial to take into account the novelty of the digital environment besides its innovative linguistic features and determine their roles within given text-based discourse as such features are most often utilized to accomplish certain functions. In support of this, Crystal (2001) believes that the communicative practices have been reformed and altered according to what suits best the virtual environments, seeing that several linguistic features have floated to the surface as a consequence of the Internet's interactive, global, and electronic nature.

Fascinatingly, it is relatively approved that the incorporation of web-based interactional services in human-to-human communication has given rise to novel fashionable qualities of online text-based communication. The chief postulation is that 'texting' has emerged as 21th century incident, mainly "as a highly distinctive graphic style, full of abbreviations and deviant uses of language, used by a young generation that doesn't care about the standards" (Crystal, 2008, p.07). In his description of the unique text-based linguistic features manifesting in online communication, Crystal (2001) introduced the concept of 'Netspeak' as a reference to those fresh linguistic features that manifest in various social media interactions. According to him, the 'Netspeak' is an electronic linguistic variety that is full of abbreviated words and acronyms, unconventional spellings and non-standard uses of capitalizations and punctuations. More importantly, it remains an inventive means of online text-based communication and a hybrid linguistic variety in the sense that it encompasses features of both face-to-face interaction (speech) and writing (Crystal, 2001).

However, this hybridity has evoked a controversial debate among researchers as they could not concur on whether this online variety is a more written-like or speech-like medium of text-based online communication. In this respect, Herring (2007) argues that the linguists' views diverged on whether it is a sort of written language given that messages are typed using the device's keyboard and can be read on the screen as if they were texts; or it is a 'written

speech' since many online text-based messages share some characteristics with speech such as fast exchange and informality of messages; or it is neither spoken-like nor written-like, but rather a distinct style of communication. So, the phenomenon is quite complex for the reason that online participants, who are engaged in a synchronous text-based communicative event for instance, tend to write what they speak in real life settings; without paying attention to the grammatical mistakes and spelling errors that they may, consciously or unconsciously, exhibit in their text messages.

Moreover, reading the chronological occurrence of text messages within a conversation, as in the case of Messenger, gives somebody the impression that participants have engaged in a face-to-face dialogue, as he/she is likely to imagine the physical situation and how the turn taking process took place, especially if the reader and participants know each other well. In this vein, Thurlow et al. (2004) asserts that "even though it is not face-to-face and is typed, the language of the Internet invariably looks more like speech more than writing" (p.126). In view of that, the synchronicity and informality of most text-based communication technologies led the majority of CMC researchers to consider this online variety as a kind of spoken discourse which has been written down. On the other hand, Crystal (2006) avers that 'Netspeak' is better seen as a "written language which has been pulled some way in the direction of speech than as spoken language which has been written down" (p.51). Therefore, he labelled this CMC language as "a genuine third medium" (Crystal, 2006, p.52); in the sense that it encompasses features from speaking, writing, and technologically-based properties.

Last but not least, the embryonic and unique linguistic properties of text-based communication technologies have in fact caused a hot debate amongst linguists on whether this 'third medium' is reflecting one of the most prominent design features of human communication which is creativity/productivity, or is it deteriorating one's ability to write properly and ruining standard language varieties. Therefore, surveying peoples' attitudes, from a gender perspective, towards such observable hybrid linguistic practices in the digital environments is needed as far as the objectives of present research are concerned.

2.2.3. CMC and Gender

Instead of being engrossed in undertaking a mere descriptive analysis of Internet-based varieties and deconstructing their unique text-based linguistic features, researchers have gone beyond this level of inquiry as they have paid considerable attention towards a macro-investigation of the discourse of CMC. As far as text-based online communication is concerned, researchers have questioned the extent to which such modes of digital communication provide its online users with the necessary electronic services and contextual cues for the construction and negotiation of various socio-cultural identities which they may perform in real-life situations. That is to say, the addiction to these forms of communication technologies have inspired a variety of interdisciplinary studies to understand the way people's offline identities are shaped in the digital world, especially if this is done with respect to certain relative limitations such as the lack of physical presence and social context cues, and the anonymity of participants in some CMC modes. In this context, Herring and Martinson (2004, p.424) assert that

The Internet, it was said, would mask the visible differences between men and women, between races, and across other social categories, because e-mail and other forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC) strip away physical appearance cues, leaving us to express ourselves online only through language.

Indeed, language is not just a mere tool of the execution of a range of social practices and functions for the people using it, but it is rather a mirror of our ideological beliefs, socio-cultural values, preferences, dislikes, and personal experiences. This issue is more significant when those text-based communication technologies are considered, for the reason that participants taking part in such interactional online environments may deliberately conceal their real-life personas to others. Hence, they may create their own accounts on these platforms using fake profile names, illusory home addresses and occupations, false demographic data (e.g. gender, age, geographical location, etc) and so forth. In this respect, "identity deception is easier to carry out in text-based computer-mediated communication than face-to-face" (Herring and Martinson, 2004, p.425). That is to say, the identity of online participants is likely to be distorted in such media of communication since this latter do not entail only the participants who know each other well, but even strangers and pseudonymous

ones are welcomed. More importantly, debates of identity construction in CMC research are in fact directed by socio-psychological approaches and tend to put emphasis on the participant free will, guaranteed by anonymity, to construct various online identities as demonstrated in the process of gender switching (Turkle, 1995). In view of this, online text is like a ‘mask’ (Danet, 1998) that online users have it on in order to presume various online identities which might not conform to their real-life identities (Androutsopoulos, 2006). As far as privacy and security issues are concerned, it is argued, however, that men are more inclined than women to share their private data, email address and location; a pattern which is internationally exhibited (Taraszow et al., 2010; Kuo et al., 2013).

As a matter of fact, the study of the relationship between language and social identities in CMC was predominantly initiated by Herring’s works (e.g. Herring 1993, 2000, 2003) on language and gender and who discovered some “systematic differences in the participation patterns and discourse styles of males and females” (Panyametheekul and Herring, 2003, p.6). In asynchronous modes of CMC, males’ communicative style is typified by strong allegations, exclusive *we*, disagreement and impoliteness; whereas females’ style is characterized by support and concord, inclusive *we*, aligned orientations, and the articulation of their own sentiments. In synchronous CMC, male users tend to use more aggressive verbs, vulgarity and nasty vocabulary, while females use more emoticons and amusement, in addition to nonaligned and affectuate verbs. For Herring, the truth that female users may get more response than their males’ counterpart in e-chats is owing to their being located as entities of sexual desire. The conclusions made by Herring maintain that gender-based asymmetries and male dominance are endured on the Internet; as such conclusion is in a fairly sharp opposite to the delusion of egalitarian discourse (Herring, 2000, 2003; Panyametheekul and Herring, 2003).

Nevertheless, the results of Herring’s work have been partially validated by other studies. For example, Huffaker and Calvert (2005) unearthed that blogs administered by teenage males are quite comparable to the ones operated by females and that young male bloggers tend to use emoticons more than females; as this latter “are not using language that is more passive, accommodating, or cooperative” (Huffaker and Calvert, 2005, p.19). Moreover, her presumption of gender as a pre-existing social category that manipulates the use of language has been condemned by those researchers informed by the idea of ‘doing gender’ and insist on seeing this latter as a ‘performance’ which is enacted in online interaction (Rodino, 1997); while others stress the need to contextually examine the relationship between

language and identity in CMC research (de Oliveira, 2003; Georgakopoulou, 1997, 2004; Huffaker and Calvert, 2005).

Consequently, several theorists concerned with cyber communication have endorsed this view; asserting that since text-based online communication filters out contextual cues like physical presence and tone of voice, online users are supposedly free to execute any (gendered) identity that they can visualize (Danet, 1998; McRae, 1996; Stones, 1996). A major standpoint of this position embraces the inspiration that virtual characters can be developed independently from their real life animators, constructed by the ebb and flow of online social interactions and the contexts that they encounter in the cyberspace (Stones, 1996). In brief, online self-representation is a rather dynamic and fluid process as individuals can make use of whatever multimedia features in order to construct various online gendered personas, either in terms of avatars selection and profile names or in terms of status updates and online activities, including language use.

As far as the question of whether gender roles, power relations and stereotypes are salient online, it is worth noting that technology tends to reinforce the maintenance and spread of androcentric socio-cultural beliefs in a rather creative way, thanks to the different multimedia affordances provided by the digital world. Gender-based ideological contents are relatively observed online, being displayed in video memes, pictures, graphical representations, emoticons, stickers, and so on. In this respect, Zahali (2017) pointed out that the Internet, mainly Facebook, is strengthening the survival of offline traditional gender stereotypes as such interactional milieus are functioning as effective arenas in which an ubiquitous gender-linked multimodal content underpins the conflict of gender identities in an unprecedented way. She further highlights this view in the Facebook picture underneath:



Source: Zahali (2020, p.204)

The attached picture has been innovatively constructed, as each of its multimodal components has a certain function to accomplish and contributes to the development of communication and completes it. The use of such sorts of multimodal discourse on Facebook is in fact quite common among Algerian Facebook users, especially the younger generation. As far as gender stereotypes are concerned, the picture highlights an ideological socio-cultural belief concerning the role of women in the Algerian society in a rather sarcastic way. On the one hand, it implicitly reflects women's lack of wisdom as this is expressed in the Algerian dialectal Arabic text written in yellow:

كي تقولك كفاش المنتخب فيه 11 لاعب و هداك رقم 14 منين جاتو

'When she tells you, since the football national team consists of 11 players, from where did that player get number 14?'

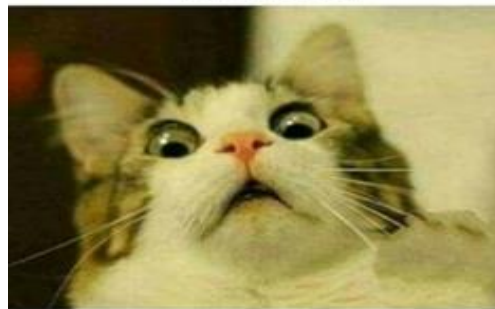
On the other hand, it stereotypes women as homemakers in the sense that they should be concerned with indoor activities like cooking, washing, etc, and men-preferential topics like sports do not fit them well. This is explicitly revealed in the picture as the famous cartoon cat 'Tom' points with his hand to the kitchen and says in the Modern Standard Arabic (the statement which is written in white colour):

مرحبا بك في مكانك الطبيعي

'Welcome to your natural position'

On the whole, the above example shows the extent to which multimodal Facebook discourse reflects offline traditional socio-cultural norms and beliefs concerning the roles of men and women in the Algerian society. In a similar vein, the picture below demonstrates a gender-based ideology about women as being talkative and defiant.

**Husband got shocked while
reading his wife's school
report card**



**"Very obedient &
soft spoken student"**

In fact, the amusing facial expression of the cat tells the whole story more than the two texts themselves. The cat represents a husband's reaction while reading the school report card of his wife, as the report declares that she is 'very obedient and soft spoken student'. Therefore, the message to be conveyed in this context and through such multimodal content is that the wife argues a lot with her husband and breaks his words. Moreover, the two pictures are in fact just preliminary illustrations of the way men and women are ideologically represented in the virtual world. This area will be explored in further details in the next chapter, for the sake of identifying the role of such multimodal ingredients in transmitting ideological beliefs concerning the distribution of social power between men and women and the roles assigned to them by the normative belief system in the Algerian society.

Last but not least, a substantial body of research has also revealed that men and women differ in terms of their practices and motives when getting connected to the digital world. In their study of online social support among Algerian Internet users who tend to express themselves in French language on Facebook, Meziane & Baiche (2018) and Meziane (2019) concluded that there is a strong relationship between online social support and gender as, when getting online, male users tend to search for 'self-esteem' in the facebook group of sport, while female users scored higher than males in the two social support categories 'self-esteem' and 'appraisal' in the facebook groups of music and education. Interestingly, their findings go in line with the work of Sullivan (2003) who declared that women tend to look for appraisal and emotional support by means of politeness, praise, thankfulness, and positive encouragement.

On the whole, the current discussion is quite enormous and vast-ranging in the sense that research is varied as far as gender studies in the digital world are concerned. How men and women from different age categories, social backgrounds and geographical locations present themselves and are represented online still raises many controversial debates among linguists, sociologists, psychologists, cyber-theorists, and even feminists; especially when aspect of anonymity, identity deception, and temporality and audience scope of CMC modes are considered. Therefore, the current investigation is limited to the area of social networking sites in general, and Facebook in particular, as we attempt, on the one hand, to identify the major unique text-based linguistic features used by Algerian male and female Facebook users. On the other hand, we will seek also to assess their attitudes towards those features and what linguistic cues they make use of in order to construct their online gender identities in both synchronous and asynchronous communication on Facebook.

2.2.2. Social Networking Sites

As its name indicates, social networks refer to those diverse relationships and affiliations that link individuals to one another in a rather complex way. The social nature of human beings urged this latter to create online communities through the use of the so called ‘social network (ing) sites’ (hereafter SNSs), in order to strengthen their social ties and build new ones. Unlike traditional offline social networks which are limited in terms of scope, online social networks are rather vast and global as they can connect people from diverse locations around the globe making, therefore, an intricate worldwide web, thanks to the potential ubiquity of SNSs such as Facebook, MySpace, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, etc. that have been afforded on computers’ and smart phones’ screens. Consequently, individuals are no longer compelled to run off from their desks and beds in order to interact with their mates, family members, and fellow workers as they used to do so before. Interestingly, these online gatherings where ‘netizens’; to borrow Crystal’s notion (2006), can meet and share different topics of interest, have incredibly gained greater popularity in recent times and captured the concern of most people worldwide because of the variety of the striking services that they afford to its subscribers.

The growth of SNSs is chiefly linked with the advent of Web 2.0 technologies which have touched all sectors of humans’ social lives and altered the course of humanity. They are displaying astonishing consecutive updates since their ubiquity, as they are being endorsed so fast by millions of users from various strings of social order around the globe. Undeniably, these sites are operating as communal venues for the construction of an assortment of virtual communities which allow its online members to sustain and retain aspects of sociability, important connections with others, hospitality, compassion and support (Parks, 2011). It was also disclosed that among the major reasons that push individuals to adhere to online communities is the freedom to convey beliefs and the search for social support (Herring, 1996). In this respect, one may say that the cyberspace is liable to afford its visitors a suitable and comfortable environment, especially for those who look for toughening their social bonds with others and self-representation too.

Moreover, it is worth noting that such online SNSs sustain both the upholding of pre-existing social relations and the construction of new connections (Ellison et al., 2007), along with endowing its online users with an aptitude for surfing freely and forming selective personalized digital characters, either imagined or real ones. Hence, active subscribers to these digital sites are able to make connections with other active users easily, having in mind

many communicative purposes like making new relationships and sharing confidential information (Lenhart and Madden, 2007). Said differently, these aspects of socialization have in fact made these screen-based sites not just mere sorts of CMC, but they have turned out to be 'social' in nature since they are deeply-rooted in people's day-to-day social practices. This asserts that when interacting on these sites, people tend to live in social groups rather than in isolation. In this respect, Das and Sahoo (2011) state that "online social networking is a type of virtual communication that allows people to connect with each other. This concept arises from basic need of human beings to stay together in groups forming a community" (p.222). Besides that, SNSs like Facebook have in fact provided a chance to make use of the Internet as an expansion of real-life social interactions and to track other individuals' ways of living moment by moment (Boyd and Ellison, 2007; ul Haq and Chand, 2014). In this respect, SNSs are functioning as empowering tools of social communion as they provide virtual spaces for individuals to meet online in a rather less time-consuming pace and without any socio-cultural, political, linguistic and geographical restrictions; making up, therefore, vast heterogeneous technologically-based communities.

According to Boyd (2011), people generally subscribe to SNSs in order to get socialized with their friends and associates, to share information, and to see and be seen by others. Likewise, enthusiasts of such web-based communities are able to publish multimedia contents about themselves including their profile names and snapshots, share different textual contents, and interacting by means of sending private as well as public messages (Shen et al, 2013). In addition, they are also able to enlarge the circle of their own networks of friends as such forms of communication technologies authorize the formation of different relations with people across the world and from all diverse walks of life. Indeed, SNSs have gained greater popularity in a rather short period of time thanks to the assorted multimedia services they afford, its ease of subscription and access anytime/anywhere besides being quite flexible in terms of usage and navigation.

Interestingly, networking sites are fairly acknowledged as being effective virtual spaces where people can find leisure and satisfy their needs due to the salient features that distinguish these sites from other forms of CMC. In this respect, Boyd (2014) argued that networked public environments produce affordances of perseverance, visibility, spreadability, and searchability. On the one hand, online networking-based services are rather persistent in the sense that cyber communication is rather durable as online contents can be viewed, stored and reviewed when and where necessary. In view of that, visibility can therefore be achieved by potential viewers, without considering the limitations of time and space. On the other

hand, spreadability and searchability of SNSs emphasize the ability and the potential of online members to share and get pieces of information without any geographical limits. Because of these exceptional characteristics, SNSs can thus amplify potential audiences, by going across the boundaries of social settings and affording the probability in which hybrid societal environments are feasible (Boyd, 2014).

To sum up, the obsession with these networking sites, which have become integral parts of people's day-to-day social practices, have in fact fuelled the curiosity of researchers from various disciplines to understand how netizens' identities, beliefs, lifestyles, and their interpersonal relationships and networks are shaped in such virtual contexts, including language use of course. Moreover, the range of multimedia services and applications provided online including pictures, texts, audio-visual contents, graphical representations, etc have fairly strengthened the socialization and self-representation aspects of these sites, thanks to those intellectuals who have developed such various new modes of online communication inch by inch. Nowadays, Facebook is incontestably one of the major SNSs that has gained a marvellous worldwide popularity, as it enables its users to perform diverse activities once they get access to it using their own profiles.

2.2.3. Facebook

As revealed beforehand, the revolutionary creation of SNSs has unquestionably altered the course of human civilizations by allowing this latter to build a range of complex social networks and joining various virtually-constructed communities in the same time and from whatever place in the world. The aspects of connectedness, openness and socialization that the so-called 'Blue World', Facebook, has always offered to its visitors made this latter not just a mere website or a well-off institution that is gaining millions of dollars every day, but it has also become "a computerized human-based virtual universe that is deeply anchored into our lives" (Ghermaoui, 2017, p. 26). More importantly, this site was launched as an extension of globalization; a virtual community on which people can interact and know each other well on a global dimension.

Moreover, people can now create their accounts easily in order to join Facebook as they can use either their real identities or fictional ones in a very short period of time and without any costs. In doing so, Facebook users are then able to transmit their real-life social experiences to others, maintain pre-existing relationships and building new ones locally or universally. Hence, Facebook is functioning as a powerful social networking tool that is

allowing its users to create public and private profiles to interact with individuals who are parts of their expanded social network (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). In this respect, the world has predominantly converted into a global village along with the emergence of SNSs like Facebook as this latter

..strengthened the world's global village character. Geographical distances play non ever-increasing role in our lives given the possibility of being in the same cyberspace, whatever our geographical location might be. Maintaining contact does not depend on geographical proximity anymore, what does count, though, is internet availability

(Horváth, 2014, p.86)

As far as its history is concerned, Facebook was launched for the first time on February 2004 as a social networking website under the supervision of a Harvard undergraduate named Mark Zuckerberg along with three of his classmates. The term 'Facebook' is originally linked with the pamphlets that some Harvard undergraduates handed over to other students at the start of the year in order to be acquainted with each other well. These pamphlets included bits of information related, for instance, to the place of origin, main concerns, high school, pictures and a photograph of a summer pastime of each student. The main concern was then to enable Harvard university students to keep in touch with each other by aggregating them all together in one virtual community on which they can find most of the personal details about other members just after somebody write their names in the research engine. Surprisingly, the potential of Facebook started to gather pace just few months later and became very popular and accessible to other high school students in the United States of America.

Surprisingly, with the production of more advanced smartphones, Facebook, as a website, became no longer restricted to computers and laptops, as it has been offered as an 'application' for android systems along with other services such as Messenger. This latter should be installed in parallel with Facebook application on smartphones so that users can make conversations with their online friends easily. In view of that, the arrival of smartphones' technologies has been considered as a driving force behind the mounting popularity of Facebook nowadays; as each holder of such devices is more likely to create a Facebook account with different purposes in his/her mind.

Since the year of its ubiquity, Facebook has gone through various technical updates in order to satisfy the needs of its users and attract more clients from different socio-cultural backgrounds, age categories and locations at the global scale. Today, new subscribers to Facebook are required first to create their own profiles (referred to as ‘the wall’ formerly) using either their email addresses or phone numbers in addition to a password so that to log in the site. As far as the profile data are concerned, the participants are rather free to choose what to say about themselves as they can subscribe using the real-life identities or fake ones, without any restrictions from the Facebook administration. The profile data consists of personal information (this includes the name of the user, place of residence, gender, professional experience, date of birth, social status, etc), contact information (phone number and/or email address), and pictures (profile and cover photos). After that, subscribers are required to make a list of some online friends by sending and/or receiving friend requests from other active users, and making selections concerning their favourite movies, music, emissions, books, sports, games, etc. In order to widen the scope of their fresh profiles, users can visit and join various groups and/or pages that attract them the most, to become followers, or they can even create ones of their own.

In fact, Facebook groups and pages are also considered as some kinds of profiles, constituted around a particular interest such as education, fashion, sports, cars, TV shows, etc. We may say that such sorts of profiles are likely to form online communities of practices since its members join and like them in order to negotiate specific matters, depending on the purposes of each group and page. Consequently, Facebook has developed into an up to date communication fashion whereby individuals can actualize their wants of connectedness and sharing information through the assorted tools and features that they are equipped with (Triana et al, 2020).

2.2.3.1. The Design Features of Facebook

Once the Facebook user finishes the creation of his/her personal profile in a way that he/she likes better, the first thing that appears on the screen right after logging into Facebook is the homepage. This latter “includes a news feed that contains information on the latest changes in the profile of other friends and status updates that display Facebook users’ activities, photos, and other interesting features” (Triana et al, 2020, p. 02). Said differently, the homepage displays what the user and his/her friends have posted, shared/exchanged, commented on, reacted to, and even where they have been tagged by others. In addition to

this, it shows the latest publications of the groups and pages that the user has already joined and liked respectively. In fact, diverse contents are likely to appear on the homepage including pictures, texts, videos, events, direct videos, a marketplace where people can expose their products for sale, games, others' birthdays and travelling, etc. In a similar vein, Facebook has recently added the feature of 'stories' which allows the user to upload multimedia contents concerning his/her daily activities and hobbies as others can also comment on or just react to others' stories which appear on their homepages too.

Another quite interesting feature of Facebook is probably the interrogative sentence '*What's on your mind?*' that emerges at the top of the homepage whenever we get access to our Facebook personal profiles. This sentence is in fact an indication that through this networking tool, individuals can contentedly transmit their ideas, beliefs, and feelings in the real world to others by updating their status in the virtual context each time in order to gain solidarity, support, and feedback, or, for spreading news, hash tags, and knowledge, or just for leisure and fun. This also indicates that this platform promotes for self-expression and the freedom of speech. However, if this latter was meant to sponsor for racism, hate, or other sorts of offensive speech, the user will be exposed for severe consequences like blocking his/her Facebook profile.

Moreover, today's social network communication on Facebook platform is taking a variety of forms. It is further deemed as a "mid way between text-based CMC and video-based CMC" (Bodomo, 2010, p.315). By way of explanation, it can be based on the exchange of text-based contents and pictures, making voice and/or video calls, and exchanging audio recordings of the participants' speech via the discussion forum (inbox) as in the case of instant messaging application, Messenger. As far as this latter is concerned, messages can be sent and received confidentially since such application allows for the exchange of online contents either in 'one-to-one' or 'one-to-many' modes. That is to say, Messenger does not involve the communication between two participants only, but it can also occur between more than two online friends, standing on the fact that group discussions can also be formed on Messenger as many friends can gather online around a joint enterprise.

As far as synchronicity is concerned here, there seems to be, however, a kind of overlap since Facebook, on the one hand, can be synchronous as in the case of instant messaging and it may include also the case when participants write successive replies to others' comments simultaneously about a given updated status. On the other hand, asynchronous communication on Facebook, which takes place in a delayed time, includes some cases like when users comment on others' posts not at the same time as this latter has

been published, or when they send private messages to others and this latter are offline or quite busy to reply if they were online. So, interactivity on Facebook is dynamic in the sense that it is based on the users' active participation in several online communicative practices, thanks to its developers who have attached all CMC modes within this site.

Above all things, networking remains the principal feature of SNSs in general and Facebook in particular since it sustains and maintains offline as well as online friendships. In this vein, online users are able to build virtual networking communities by means of sending/accepting friend requests, in addition to joining various Facebook groups and pages (Zahali, 2020). Consequently, Facebook users are then capable of managing the bulk of their networks because of their capability of sending friendship requests to other members and choosing to accept or to reject others' invitations (Davenport, et al., 2014). In fact, the networking feature of Facebook gives emphasis not only to the formation of novel online connections, but it encompasses also the spread of real-life associations into the digital environments by preserving pre-existing connections.

As a matter of fact, Facebook enables its clients to create online communities in which they can negotiate different issues, thanks to Facebook's stunning interactional affordances. According to Komito (2011), Parks (2011), and Hogan (2010), a virtual community is a kind of network that is formed within a social network of people through the deployment of particular social media and which is neither confined by geographical nor political limits. That is to say, the virtual communities, which mainly come out as a result of social networking on Facebook, tend to emerge from the requirements of a compilation of individuals who have a shared tendency to exchange views within the digital world. Thus, with a good deal of individuals spending much time in the cyberspace, such regular social networking will certainly lead to the construction of online communities typified by their distinctive norms of interaction and specific aims. In this respect, Danet and Herring (2007) perceive "Internet users as members to one or more speech communities who bring to their online encounters shared knowledge, values, and expectations for linguistic interaction" (p.07).

As far as the notion of virtual community is concerned, this latter was in fact popularized by Rheingold (1993) who defines it as "social aggregations that emerge from the net when enough people carry on (...) public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feelings, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace" (p.5). In view of this definition, being a member of a community is no longer necessitating one's physical closeness to others nor face-to-face interactions between them, standing on the fact that

individuals can virtually belong to various communities at the same time, thanks to the WWW. What is counted, as far as the above definition is concerned, is the frequent and ongoing interactional practices of the groups online members instead.

Moreover, it is worth noting that the notion of virtual/online communities in CMC-based research has been defined differently by different theorists, ranging from comprehensive definitions such as “a group of people who interact in a virtual environment” (Preece, et al., 2003, p. 1023) to the detection of the most common parameters that define the frameworks of such Internet-based communities. According to some CMC researchers like Baym (1998, 2000, 2003); Androutsopoulos (2003b); McLaughlin, Osborne and Smith (1995); Jones (1997); Castells (2000); Porter (2004); Herring (2004); and Preece Maloney-Krichmar (2005), the major conditions that lay the basis for the construction of a virtual community include: frequent interaction around a common enterprise or goal; the assignment of social roles; hierarchies and mutual standards; a shared history; and a self-awareness of dissimilarity from other groupings (Cited in Androutsopoulos, 2006). Hence, the cohesion of an online group is based on certain criteria including language use, group identity affiliation and membership, the nature of social distances between individuals, and the customs to which the group members should stick to.

In view of the abovementioned states of affairs, the formation of well consistent heterogeneous online communities in the digital world does not rely heavily on the physical co-presence of participants as much as its traditional counterparts do. Today, group memberships, identities, values, principles of linguistic interaction and sense of belonging have all been affected by and adapted to the virtual contexts, where networking is also possible with people living overseas through the medium of language, and thus, allowing for the creation of rather global and socio-culturally wide-ranging online communities with specific orientations. To achieve this, online participants rely, for the most part, on language as a powerful tool in the creation and persistence of such sorts of communities in the digital world, as it enables its users to construct and negotiate various relationships and identities, regardless of their physical absence.

Therefore, for the sake of understanding how virtual communities operate, it is worth taking into account their “consistent and distinctive language practices” that consist of group-specific glossary, forms of non-verbal interactions, humour, and genre (Baym, 2003, p.1016). In fact, linguistic-related issues in CMC studies have evoked interdisciplinary controversial debates among researchers, standing on the fact that the advent of communication technologies has tremendously altered and revolutionized language use in the digital

environments, as this becomes rather more salient when text-based discourse is considered. As far as the research objectives are concerned, the next section is thus devoted for the description of the major innovative text-based linguistic features of online social networking communication among Algerian Facebook users.

2.2.3.2. Linguistic Features of Facebook Communication

The ubiquity of Internet-based interactive services like SNSs have not only given legitimacy to the construction of the so-called ‘online communities’ where offline as well as online memberships are sustained, but it has also brought a significant influence on the socio-cultural and linguistic aspects of people’s daily practices. When getting access to the virtual world, online users are likely to be affected by others’ ways of thinking, their lifestyles and socio-cultural identities; as such impact may result in the hybridisation, alteration, or deterioration of one’s authentic socio-cultural identity through time. More importantly, the language that humans have always communicated by in their traditional face-to-face interactions has been also affected by the ubiquity of communication technologies of Web 2.0, especially those equipped with text-based interactional forums and attractive multimedia tools as in the case of Facebook. Actually, the integration of such sorts of media into people’s lives has led to the appearance of certain radical changes as well as innovations in the linguistic practices emerging in online text-based discourse; either to overcome the limitations of technology on the one hand, or to compensate the loss of non-verbal cues and paralinguistic displays on the other hand.

Without any doubt, Facebook has become today an integral part in people’s day-to-day interactional practices because of the salient affordances and multimedia services that it offers to its users as elucidated earlier. Regardless of being relatively low-cost and simple in terms of usage, it is an open access platform in the sense that it is not designed for certain social categories like literati, the rich or youngsters, but any mature human being, regardless of its background, can surf on Facebook. In addition to this, this site is playing an integral role at the personal, interpersonal, local, and global scales, for the reason that it has not only bridged that gap between communities with different socio-cultural, religious, political, and linguistic heritage, but it has also reinforced people’s sense of belonging, self-awareness, and sociability; besides the construction and preservation of new connections and pre-existing ones.

More importantly, the rapidly wide usage of SNSs in general and Facebook in particular has in fact led to the emergence of fresh digital-based linguistic behaviours that have never been evident before. As far as text-based communication is concerned, Barthon and Lee (2013) assert in this respect that online users are becoming enthusiastic to easily produce multimodal text-based contents when communicating with others, as they are able to mix up languages, pictures, and videos besides their ability of having a good deal of control over other significant textual components like colour, graphic design, and font.

Furthermore, understanding the mechanisms of multimodal text-based online communication on Facebook, where participants may be anonymous in certain cases but physically absent, might not be as successful as face-to-face communication, as meanings might not fully conveyed if participants did not clarify their communicative intentions well. Therefore, features of unconventional spellings including omission of vowel sounds for shortenings and contraction, the non-standard and deficient usage of punctuation marks and capitalisation, distinctive signs, transliteration (script switching/fusing), and repetition of some letters, besides other semiotic resources like emoticons, pictures and colours are usually employed along with language in order to contextualise meanings and avoid misinterpretations between participants. In doing so, participants tend to “sacrifice several writing features for the sake of reaching a speech-like interaction” (Zahali, 2020, p.70), especially as far as non-verbal cues (facial expression, voice tone, etc) are concerned since they might not be effectively communicated in written discourse.

Therefore, understanding why hybrid text-based linguistic behaviours are formed in the way they appear on the screen entails taking into one’s consideration the nature of the digital and socio-cultural contexts in which they are used, as well as the functions of various innovative linguistic features and multimodal ingredients since such features are most often used to accomplish particular roles within online discourse.

2.2.3.2.1. Non-Conventional Spellings

In order to reach a speech-like discourse, there seems to be a relatively growing tendency among Facebook users to violate the norms of formal writing at the level of orthography. The frequent manifestation of certain unusual spellings observed online in the text-based discourse of participants reflects the extent to which communication technologies revolutionized language use online, by making this latter hybrid and informal. In fact, the

non-conventional spelling of words is classically linked with mobile phone ‘texting’ (Farina and Lyddy, 2011), which is unanimously referred to as Short Message Service (SMS). Thus, the users of such text-based communicative medium were required to find out a strategy in order to overcome the insufficiency of the writing space (only 160 characters) on the one hand, and to reduce time and typing efforts on the other hand. Since then, the language of text messaging started to develop in a different style, mainly as a “mode of expression/communication that uses mostly colloquial speech or unusual adapted vocabulary words, unconventional abbreviations and distinctive signs i.e. it is no longer considered as a standard language” (Berrabah, 2014, p.1). However, the scope of such linguistic practices has been enlarged more than even before, as Algerian Facebook users tend to make use of such text-based communicative strategies to serve different functions and motives.

The best example of non-conventional spellings is illustrated when online participants tend to spell words as they are pronounced without caring about their formal structures. This case is generally referred to as letter-phone correspondence as in ‘**blokage**’ (blocage), ‘**dosier**’ (dossier), **diplom** (diplôme), ‘**niide**’ (need), ‘**taime**’ (time), ‘**l'emploi**’ (l’emploi), ‘**asque**’ (ask), ‘**wi**’ (oui), ‘**li**’ (les) etc. Such typographical errors may occur unconsciously when interlocutors tend to be as quick as possible in typing their messages, especially if the topic of the conversation and the addressee are more important than the code itself. Additionally, the (morpho-) phonological adaptation of non-conventional spellings and the borrowing of certain symbols and/or letters that do not originally represent certain sounds, as shown in the above examples, do not reflect the linguistic deficiency of users, but they signify their understanding of letter/symbol-sound correspondence (Farina and Lyddy, 2011).

Yet, these sorts of typos may also indicate the users’ linguistic incompetency, that’s why some smartphones’ programmers have recently developed and incorporated an orthography-based auto corrector service within the devices’ keyboards. This service enables texters to select well-formed and previously used items from the list displayed at the top of the keyboard during the typing process so that to allow users to deliver a coherent content to their interlocutors.

2.2.3.2.2. Reduced Word Forms

As far as word formation processes are concerned, Algerian Facebook users tend to put into their informal text-based interactional practices some morphological features like shortenings and contractions. Hence, middle, as well as final vowel sounds are most often omitted by users as they prefer to employ, either fully or partially, abbreviated words instead. More importantly, such morphological processes are rather salient when the Romanized Arabic (writing Arabic using Latin scripts) is considered, since this unusual written version of Arabic facilitates the formation of abbreviations and acronyms more than when using Arabic scripts to write Arabic. Years ago, the unavailability of the possibility to communicate in Arabic using its own scripts urged many Algerian online social networkers and even SMS users to adopt Latin scripts to represent their day-to-day online linguistic practices. Consequently, the production of shortened forms of new or pre-existing lexical words has long been associated with Latinized Arabic, as many word formation processes have been extensively observed online in this hybrid online variety for the most part.

In spite of the fact that SNSs like Facebook do not generally impose a limited set of characters on its users to write their messages as in the case of SMS, people still adhere to certain text-based shortcuts so that to be as quick as verbal discourse. This is rather quite significant when synchronous private informal instant messaging is concerned, since the involved participants may not pay attention to the structure of their messages as much as they may do to the meanings that they want to convey through the forms that they consciously or unconsciously choose. The major morphological processes observed online can be summarized as follow:

- **Shortenings:** in many cases, online users tend to drop initial, middle, and final letters from popular and widely used words of their day-to-day online interaction such as ‘**prof**’ (professeur) , ‘**metho**’ (methodology), ‘**ni**’ (‘rani’ i.e. I am), ‘**civil**’, ‘**civ**’ (civilization), ‘**max**’ (maximum), ‘**att**’ (attend), ‘**pub**’ (publication), etc.
- **Contractions:** Unlike the first case, online users frequently remove vowel sounds from words for contraction. In spite of such non-standard spellings, participants can easily figure out their meanings within the context of interaction. Moreover, vowel sounds may be partially omitted as in ‘**khsni**’ (khasni i.e. ‘I need’), ‘**yrslna**’, (yerselna i.e. ‘send them to us’), ‘**sawrh**’ (sawerhom i.e. took a picture of them), ‘**wa7d**’ (wa7ed, i.e. somebody), or fully dropped as in ‘**grp**’ (group), ‘**slm**’ (salam i.e. peace),

‘**msngr**’ (messenger), ‘**mrc**’ (merci), ‘**bnsr**’ (bonsoir), ‘**nrml**’ (normal), ‘**bzzf**’ (bezzaf i.e. ‘much’ or ‘too much’), ‘**plz**’ (please), etc.

- **Acronyms and Initialism:** when communicating online, participants tend to use reduced forms of given long phrases and expressions by writing only the initial letter of each word constituting that long phrase or expression. This phenomenon is quite more salient when Latin scripts are considered, although such instances are seldom observed online in Arabic letters. For example, ‘**svp**’ (S’il vous plait), ‘**stp**’ (S’il tu plait), ‘**psq**’ (par ce que), ‘**fb**’ (facebook), ‘**esq**’ (est ce que), ‘**lol**’ (laughing out loud), etc.
- **Morpho-phonological Adaptation Process:** as far as this text-based online feature is concerned, users tend to juggle the internal structure of many words as they favour adopting them morphologically and phonologically. This process is in fact a unique fresh type of contraction as it is likely to save time and typing effort. To do this, users can employ a variety of symbols (mainly numbers) and other letters that phonetically correspond to certain sounds within the original words as in ‘**b4u**’ (before you), ‘**ur**’ (your), ‘**thnx**’ (thanks), ‘**c**’ (c’est), ‘**2r1**’ (de rien), ‘**cu l8r**’ (see you later), etc.

Although they may often indicate the lack of the grammatical knowledge to spell words correctly, it is possible to assert in this respect that those aforementioned morphological processes do not essentially signify orthographic blunders and users’ deficiency in spellings, but such non-standard typographic forms may instead reflect the users’ competency in adjusting offline language in a way that suits the novelty of the digital context.

2.2.3.2.3. Transliteration

As its name indicates, transliteration is a purely orthographic notion which basically stands for the practice of writing the words of a given language variety using different scripts, or simply the alphabets of another language. The manifestation of such hybrid feature in the online text-based discourse of people was in fact motivated by the so called ‘technologically-marginalized languages’ (Zahali, 2020), in the sense that not all languages were represented online by the advent of the Internet as in the case of Arabic. That is to say, many languages with non-Roman alphabets were marginalized at the early developmental stages of the Internet, which urged the users of this latter to adopt the Latin scripts in order to symbolize their languages online in spite of such technological constraint.

As far as the context of the current research is concerned, Algerian online users often transliterate when they interact on Facebook either when they write posts and comments, or when they send and receive private messages. Before the absorption of Arabic scripts in the keyboards' writing system, the usage of Latin scripts to communicate in Arabic on Facebook was very dominant among Algerian users so that to overcome the barriers of technology, and this has given birth to the Romanized Arabic (hereafter RA). In this respect, Aboeizz (2009, p.02) describes the RA as “a written form of Arabic that uses Latin or Roman characters as an alternative orthographic form of Arabic language, which normally employs Arabic script” (Quoted in Zahali, 2020, p.90). This variety is considerably omnipresent in online communication and it was implemented for the first time as a linguistic stratagem in order to prevail over the marginalisation of the technological industry (Palfretman and Al-khalil, 2003; Aboeizz, 2009; Gordon, 2011; Tagg, 2015). In light of this, the users of this hybrid online variety rely heavily on the phonetic features that Arabic and Latin sounds have in common as it has no standard or codified system of orthography. Besides that, the way users tend to spell words depends, for the most part, on the extent to which they are familiar with Latin scripts. Hence, users whose writing level is quite good in the French or the English languages for instance may find it easier to use RA more than those who are competent only in the Arabic language.

Standing on the fact that certain Arabic speech sounds lack analogous sounds in the Roman scripts, individuals usually draw on numbers and other signs, together with Latin letters, in order to compensate the lack of those sounds in the Romanized writings of Arabic (Palfreyman and Al-khalil, 2003; Aboeizz, 2009; Gordon, 2011; Tagg, 2015). For instance, the numbers ‘3’, ‘9’, ‘7’, ‘6’, and ‘1’ are most often used to represent the missing sounds in the writings of RA, mainly (ع), (ق), (ح), (ط), and the glottal stop ‘ء’ respectively. This latter is often represented by ‘a’ in the RA and this depends on the user’s choice. Moreover, the Arabic pharyngeal sound (خ) /χ/ is most often represented by either number ‘5’ or the symbol ‘kh’, while the sound (غ) /ʁ/ is most of the time represented by the sign ‘gh’. Interestingly, the adoption of these numbers and distinctive signs in the online RA reflects the extent to which informal text-based online communication is helping the accommodation of colloquial day-to-day-spoken varieties (as in the case of Algerian dialectal Arabic) to the domain of writing, in spite of the fact that such low varieties have been stigmatized by language planners.

However, the users of Arabic online still adhere to the utilization of Roman scripts when communicating online, even with the latest integration of Arabic and other non-Roman letters into the keyboards' typing languages. More importantly, Algerian texters often spell foreign words (as in the case of French or English languages) using Arabic scripts, as this phenomenon is quite observed among younger educated generation on Facebook.

Today, linguists are thus more inclined to search for the factors that have lead to the preservation of the RA and what affects the user's selection of a given script over the other, instead of a mere descriptive analysis of these online linguistic phenomena. In this vein, Aboelezz (2009) thinks that the persistent manifestation of RA in online communication might be an indication that users have been familiarized with it, and has turned out to be a logo for a fresh teenage identity, while Tagg (2015) believes that the online Romanisation of language varieties bears a kind of social and/or personal importance. Zahali (2013), on the other hand, believes that the choice of the scripts is also correlated with the gender, region, and the educational level of the user. Likewise, Mostari (2018) asserts that the Algerian SMS users still prefer the use of Latin scripts in writing their messages in spite of the existence of a choice to choose Arabic scripts in their mobile phones. She states further that the main reason behind this choice may be linked to the sum of the exposure that the Algerian speakers have to the French language, and hence to its alphabets, unlike in some Middle East countries where Arabic scripts are commonly used instead. In brief, transliteration is no longer employed in the digital context to triumph over the technological marginalisation only, but it is being governed by various socio-cultural factors.

2.2.3.2.4. Non-Standard Usage of Punctuation Marks

As far as this feature is concerned, Facebook users often violate the norms of formal writings either through the omission of punctuation marks and the incorrect usage of capitalized letters, or via the exaggerated usage of punctuation marks and repeating letters in order to convey a specific paralinguistic cue. In the former case, deficiency in punctuation may result from the users' need to be as rapid as spoken discourse, since participants might be psychologically affected by the content of their messages more than their forms. In spite of this, readers of informal online contents can easily differentiate between what is a question from what is a statement or an exclamation even with the absence of the appropriate

punctuation marks. In a similar vein, the lack of capitalization of initial words and proper nouns may also result from the need to type both hastily and quite efficiently (Zitouni, 2013).

Regarding the second case where people deliberately exaggerate in the use of punctuation marks and certain letters when they interact on Facebook, the aim is either to highlight an important part in the information or to deliver a specific emotion and/or reaction towards something. This engrosses an inventive deployment of punctuation, as “constructing paralinguistic markers quite ingeniously as well as breaking orthographic conventions in an inventive manner appears to be a personal stylistic choice” (Kortti, 1999, p.15. Quoted in Mostari, 2018, p.15). Hence, online text-based communication is not deficient when paralinguistic markers are considered, but it has developed its special stylistic ways in transmitting the non-verbal cues that fit the nature of the digital context. Hence, the exaggerated use of punctuation mark and letters like (??????,, !!!!!, hhhhh, hahahaha, mmmm, xxxxxx, etc) in addition to the use of fully capitalized words or phrases like (j'ai dit NO, I said FINAL marks, etc) are most often used to communicate a particular paralinguistic cue such as anger, self-determination, uproar, disagreement, laughing, sarcasm, etc. As a result, netizens have rapidly adapted to the digital environments, thanks to the graphical semiotic online resources that communication technologies has ever afforded to its users to communicate a non-verbal content.

Amusingly, the language of online text-based communication is rather informal as it is not constrained by certain fixed norms of correct usage. From time to time, innovative linguistic practices float to the surface thanks to the users' linguistic creativity on the one hand, and the nature of digital context in which language is used on the other hand. This can be best illustrated in the fashionable innovative use of punctuation marks besides other symbols at the early beginnings of text-based communication technologies in order to represent particular paralinguistic displays such as sorrow :(, happiness :) , a wink ;) , crying:'-(, anger >:-(, etc. These symbols have been updated later on to become known as emoticons, emojis and stickers so that to represent diverse facial expressions, feelings, and attitudes in a more advanced manner.

2.2.3.2.5. Emoticons

The major question that has evoked hot debates among researchers is probably: how can text-based online communication be as successful as face-to-face communication if paralinguistic cues are hardly achievable in the former? Standing on the fact that non-verbal cues play a significant role in transmitting and interpreting the discourse of verbal communication, text-based CMC discourse has in turn given birth to a variety of graphical representations which correspond to the diverse moods of people's facial expression that are of a paramount importance in conveying real meanings and attitudes, the same as body language does in face-to-face communication.

According Derks et al., (2007), the usage of emoticons in CMC can, at least partially, accomplish the same functions as non-verbal behaviours do in face-to-face interactions. Since they are likely to function as non-verbal substitutes, suggestive of facial expression, they may perhaps adjoin a paralinguistic ingredient to the content of a message (Derks et al., 2007).

Today, online users are no longer constrained by the keyboard's limited set of symbols in order to convey paralinguistic displays such as anger, sadness, astonishment, disappointment, happiness, sarcasm, etc to others and strengthening their messages, although it was somehow unattainable to express those cues in the contexts of text-based online discourse. Hence, scripts, punctuation marks, numbers, and other particular symbols used to be joined together in innovative ways so that to create what is labelled as 'emoticons' in order to substitute the lack of facial expression (Baron, 2002; Thurlow et al., 2004; Crystal, 2006a). These semiotic resources "may be used to emphasize or clarify one's feelings but also to soften a negative tone and to regulate the interaction, just as smiles and frowns do in daily life" (Derks et al., 2008, p. 380). On Facebook, emoticons do function as effective communicative means for Netspeakers in order to express assorted feelings and sentiments in one message (Mustafa et al., 2015).

Since their ubiquity in 1982 up till now, emoticons have been extensively employed in diverse online text-based interactional forums like Facebook and its instant messaging application Messenger. Lee et al. (2016) have identified three types of emoticons which have been essentially categorized them according to their evolution and outward appearance. The first kind refers to those facial expressions and emotions that used to be represented through 'smileys' in which certain punctuation marks and other symbols were combined together in creative ways as shown earlier. Then, simple illustrative icons of people's diverse facial expressions (referred to as emojis) were introduced later on. These coloured emojis are quite

precise and communicatively more effective than the former kind since they nearly cover all the emotional moods, besides many other symbols that represent many things apart from humans' emotions. As far as the third kind is concerned, sticker emojis have been added just recently. Unlike 'smileys' and 'emojis' which are likely to occur at whatever position within the written discourse, stickers always occur individually, and can be described as functional painted animated graphics that can sufficiently represent assorted attitudes and reactions online; even without the need to integrate a written piece of discourse along with. The table beneath illustrates best three kinds of emoticons.

Text-based Emoticons	Icon-style Emoticons	Sticker Emoticons
:-}{ :'(:-# 8-) :-) :-(:) :(:*) :0 !-) :-X ;-) :'-(:-D ;) @}->--		

Table 2.2 Types of Emoticons

As a matter of fact, the latest updates of emoticons are in fact the by-product of the new communication technologies, unlike the non-standard use of punctuation marks and other symbols which were human-made products in essence. More importantly, emoticons are commonly comprehensible at the worldwide level, regardless of the kind of language being used in the digital context (Ross, 2006). In essence, they are more likely to designate the advance of using symbols, colours, drawings, etc. in online text-based communication, mainly in contexts where the use of language alone becomes an obstacle in clarifying particular feelings and/or messages. Nevertheless, recent studies attest that emoticons are more than mere graphical representations used for the sake of clarifying sentiments and inserting a non-verbal cue within discourse (Lee et al., 2016; Tigwell and Flatla, 2016). Thus, they can clear up contents, regulate the tone, and strengthen the message (Rodrigues et al., 2017), besides the ability to offer visions about the characters of their users (Wall et al., 2016). In short, emoticons are functional paralinguistic visual tools that can boost online social interactions and self-expressions by affording supplementary other personal, socio-cultural, and contextual cues further than what is apparent in the textual message.

2.2.3.2.6. Code Switching/Mixing and Borrowing

As a matter of fact, the phenomenon of code switching/mixing (hereafter CS/CM) and borrowing are no longer associated with verbal discourse, standing of the fact that those individuals who are able to code switching/mix and borrow when they interact verbally are likely to do so when they engage in an informal online communicative event through a particular CMC text-based mode like SMS, Messenger, Viber, emails, etc. As far as the Algerian context is concerned, many researchers like Zitouni (2013), Berrabah (2014), Abdelhamid (2018), and Achili (2019), Zahali (2020), besides the researcher's online participant observation in the current investigation, have proved that such language alternation phenomena are quite apparent in the online written discourse of Algerians, mainly in SMS, emails, and Facebook. Hence, the advent of diverse text-based communication technologies has greatly fuelled an interdisciplinary academic interest in written CS/CM, in spite of the fact that much of pioneering models and theories to CS which attempted to explain the socio-cultural, structural, psychological, and the pragmatic dimensions of this language contact phenomenon have resulted from the early scholarly works on its oral counterpart.

As its name indicates, CS is an appealing language contact phenomenon which is commonly referred to as the practice of switching back and forth from one code to another in a given naturally occurring interactional event, as the switch may be performed at different structural levels like words, phrases, clause, and sentences. In the relevant literature, many theorists have attempted to define the notion of CS differently, but with minor disparities for sure. In this respect, Myers-Scotton (1993a, p.03) defines it as “the selection by bilinguals or multilinguals of forms from an embedded variety (or varieties) in utterances of a matrix variety during the same conversation”. Moreover, Auer (1998, p.01) describes CS as “the alternating use of two or more “codes” within one conversational episode”. In a quite similar vein, CS is further conceptualized as “the free conscious simultaneous movement, shift back and forth, between various language varieties usually within discourse by the speaker or writer particularly at the phrase level to fill in either speech and/or writing gaps” (Berrabah, 2014. p.35). More importantly, CS may be also motivated by some socio-cultural and psychological factors in the sense that is it often used deliberately in casual speech/writing to execute and negotiate different communicative functions and social-pragmatic meanings for the people using it.

As far as the notion of CM is concerned, this latter is often used synonymously with CS in the sense that some researchers consider them as two sides of the same coin. However, others believe that CM takes place when bilinguals shift from one language variety; through which he/she inserts few words from the first language then switching to the second one and so on. Hudson (1996, p.53) states in this respect that CM is “a kind of linguistic cocktail-a few words of one language, then a few words of the other, then back to the first for a few more words and so on”. Yet, other scholars consider CS and CM as two dissimilar concepts standing on the idea that the former occurs at the inter-sentential (i.e. the sentence or clause) level while the latter arises at the intra-sentential (i.e. within the sentence, clause and phrase) level.

Borrowing is also regarded as one of the most appealing outcomes of language contact phenomena. Unlike CS which, most of the time, occurs in rather longer units of language like phrases and clauses, as it also requires its users to be relatively competent multi/bilinguals, the process of borrowing does not in fact entail these prerequisites, but it

...involves the adoption then, most of the time, the adaptation of single words into morpho-syntactic and phonological system of the other language without taking into consideration their sources. This means the integration of foreign words into the recipient -or host- language as if they belong to its native language system”

(Berrabah, 2014, p.38)

This means that the borrowed words are entirely exposed to a kind of structural assimilation at the level of phonological and morpho-syntactic systems of the host language as in the words “سبيطار” (hospital), “بوشطة” (post office), “كرطاب” (school bag), “بوطونة” (a button), “نكونيكتي” (I am surfing), etc. These French words have been adapted to the morpho-phonological system of the Algerian colloquial variety due to the long existence of the French colonization in the Algerian country. Hence, Algerian speakers tend to use many assimilated borrowed words in their day-to-day spontaneous interactions which became parts of their mother tongue language namely Algerian dialectal Arabic (hereafter ADA). In some cases, however, speakers tend to use the borrowed words as they appear in their original forms, without any sort of adaptation. In this respect, Thomason (2003) asserts that borrowing may also take place when a code-switched item tend to be used more and more frequently by

speakers until it becomes a normal ingredient of the host language. Either assimilated or not, a huge number of French words and phrases have been integrated in the lexicon of ADA.

Standing on this fact, we have exhaustively observed that borrowing is also taking place in the sphere of text-based CMD as in the case of Facebook communication in Algeria, as it may also be motivated by certain linguistic and even extra-linguistic factors. In light of our random web corpora, the table underneath illustrates the three main language contact phenomena as observed in online text-based communication on Facebook.

Language contact Phenomena	Illustrative text-based Facebook posts
Code Switching/ Code Mixing	<p>_Hi guys.. les inscriptions 1st master kesh khber alihom? (Eng/Fr/Ar CS)</p> <p>(Hi guys...Are there any news about the registrations of 1st year master?)</p> <p>تحية لكل عضو في القروب ان شاء الله تكونو كامل ملاح من فضلكم email تاع شاف ديبارتومو_</p> <p>(MSA/ADA/Eng/Fr CS)</p> <p>(Hi to every member in the group, hope that you are all doing well by God's will, please I need the email of the head of the department)</p>
Borrowing	<p>_Slm chkon li sotna man 9abal ycomonti nsa9sah</p> <p>(Peace be upon you, would the one who has graduated before comment so that to ask him)</p> <p>_Slm yadra afichaw planning ta3 master 1?</p> <p>(Peace be upon you, have they displayed the planning of Master one?)</p>

Table 2.3 Online text-based Instances of CS/CM and Borrowing

2.3. Description of the Sociolinguistic Situation in Algeria

It is worth noting that the current Algerian sociolinguistic situation is renowned for its diversity and complexity. This intricate linguistic landscape is historically credited as being an offshoot of a long history of successive invaders and conquerors who occupied the North of African continent as a whole and the Algerian country in particular. Due to its advantaged geographical location and natural resources, Algeria, besides some other Maghreb nations, were consecutively occupied by various civilizations and socio-cultural waves who settled

along the Mediterranean Basin like Berbers, the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Vandals, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Turkish, the Spanish, and finally the French. This has led to the proliferation of a diverse melting-pot linguistic situation characterizing the current speech repertoire of the Algerians, which is in fact the outcome of the profound socio-cultural contact between different identities and language varieties that are said to belong to dissimilar language families. Today, many words existing in Algerians' day-to-day spontaneous spoken regional dialects are in fact loanwords originating from different languages that have been present in Algeria during the early periods of colonialism.

More importantly, the same situation is now becoming quite more intricate as the contact between people from different socio-cultural backgrounds and geographical territories is no longer limited to traditional factors like colonialism, trade, migration, or mixed marriage. In the age of globalization, however, the contact between languages, and even the need to learn new varieties, is inevitable so that to meet the needs of the so-called 'global village', mainly at the socio-cultural, economic, political, and diplomatic levels. Hence, human communication has gone faster than even before thanks to the novel ways of online interaction afforded by the diverse modes of communication technologies that are affecting, to some extent, people's linguistic practices online as well as offline. As far as the Algerian context is concerned, a considerable significance has been given to foreign language teaching/learning like French, English, Spanish, German, etc in the Algerian educational system, for the sake of satisfying the needs of the world's recent challenges that the 'Arabisation¹' process could not fulfil.

In essence, this part aims at offering a brief description of the current Algerian sociolinguistic profile and the major historical, socio-cultural, and political factors that have led to the co-presence of genetically related and unrelated language varieties in the country, as well as to the existence of diverse linguistic behaviours and practices. This is quite compulsory since one of the major objectives of the current investigation is to assess people's attitudes towards language use on Facebook from a gender-related perspective. Hence, this part will first shed light on the history of the so-called linguistic diversity in Algeria, and then, it will tackle the major language varieties existing in the country. At last, the major outcomes of language contact phenomenon will be discussed with reference to the Algerian context

¹ A language planning policy that was first launched by the president Ben Bella (1963-1965) after independence as a means to regain the legitimate Arab-Islamic identity of the Algerian population by eradicating all what is related to French.

such as bilingualism, multilingualism, diglossia, and language alternation processes like CS and CM.

2.3.1. The Linguistic Diversity in Algeria: a Brief Historical Overview

Algeria has become the largest country in the Arab-Islamic world in general and the African Continent in particular with a surface of 2,831,741 square Km since the subdivision of the Sudan in 2011. It is situated in the north-middle part of African Continent along the Mediterranean Sea; with a shoreline of approximately 1200 Km. Algeria is bordered by the Mediterranean basin to the North, Tunisia and Libya to the East; Morocco, Western Sahara, and Mauritania to the West, and by Niger and Mali to the South across the Sahara desert. In fact, its strategic geographical location exposed it to several exterior waves of invasions and colonialism, either for better or worse. As far as its population is concerned, there are about 43 million inhabitants (2021) living in Algeria, in which an ethnic amalgamation between Arabs and Berbers constitute the large majority of the population.

Historically speaking, Algeria was originally populated by the Berbers who are credited as being the indigenous natives of Northern Africa in general and Algeria in particular. They settled in tribes alongside the Mediterranean Sea, as they surprisingly succeeded to protect their Hermitic language (es) (referred to as Tamazight), their culture, customs and their national identity in spite of the successive waves of foreign conquests that they have witnessed since their first arrival to the land, namely the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Vandals, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Turks, the Spanish, and finally the French.

The Phoenician (also known as the Carthaginians), an antique Semitic assemblage, was the earliest civilization that took control of the land. They were merchants and traders who settled on the northern African shores around 1000 B.C, while the interior lands were left for the rebellious Berbers who planned to protect their cultural legacy and languages from abolition and assimilation into others' cultures. The Phoenicians used Punic; a Hamito-Semitic language that is related to both Hebrew and Arabic had little influence on the language of the Berbers. This latter was maintained in the countryside, in mountains and Sahara, while Punic was used in the cities.

Years after the Roman invasion to North Africa, Punic was substituted by Latin language and became the official language of the new dwellers after the fall of the Carthaginians. During the Roman period which lasted for five centuries, Berber was reserved in rural areas and has always been the spoken language of the nomads and peasants. Just like Punic, the Latin language had little influence on Berber. After five centuries of occupation,

the Roman Empire, being deteriorated by its inner crises, was devastated by the Vandals who were in turn conquered by the Byzantines in 533 AD who wanted to breathe life into the collapsed Roman dynasty.

By the late of the 7th and the early 8th centuries, the Arab conquests to the North of Africa marked a turning point in the history of the area, mainly on Berbers. Unlike the preceding religions and cultures, the introduction of Islam by the Arabs had extremely changed the character of the area as it had invasive lifelong upshots on the grand Maghreb land (Mostari, 2005). Hence, a new civilization, a new religion, language, and new culture were brought in, so that all nations of North Africa are labelled today as the Arab-Islamic World. In spite of the far-reaching attempts of the Arabization process that escorted the Muslim relocation to the land, the cultural and the linguistic heritage of the Berbers succeeded to survive in some regions, as their different dialects were also maintained up till now (Mostari, 2005).

In its recorded history, the Arab-Islamic conquest to North Africa took place during two major epochs. The first one, which had chiefly occurred in the 7th century, had been typified by peaceful attempts of Islamisation more than with Arabisation. In spite of the fact that all Northern African lands and Spain became under the rule of the Arabs during this period and through which the impact was purely religious rather than linguistic, Berber and its varieties remained the medium of interaction as its users represented the majority groups. In the second stage of conquest which took place in the 11th century, a large amount of Arab nomads migrated to North Africa, associated with nonviolent endeavours of Arabisation. This latter took nearly 13 centuries during which many Berber ethnic groups were gradually Arabised and Islamised, especially those who lived in urban areas, while those who moved to the hilly lands like Aures, Kabylia, and the Sahara protected their dialects from the influence of the Arabic language. Hence, most indigenous inhabitants became bilinguals as they embraced gradually this prestigious language for its strong alliance with the Islamic monarchy.

As a matter of fact, Berbers of North Africa, precisely in Algeria and Morocco, are still occupying those areas today where they succeeded to secure their ethnic identity and cultural heritage from the process of Arabisation. Quite amusingly, the Arabised Berbers of North Africa raised a cycle of luminous dynasties like the Rustamids, Fatimids, Idrissids, Zirids, and Almohads which have all contributed efficiently to the fortification of the socio-cultural as well as the linguistic heritage of the Maghreb region in general, and Algeria in particular (Mostari, 2005).

Moreover, the Spanish language also marked its presence in the North of Africa, and Algeria in particular, after the Islamisation and Arabisation of this latter and the fall down of all Berber dynasties that have dominated the territory for many centuries. The existence of the Spanish in North Africa was caused by the crucial warfare between Islam and Christianity which was in turn marked by the collapse of Granada in the late of the 15th century. As a consequence, the Spanish Muslims had to emigrate from Andalusia to find shelter in the Maghrebian coastal region. Therefore, the Spaniard troops conquered many coastal territories of the North African region. Being exposed to danger by the growth of Christian Europe, the North African cities called for the protection of the supreme Islamic rule at that time, the Ottoman Empire, as this latter reigned most of the inner lands of the Maghreb until the 19th century.

In spite of their long presence in the land which lasted for three centuries (1516-1830), the Turks had little linguistic influence on their protectorates. In fact, the former remained a detached overseas assemblage in Algeria and were not heavily assimilated into the lives of the natives. As a result, Berber and Arabic languages were preserved since language contact was not very common to the extent that it may cause long-term effects on the socio-cultural and linguistic identity of the Algerian population. The Ottoman Rule in Algeria ended by the French colonialism in 1830 who struggled to wipe out the Arab-Islamic identity and the linguistic heritage of the Algerians.

During the period of 132 years of colonialism, Algeria witnessed the presence of the French authorities who applied harsh and destructive policies for the sake of eradicating the national and socio-cultural identity of the Algerian people. Those policies were designed to serve the purpose of making Algeria, for its strategic position and resourceful lands, an expansion of France to the extent that it was labelled by the colonists '*L'Algérie Française*'. In fact, the French colonizer exercised severe socio-economic and linguistic practices upon the Algerian society so that to exterminate its Arab-Islamic values and the spirit of nationalism, in spite of the furious popular movements of resistance led by symbolic Algerian leaders like Emir Abdelkader, Cheikh El Mokrani, Cheikh Bouamama and many others.

To realize such goal, the French language was officialised in education; the teaching of Classical Arabic (hereafter CA) was restricted to traditional and religious schools since it represents the Islamic religion, and Koranic schools were destroyed and manipulated so that to avoid the arousing of any sort of national awareness among the Algerians. Subsequently the sociolinguistic situation of the Algerian society degraded as illiteracy and ignorance upgraded greatly. After gaining independence from France in July 5th 1962, the Algerian

leaders were faced with an urgent need to take the essential measures so that to restore the Arab-Islamic values of the Algerian population.

2.3.2.1. Algeria during the Post-Colonial Era

As a matter of fact, the socio-cultural as well as the linguistic matters were unquestionably the foremost interests of the newly independent Algerian government. Standing on the fact that language reflects the cultural heritage of a given social group, the Arabic language, mainly Classical Arabic, was chosen as a national and an official language among the existing varieties in the country since it represents the culture of all Arab-Muslim speaking communities and the language of Holy Koran. Thus, great efforts of Arabisation process (policy of Arabisation) were initiated in order to regain the status of Arabic in prestigious fields since its reputation was threatened, if not purged, by the French language and its socio-cultural norms. Such linguistic preference was “strongly encouraged through the foundation of free private schools, commonly known as Zaouia schools (rural Koranic schools), where CA have to be taught for restoring the pre-colonial personal identity together with Arabo-Islamic culture” (Berrabah, 2014, p.15).

As its name indicates, the Policy of Arabisation is a purely language planning activity which was enacted during the mandate of the president Ahmed Ben Bella (1963-1965) as a anti-colonial instrument to remove French along its socio-cultural norms from the sociolinguistic repertoire of the Algerian community and retain the legitimate values of this latter. This was declared in the first constitution during Ben Bella’s term of office in 1963 and it was announced further during the mandate of the president Houari Boumediene (1965-1978) by taking for granted CA as the only national and official language in the country. The policy was launched in all sectors like education, administration, justice, military, etc.

More importantly, it is worth pointing out that the Policy of Arabisation was chiefly oriented by certain ideological beliefs and attitudes. As mentioned before, decision makers were faced with the urgent task of retrieving back the authentic socio-cultural norms and the Islamic values of the Algerian Arab-Muslim population through the adoption of Arabic language as the only medium of interaction used in public and official domains. This manoeuvre was fundamentally fastened by the belief that the harmony of a nation can be solely assured through the adoption of a lone national language and, hence, multi/bilingualism was recognised as a menace that threatens the unity of the country (Zahali, 2020). In fact, this belief “regards Algeria as a monolingual country and such consideration ignores the linguistic richness, that various speech communities and the different ethnic groups that comprise the

Algerian society” (Berrabah, 2014, p.17). In other words, such ideology disagrees with the reality of qualifying Algeria as a bilingual nation or even the worthiness of being called a multilingual country (Berrabah, 2014). In this respect, acknowledging other existing varieties, according to the language planners of the post-colonial period, would cause a kind of socio-political division; while promoting only one official language would guarantee the unity of the nation.

Despite the fact that the Policy of Arabisation has at least minimized the status of the French language in the country, it, however, failed to cope with the demands of scientific research, technology and modernism. For many Algerian Francophones, CA, or even its simplified version namely Modern Standard Arabic (hereafter MSA), cannot fit contexts where the French language is more appropriate since this latter contains more technical terms and expressions in certain domains of public life such as banking, industry, medicine, engineering, etc. (Berrabah, 2014). Today the formal variety (ies), CA and/or MSA are restricted to instructional fields like schools (primary, middle, and secondary), in certain university subjects like law, human and social sciences, Arts, etc., while the informal colloquial variety, namely the ADA, is mainly used in spontaneous daily life interactions. Surprisingly, the French language is still present in the linguistic repertoire of Algerians both in formal or informal situations despite the negative attitudes towards it, and even in the speech of the uneducated people. For better or worse, the French language has strongly marked its presence in the current Algerian linguistic profile since; on the one hand, loads of adapted and/or adopted French loanwords are commonly used in daily conversations, and many Algerian speakers, on the other hand, can easily alternate between French to Arabic as if they were native speakers.

Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that the Arabisation process which was chiefly implemented to eliminate, or at least, to reduce the presence of the French language in Algeria, has unfortunately proved inadequate as monolingual education began to be questioned since the 2000s. Numerous factors mainly technology, modernity, urbanisation, globalization, and job opportunities have all stressed that multi/bilingual education in the Algerian schools and universities is a must. Therefore, the Algerian government has first officialised the teaching/learning of French as a first foreign language in the Algerian educational system since the year of 2003 until the present day, despite the fact that this language was heavily defied by the language planners and nationalists of that time for more than fifty years after the independence. Paradoxically, French language is as more salient in the curriculums of both Ministry of National Education and that of Higher Education and

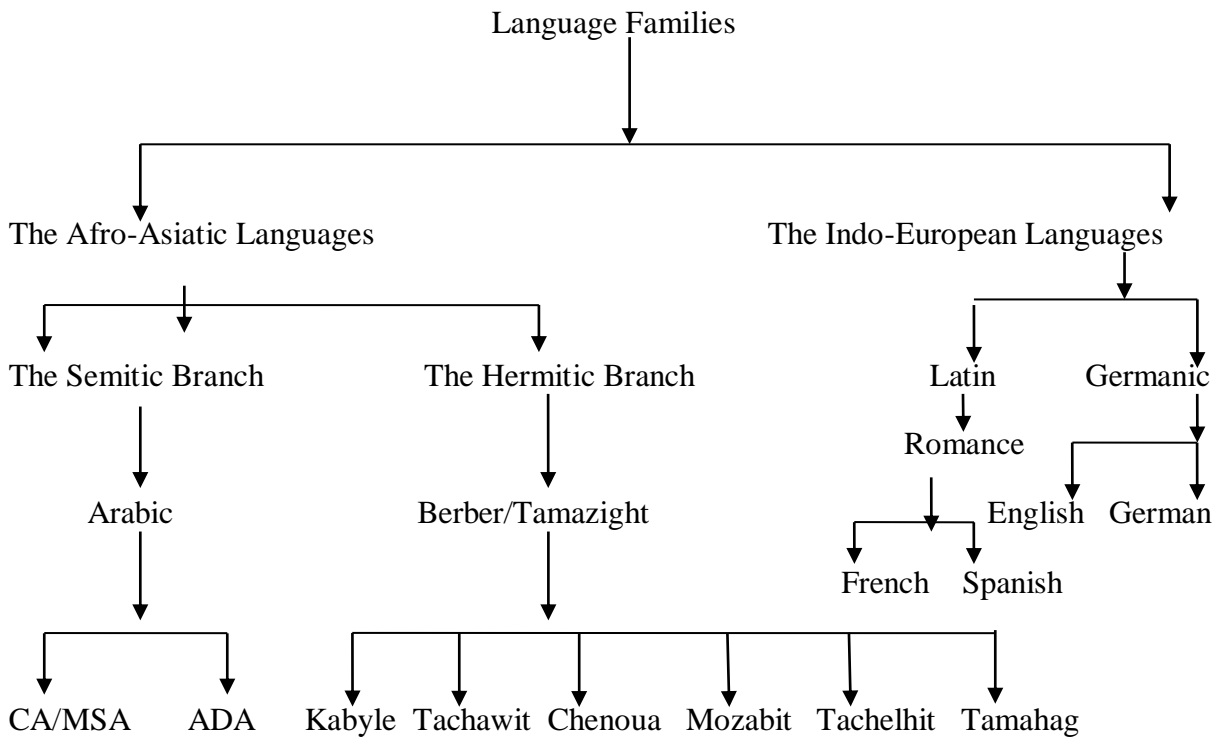
Scientific Research as it is in the day speech of most Algerian speakers. In fact, French is profoundly used as a medium of instruction in scientific and technical fields at universities, where CA and/or MAS failed in such contexts, as it is also taught as a specialty in its own like other languages namely English, Berber, Spanish, German, and many others. As stated by Berrabah (2014), the implementation of Arabisation has exhibited once again its failure to satisfy the needs of Algerian job markets in the sense that those French-educated students are more likely to get employed more than Arabized students.

Last but not least, the adopted language policy that hopefully aimed at retaining the past days of the pre-colonial era and ultimately recuperating the Arab-Islamic standards as essential ingredients of the Algerian national identity has led to an angry outburst by minority groups, particularly Berbers, who protested against such policy which had marginalized their mother tongue and culture and reduced their status in the country. Hence, since the late of 1990s, many Berber people, especially Kabylis, objected such cultural discrimination towards them, as they went through substantial socio-cultural protests and manifestations that took place both in and out of Algeria to call for their linguistic rights. Due to such anticipated language conflict which had resulted from those regular political regulations, Berber/Tamazight was officially recognized as a national language in addition to Arabic on February 2002, in a constitutional amendment signed by President Abdul-Aziz Bouteflika. Today, Tamazigh is taught as a subject matter in different educational institutions in some Kabylis regions like Bejaia and Tizi Ouzou, as it also used in specific TV shows, news, and channels.

2.3.2. Existing Language Varieties in Algeria

After having a quick historical glance at language contact in Algeria on one hand and the language policies adopted right after the year of its independence from the French colonizer on the other hand, it is high time then to discuss the current intricate Algerian sociolinguistic situation in much ins and outs. Standing on the fact that the policy of Arabisation failed to face the world's new challenges, mainly in the light of globalization and the development of new communication technologies, the linguistic richness of a given social group has eventually become a requisite if not a must. Hence, the Algerian speech repertoire is composed of several genetically related and unrelated language varieties that are used in different social contexts to serve different functions and negotiate multiple identities. The

graph underneath represents the multiple language varieties and dialects used currently in Algeria.



Graph.2.1 The Diverse Language Varieties/Dialects Existing in Algeria Today

Source: Berrabah (2014)

2.3.2.1. Arabic Language and its Varieties

It is worth noting that the term ‘Arabic language’ is historically correlated with the earliest Arabs of the pre-Islamic era and its poets. More importantly, it also represents the language of the Islam religion which was spread by Allah’s last Messenger, the Prophet Mohamed Peace be upon him. The Arabic language was first introduced to the inhabitants of North Africa in the 7th century when some Muslim commanders like Oqba Ibn Nafi and others lead their armies to the land in order to spread the Islam religion. Nowadays, Arabic is probably considered as the first richest language in the world in terms of its structure and is recognized as one of the heavily spoken languages in the world with more than 350 million native speakers distributed amid 25 countries commonly known as the Arab World. Regardless of the Arab immigrants, this world covers two geographical areas namely the

Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in which Arabic, mainly the colloquial variety, represents the mother tongue of the population.

As far as the Algerian context is concerned, it should be noted, however, that the same term seems quite misleading and ambiguous since it does not state clearly whether it refers to the frozen very standard, but dead, variety namely CA, or to the simplified version of this latter i.e. the MSA, or to the colloquial variety of day-to-day interactions namely the ADA. In this section, we will briefly introduce these three genetically related varieties with much emphasis on their status within the contemporary Algerian sociolinguistic situation.

The most prestigious and highly codified Arabic variety is generally referred to as CA which has originated from the Bedouin dialects used in the Arabian Peninsula (Sayahi, 2014). This variety is commonly acknowledged as the oldest frozen variety that was firstly revealed through the poems of pre-Islamic era and it was qualified as a 'sacred' language to represent the Islam religion and the Holy Koran. After the down and spread of the Islam religion, CA was also publicized through many grammar books and dictionaries that were written by famous early Arab grammarians like *El Farahidi* and *Sibawaih* during the 7th and 8th centuries (Zahali, 2020), who aimed at putting forward a thorough description of the different structural levels of CA, and subsequently, to preserve this latter.

Although the Arab Muslims have had a considerable amount of exposure to CA and in spite of trials of early grammarians to codify and standardize this variety, language alteration was inescapable. Thus, due to the Islamic expansion and the immense interdialectal contact between the diverse Arab Muslim communities, CA ceased expansion at the expense of Middle Arabic besides other idiosyncratic regional spoken vernaculars that had emerged due to the intervention of non-Arab language varieties of the native dwellers, as in the case of Berber in North Africa and Coptic in Egypt (Miller and Caubet, 2009), leading, therefore, to a steady diminution of this variety. As far as today's Arabic vernaculars are concerned, this latter is full of many linguistic borrowings as they were intensely influenced by European languages during the European conquests to the area of MENA throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. Interestingly, those vernaculars and European languages did not cease developing in that area whereas CA has failed to build up a grammatical model and a lexicon that suit best the recent life changes. In brief, CA was the ultimate stage of the development of Old Arabic varieties (Owens, 2006).

In spite of the aforementioned state of affairs, CA is still used in restricted domains, mainly in Arabic literary works, religious discourse, and in modern poetry to some extent. For many Arab speakers, CA still holds a special status among them in the sense that it is deeply rooted in their socio-cultural heritage as it reflects their religious identity as Muslims although it does not represent their mother tongues. For functional reasons, a simplified version of CA was recently developed so that to meet the requirements of the current changes which are taking place in the different life sectors. This was expected to be fulfilled by the so called MSA.

As a matter of fact, the MSA is considered as modified version of CA which was developed, or precisely adapted, to meet the needs of the world's new challenges. It is much easier and understandable than CA in terms of its structure and lexicology as it also contains many instances of linguistic borrowing from foreign languages so that to fill in the lexical gaps. More importantly, the modernization of Arabic was in fact fuelled by practical factors since; on the one hand, the 'hybrid' spoken day-to-day dialects of Arab nations lacked prestige and purity since they were influenced by non-Arab languages and, therefore, became deviants from CA. On the other hand, the multifaceted structure of this latter and the semantic ambiguities of its words and expressions stood as obstacles that hindered its use in domains like journalism, translation, and social media since many people are not totally proficient in this variety.

In other words, CA was revived, and essentially adapted, during the age of the Arab Renaissance not only to be used in religious contexts but also to suit modern time demands in both verbal and written formal state of affairs like official speech events, political discourse, education, administration, broadcasts, journalism, contemporary publications, TV news, etc. With the growth of Pan-Arabism, MSA was recognized as the official language in most countries of MENA region, and just like CA, it is no one's native language as it is taught at schools and university as a subject matter on its own. As far as the Algerian context is concerned, the MSA is considered as the high variety which is reserved for more formal and official situations as many educated people switch to it, either partially or completely, in their daily conversations to serve a variety of functions. This case is generally referred to as the Educated Spoken Arabic (ESA) in which a speaker shifts back and forth from the colloquial variety to the standard one in diverse communicative settings. Just like the other foreign languages, the MSA requires high-quality formal education so that to acquire the required competencies to use it correctly in given social contexts.

As far as the local variety is concerned, the ADA (also referred to as '*Darija*' or '*El-Amiyya*') represents the mother tongue of the majority of Algerians and it is traditionally reserved for spontaneous spoken day-to-day communicative events. It differs from the codified MSA in the sense that this latter is generally used as a 'lingua franca' among all Arab speaking countries while the former, being a distinctive spoken variety of the so called 'Colloquial Arabic', is neither codified nor standardized and even not publicly recognized as an official language, although it is being used in written informal domains today. Hence, we dare to say that the two genetically related varieties, the MSA and ADA, are supposed to be in complementary relationships since each variety is theoretically employed to accomplish certain functions. However, this is quite the opposite of what reality says since both variety are, in many situations, not properly used in their right contexts, hence, creating a diaglossic situation.

Furthermore, it is worth stressing that the ADA exhibits a remarkable local linguistic variation at many levels including phonology, lexicon, grammar, and meaning. However, most of these regional Algerian dialects remain mutually intelligible since speakers can easily understand each other especially if they were belonging to two neighbouring areas. By intelligibility, we mean the extent to which speakers of a given dialect understand others' dialects and vice versa. Besides that, the ADA is analogous to some extent to the local varieties spoken in other Northern African countries, mainly in Morocco and Tunisia due to geographical and historical factors.

However, these Maghrebi spoken dialects are, to a certain degree of course, mutually unintelligible to the ones spoken in the Middle East since massive differences can be inferred among them, and this, according to Sayahi (2014) is due to three main factors. The first factor has to do with the way Arabic language was presented and extended in the grand Maghreb land. Second, the Arabic language was exposed to a profound impact due to its contact with the languages of the indigenous people in addition to other foreign languages like Spanish, Turkish, and French. The third factor has to do with the swift social adjustments and the immense movements of urbanisation that the Maghreb nations went through since the mid of 20th century.

Hence, one would like to assert that the colloquial ADA is in fact a deviant 'hybrid' regional variety that has developed in the outer circle of its standard counterpart, be it classical or modern, but they remain genetically related since they bear great similarities at many linguistic levels. Due to the heavy contact between Arabic and indigenous as well as foreign languages, many loans words have slipped to the lexicon of ADA as many language

alternation processes like CS and CM, mainly between Arabic and French, are frequently used when interacting via this local variety. In fact, those languages have considerably changed the format of dialectal Arabic varieties in the Maghreb region, differentiating it from its Middle East counterparts which have, in turn, developed in different ways due to historical, socio-cultural, economic, political, and geographical factors.

In spite of being a stigmatized variety which has been disregarded by Algerian language planners, at least for the moment, the ADA is in fact no longer limited to informal spoken contexts as it is assumed. However, it is often used side by side with those formal prestigious varieties in different interactional oral events. Surprisingly, the advent of communication technologies and SNSs like Facebook and other forms of text-based online communication have also paved the way for the stigmatized varieties to mark their presence in the world of writing. Actually, the ADA has developed as a inimitable form of ‘new-writing’, and subsequently

The accommodation has been rapid and widespread and Algerian Arabic speakers have not relied on previously developed linguistic and orthographic norms, but have started creating their own linguistic norms, which include the use of colloquial forms of Arabic and language mixing, the development of a stock of linguistic forms, such abbreviations, acronyms, modified orthographies and representations of non-speech sounds, and the adoption of the Latin script in the place of Arabic script, with new conventions for representing Arabic sounds

(Mostari, 2018, p.10)

Hence, we hypothesize that the unique text-based linguistic features of Facebook communication in Algeria are heavily associated with the colloquial ADA since this latter is more suitable to overcome the technological barriers of communication technologies on the one hand, and to develop hybrid linguistic strategies appropriate to the nature of digital contexts on the other hand. Hence, this hybrid informal ‘e-Arabic’ represents a kind a linguistic revolution arising from the recent changes in human-to-human communication mediums, being characterized by innovative non-standard features adopted by the younger generations. Apart from this, this variety is also being used side by side other varieties by Algerian online users in public as well as private spheres, and to write about or discuss different themes related to different domains like education, sports, cooking, politics, etc. in the cyberspace.

2.3.2.2. Berber/Tamazight and its Varieties

In addition to the ADA which represents the mother tongue of the majority group in Algeria by which 82% of native speakers use it as means to express their ideas, feelings, and thought in spontaneous day-to-day interactions, Berber/Tamazight is also spoken by the “minority of 20% of the whole population” (Boucherit, 2002, p.56). While the term Berber is most often used to denote the indigenous dwellers on North Africa, the notion of Tamazight stands, for the most part, for the distinctive language varieties that Berbers (also called Amazigh) have always spoken as their mother tongues which have been preserved, in spite of the successive waves of invasions that took place in the Maghreb region since antiquities. In the present thesis, both terms will be used interchangeably as a reference to language use.

As far as its etymology is concerned, the term ‘Berber’ is originally derived from the Greek word ‘barbaros’. This latter was basically used by the Greeks as a reference to the speakers who were considered as foreign to them in terms of language use. The same notion was adopted afterwards by the Romans to denote those who did not speak Latin in the North African region, as they were also called so by the Romans for their vigorous opposition and resistance over four centuries (Berrabah, 2014). Nowadays, Berbers represent the minority ethnic groups in many North African countries such as Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Mauritania. However, the majority of Berber speakers reside in Algeria and Morocco in which they correspondingly make up about 25% and 45% out of the countries’ whole populations (Zahali, 2020). In Algeria, six major Berber dialects are distinguished and are largely distributed across the northern central mountains, the eastern and southern regions.

The largest minority Berber group is the Kabyles who represent nearly two thirds of Berberophones as a whole. This sub-group is found in Kabylia region which basically covers Tizi Ouzou and Bejaia, in addition to other areas like Bouira and Boumerdas. The second group is referred to as ‘*Tachawit*’ (Chaouia) which is situated in the Aures Mountains and the South East of Constantine (Benrabah, 2007), and while the third group, ‘*Chenoua*’, is spoken in Cherchell and Tipaza. ‘*Mozabit*’ (Mzabi) is found in north southern areas like Ghardaia and its environs while ‘*Tamahag*’ is spoken by the Touarag of the Saharian Hoggar Mountains, south of Algeria. Early Berber groups used ‘Tifinagh’ as an indigenous writing system to represent their languages.

According to many history books, Tamazight and its varieties are considered the oldest still living spoken dialects that have ever existed in North Africa. Despite the consecutive waves of conquests that they have witnessed, these varieties along their cultures have been maintained since thousands of years, thanks to struggle of its native speakers who sought sanctuary in isolated areas so that to protect their cultural heritage and ethnic identity from foreign influences. Generation after generation, the socio-cultural heritage of Berbers is still salient in the current Algerian sociolinguistic profile.

Unlike the Arabic language which was chosen by decision makers to replace the French language so that to retrieve back the Arab-Muslim identity of Algerians right after the independence, it took, however, about five decades for Berber/Tamazight to be officially recognised as a national as well as an official language alongside that Arabic language. This was successively declared in two constitutional amendments signed in 2002 and 2016 respectively. In fact, this gradual improvement in the status of Berber is the result of substantial waves of the Kabyle revival manifestations who protested against the denial of their linguistic rights at the expense of the Arabisation process.

In the early 1990s, Tamazight/Berber was integrated as a subject matter in primary as well as middle schools, in addition to the establishment of Amazigh language and culture institutions in certain Kabyle-speaking regions such as Tizi Ouzou and Bejaia. In these regions where Berber is used as a mother tongue, Arabic is usually considered as a third language while French is mainly regarded as a significant language standing on the fact that many Kabyleans were either instructed by French missionaries or have laboured in France (Mostari, 2005). Apart from offline settings, Berber varieties and their cultures are also broadcasted through different mass media and the Internet as well in order to popularize these indigenous varieties and cultures, at least in digital contexts. In spite of all the aforementioned states of affairs, it is still neither standardized nor codified to be widely used in formal spoken as well as written domains like Arabic yet.

Despite overcoming the major impediment that hampers its codification and standardisation, Tamazight is still represented in three main discretionary alphabets namely Tifinagh, Arabic, and Latin, as Berbers may select one script over the others to negotiate particular meanings. This was termed by Tilmatine (2015) as ‘the battle of Alphabets’ and this situation is fairly crystallized in the current situation of Tamazight in Algeria. The use of some Tifinagh scripts in writing is usually equated with the negotiation of ethnic identity, while the two other scripts, i.e. Arabic and Latin, may be associated with certain ideologies like expressing nationalism and solidarity with the Arab-Muslim world or to demonstrate

opposition to the policy of Arabisation and, eventually, non-separation from French respectively.

2.3.1.3. French

In fact, the presence of the French language in Algeria is considered as a purely colonial legacy since it served as the dominant official language during the colonial period which lasted for 132 years (1830-1962). During this period, the French authorities exercised rigorous harsh cultural assimilation policies and discriminatory acts to eradicate all what it has a connection with the Arab-Muslim identity of the Algerians and the Berbers' ethnic identity as well.

Moreover, France justified its conquest to Algeria by the mission of civilising the natives that they had to execute through whatever means necessary. Hence, they built special schools in order to teach their language, culture and civilization while they limited the usage of the Arabic language through all walks of life. Interestingly, “no other colonial power has had significant impacts on the socio-cultural, economical, linguistic and political levels as France in Algeria” (Berrabah and Benabed, 2021, p.136). In fact, this historical period is considered as turning point in the Algerian speech repertoire given that the French colonialism was the sole invader who has made a remarkable intense impact on the socio-cultural and linguistic dimensions of the Algerian society as it has also revolutionized other domains like politics, economy, diplomacy, education, etc. throughout the post-colonial era. In spite of all trials of the Algerian nationalist governors of that time to revive Arabic language and retrieve back the real socio-cultural values of the Algerian society at the expense of the French language, this latter has been gradually spread through all walks of life even better than during the colonial epoch. Statistically, Algeria has been recognized as the second francophone nation in the globe after France by the late of 20th century (Zahali, 2020).

As far as its status in the current Algerian linguistic situation is concerned, the French language is politically assigned the status of a first foreign language, but not as foreign as English or Spanish for instance. This is analogous with Ennaji's (2005) description of the Moroccan linguistic landscape in which asserts that French is neither ranked as a foreign language like English nor as national as well as an official language like Arabic. In reality, thus, it ironically seizes the status of a second official language since it is commonly used side by side with Arabic and even more than this latter in various prestigious spheres like health,

medicine, technology, science, and administration. It is also the first foreign language to be integrated in the curricular of the Algerian schooling system and is the only one to be taught in primary schools as a means of bilingual education. Besides that, it is the official language of instruction in many technological, technical and scientific fields in higher education (Djennane, 2017), while MSA is reserved for human and social sciences and Arts. More importantly, it is the language through which many official documents are frequently drafted in at the expense of Arabic. Consequently

...one can claim that French has never lost its status as being a ‘lingua franca’ in Algeria whereby the great majority of speakers shift back and forth easily and purposefully from Arabic to French in their daily interaction and many speak, read and write it proficiently in both formal and informal settings as if they were native speakers. Therefore, eliminating Fr from the speech of every Algerian is easier said than done since the process involves the removal of all that is Fr from ADA that would really take the wind out of the Algerians’ sails

(Berrabah and Benabed, 2021, p.139)

Strangely enough, the French language is strongly marking its presence, whether partially or completely, in people’s daily local linguistic practices, be it formal or informal, spoken or written, and even in online or offline contexts. Ideologically speaking, it is no longer deemed as a symbol of colonialism and the long years of torture more than it is covertly recognized as a sign of modernity, prestige, and openness to the cultural world of the Francophonie and French-speaking countries. Said differently, French has been genuinely assimilated, and mainly vernacularized, to become a central ingredient of most Algerians’ day-to-day spontaneous communicative events, regardless of their competencies in this language and their educational level as well. In other words, in the face of the language policies applied since the wake of independence so that to retain the rightful socio-cultural and linguistic values of the Algerian population through the implementation of a purely ideological monolingual policy that took for granted the Arabic language as the only national and official language of all Algerians, French has continued to be used in both formal and informal contexts nowadays.

Linguistically speaking, the long and immense contact between colloquial Arabic and French has eventually lead to a continual glide of countless French loan words to the system of ADA, being phonologically, and to a certain degree semantically, adopted in most of Algerians’ daily interactions (Mouhadjer, 2002). This is probably one of the significant contact-induced features characterizing most Maghrebi colloquial varieties mainly in

Algerian, Morocco and Tunisia. Besides that, speakers can easily shift back and forth from one language variety to another (Arabic, French, and Berber) in diverse social contexts like home, workplace, street, official meetings, etc to fulfil specific communicative functions and meanings. In other words, “French has been vernacularized as a result of steady adaptations of French linguistic forms according to what suit the local linguistic and cultural behaviours of its non-native users” (Zahali, 2020, p.32). This verity reinforces the claim that French language and culture enjoy high prestige and reputation just like Arabic, especially for Francophones, although its lack of an implicit/overt official status.

Last but not least, the maintenance and spread of French in most, if not all, Algerian speech communities and in sensitive high state domains can be also governed by people’s ideological beliefs and attitudes towards it. While conservatives recognize this foreign language as an intimidation against their authentic identity as Arabs and Muslims and an indication of enslavement and dependency, counterpart attitudes perceive it as a tool to attain social prestige and achieve higher ranks in the world of business. That is to say, the maintenance of French is also influenced by people’s constructive stances, seeing it as a pre-requisite to realize a prestigious socio-economic status in the public sphere.

Above all things, French is still salient in the current Algerian sociolinguistic landscape and is continuously employed as a working language to realize significant socio-cultural and linguistic functions in Algerians’ daily social practices. It is therefore in a continuous conflict with respect to MSA since both languages are used concurrently and interchangeably in more privileged institutional realms like finance, education, health, energy, social media, etc. Strangely enough, this intricate situation has resulted from the French policies of cultural assimilation that failed to eliminate the real identity of Arabs and Berbers from one side, and the post-colonial Arabisation process that did not succeed to hopefully eliminate French from public, administrative and governmental sectors, from the other side. Nevertheless, the status of the French language has been recently challenged by the wake of the so called globalization. As an international lingua franca, the English language has been seeping steadily in Algeria since the late of 20th century.

2.3.1.4. English

As a matter of fact, the English language was first introduced in Algeria via an educational reform that recognized it as a ‘second foreign language’ after French. Nevertheless, the scope of its usage is very limited when compared to French as this latter gains high rate in terms of users, uses and communicative proficiencies as well. Today, English is not taught in Algerian primary schools despite the growing public demands to integrate it as a second foreign language in light of the current social and economic changes that are taking place in the world. Yet, English is taught and/or learned as a compulsory subject matter delivered to middle school pupils for four years and for three years in secondary schools. At universities, English can be either studied as a major specialty on its own or as an additional module taught at least for an hour and a half per-week for the other specialties. Albeit high state officials are continuously calling for the necessity to use English across the government’s industrial, economic and technical sectors, it does not at least share the same political status as French. As far as its position within the so called English-speaking nations, Algeria is included in the ‘Expanding circle’ of English, according to Kachru’s (1985) tripartite taxonomy, which covers all those countries in which English is neither a mother tongue nor an official language, but a foreign language instead (Zahali, 2020).

Historically speaking, the implementation of English as a foreign language (EFL) as a call for multilingual education so that to face the global challenges of the new world order dates back to the early 1990s when the Algerian Ministry of Education declared an explicit proposal to include English in primary schools as an alternative for French. Hence, pupils had to make a selection between the two compulsory first foreign languages (Benrabah, 2007b; 2014). Few months later, decision makers set off an opinion census regarding which foreign language will be maintained at the expense of the other in the fourth class of primary school. Eventually, this language dispute ended with a political decision highlighting the maintenance of French; while English was taught in a small number of primary schools in 1993/94 but equally with French as a first foreign language (Berrabah, 2014). Consequently, the second language planning policy to eliminate French from Algeria failed the same as the first attempt to replace French by English did. By 2003, English language teaching (ELT) was completely eliminated from the curriculum of primary education under a schooling reform. However, it was incorporated in middle schools for four years instead of two years in the preceding

educational system. In fact, “ELT has come a very long way towards meeting that objective” (Berrabah and Benabed, 2021, p.139).

In spite of the aforementioned state of affairs, the globe status of the English language, as an international ‘lingua franca’, and the openness of Algeria to overseas countries in a progressively globalised universe are among the main factors that paved the way for learning English in Algeria, especially amongst the younger generations. The ubiquity of the Internet as global interactive worldwide web allowing a dynamic cross-cultural communication has also reinforced the utility of English as a means to meet the requirements of globalization and to keep updated with the latest scientific developments and publications that most of them, if not all, are originally published in English. Social media have also contributed in the spread of English worldwide through different means like western movies (Hollywood), series, songs, sports entertainment, etc. In essence, this language has been put forward “as the magic solution to all possible ills-including economic, technological and educational ones” (Milliani, 2000, p.13. Quoted in Berrabah, 2014) because of its achieved status of ‘a global language’ (Crystal, 2008). As an evidence of this, many Algerian researchers tend to conduct their research papers and theses in English, or at least the abstracts, so that to publish them in highly peer-reviewed scientific national and international journals.

Once again, the monolingual character of the Arabisation policy on the one hand and the reliance of French as the sole functioning foreign language on the other hand have been confronted by the shift of economic power and the rise of the so called ‘new world order’. From a functional point of view, English is increasingly gaining overt prestige over French among people in Algeria especially the younger educated generations who seek to learn this language as early as possible so that to get better job opportunities in due course, either in Algeria or abroad. Interestingly, the largest English-speaking nations namely USA and UK have initiated certain English-based educational programmes so that to encourage the acquisition of this global working language which has become an ‘inevitable task’ nowadays. Thus, the indisputable status of French in Algeria as the primary foreign language of science, engineering, technology, and intercultural communication has been recently endangered by the growing worldwide popularity of English.

2.3.4. Outcomes of Language Contact Phenomenon in Algeria

The contact between the co-existing genetically related and unrelated language varieties that constitute the current Algerian sociolinguistic profile, mainly Arabic (ADA), French and Berber, has led to profound outcomes that, in turn, guaranteed Algeria the merit to be linguistically referred to as a 'rich complex diglossic' landscape. If we take solely the Algerians' day-to-day offline, as well as online, naturally occurring interactional events into consideration, one can easily observe many bilingual linguistic practices in which more than one language variety is used side by side with another variety within the same discourse. Such phenomenon tend to occur at different structural levels (i.e. words, phrases, clauses, and sentences), as it also depends on the speaker/writer competencies in the languages used on the one hand, and on other factors like topic, addressee, setting, and social distance on the other hand.

The best illustrative example of such contact-induced language phenomenon is found in ADA/French bilingualism due to the strict assimilationist policies adopted by the French colonialism during its presence in Algeria. Today, countless French borrowed words are thus salient in ADA to the extent that they become parts of its lexical repertoire, regardless of those interactional situations in which bilinguals shift simultaneously from Arabic to French at different structural levels and to negotiate assorted meanings, and vice versa. In terms of functionality, the co-existing of these varieties has also created a diglossic situation, standing on the fact that the 'high' and 'low' varieties, as in the case of ADA and MSA, are not completely in a complementary distributional relationship as they are assumed to be.

Since the current research aims at assessing Algerians' attitudes towards language use on Facebook from a gender related-perspective, reviewing the major outcomes of language contact phenomenon is a worth doing task then.

2.3.4.1. Bilingualism/Multilingualism

As its name indicates, multi/bilingualism is a purely sociolinguistic wide-ranging phenomenon that reflects the richness of the linguistic profile of individuals and/or social groups. It is perhaps one of the most controversial topics in contact linguistics and is essentially recognized as the oldest notion that has been for long correlated with what Weinreich (1958) referred to as 'the contact of two languages'. Despite the fact that the notions of bilingualism and multilingualism have been used interchangeably in the related

literature and have both received a substantial amount of attention from various academic disciplines, others scholars, however, consider them as two different notions. In this respect, two criteria are identified.

The first measure refers to the amount of language varieties used by an individual or a community since bilingualism involves the ability to make use of just two languages whereas multilingualism takes place in situations where more than two language varieties are used alternatively by the same individual at different degrees. As far as the second criterion is concerned, Clyne (1998) described the former concept as an individual phenomenon and the latter as a societal one, without any condition of the sum of languages to be acquired and/or used in different situations. In support of this, Mackey (1967, p. 555) states that bilingualism is “the alternate use of two or more languages by the same individual” (Cited in Belarbi, 2013, p.20). In view of that, the term bilingualism will be used all the way through this part since the focus of this study is on differences in males’ and females’ online bilingual practices on Facebook.

In spite of the intensive scholarly works that have attempted to study the phenomenon of ‘bilingualism’ from a variety of perspectives so that to understand its causes and effects at the individual and social levels, researchers could not have reached so far a precise and common description of the term. In other words, bilingualism is essentially a relative notion in the sense that it may be used to signify miscellaneous things for different individuals. However, much emphasis was considerably directed towards the individual’s degrees of competency and the ability to appropriately alternate from one language to another in various social situations to negotiate a variety of meanings and interests. For instance, Bloomfield (1933) elucidated that bilingualism is “the native-like control of two languages”. This definition stresses that a bilingual individual is the one who should be equally competent and fluent in both languages. In contrast to this, Haugen (1953, p.07) states that this phenomenon takes place “when the speaker of one language can produce complete meaningful utterances in the other language”. This minimalist description does not highlight the requisite of being equally proficient in both languages and is mainly limited to the spoken form of language.

As far as Mackey’s (1967) distinction between societal and individual bilingualism, Algerian is officially acknowledged as a *de jure* bilingual country; standing on the fact that the Algerian constitution identifies Arabic (i.e. MSA) and Berber/Tamazight as the only two official as well as national languages. In reality, however, Algeria is covertly a multilingual speech community since the foreign language French seizes a great part in the linguistic profile of most Arab and Berber Algerians at varied degrees of proficiency as discussed

earlier in this section. Besides that, the stigmatized colloquial ADA dialects and other Berber varieties are also considered as indispensable ingredients in the Algerian *de facto* multilingualism although they lack political recognition. The maintenance and co-presence of these varieties was mainly due to socio-economic, historical, and political factors as it was previously explained in much more details.

Furthermore, multilingualism in Algeria became no more confined to ideological aspects like Arabisation, nationalism and colonialism as discussed before. The dawn of globalization and the Age of Information have necessitated multi/bilingualism as a prerequisite to cope with the global and interactive character of digital world, especially with the emergent online SNSs that have strengthened the bonds of intercultural communication more than even before. This has therefore made people across the globe exposed to other languages that are neither officially used nor spoken as mother tongues as in the case of English, Spanish and German. These foreign languages, besides others like Russian and Italian, have been just recently integrated in the different sectors of the Algerian educational system. For better or for worse, multi/bilingual education has in fact turned out to be governed by the world's latest diverse challenges, immigration, and global understating projects, instead of being completely based on traditional beliefs.

As for individual bilingualism, most Algerian speakers are considered bilinguals if not multilingual ones. However, the degree of proficiency is not homogenous since they may not be equally competent due to many factors like educational background, age, geography, etc (Djennane, 2017). Monolinguals are also found across Algeria especially in southern and/or rural areas in which there is a low degree of language contact, unlike in the large urban cities of North Algeria. Moreover, Algerians are explicitly classified as *late* bilinguals in the sense that they acquire a first language, either the ADA or colloquial Tamazight as a mother tongue, and in due course, they acquire and/or learn other varieties like MSA, French, or English at schools for instance. In other words, individual bilingualism in Algeria is at large of a *successive* character. Besides that, Algerian bilinguals are generally recognized as *unbalanced* bilinguals since it is quite infrequent to come across with those who possess a native-like control of two or more languages.

Evidently, the state of being a multi/bilingual speaker may be the main driving force behind the regular occurrence of certain contact-induced linguistic phenomena that may be in turn influenced by some linguistic and extra-linguistic factors. Language alternation processes, namely CS and CM, and linguistic borrowings are the most salient outcomes of language contact phenomenon in Algeria. Consciously or unconsciously, Algerian speakers

are likely to shift back and forth during a single exchange between the co-existing varieties, namely ADA, MSA, French, and Tamazight (for Berbers), at different degrees of proficiency and linguistic levels, in different social contexts, and to negotiate various socio-cultural and pragmatic meanings. In some cases, these alternation processes tend to arise with some kind of density in the sense that it might be considerably hard to define which language is being used (Djennane, 2017).

Apart from cross-linguistic switching and/or mixing practices, interlocutors are also likely to exhibit a sort of inner language switching referred to as diglossic CS. This latter takes place when speakers alternate between two genetically related varieties namely the colloquial Arabic variety and MSA that are supposed to be in a complementary distribution in terms of functionality. This is what will be elucidated next in much more details.

2.3.4.2. Diglossia

As a matter of fact, Algeria is one of the Arab-speaking countries in which the two genetically related varieties colloquial Arabic (ADA) and Standard Arabic (MSA) are supposedly used to perform different social roles and functions in different contexts. In its wider sense, the functional distribution of these two varieties is highly influenced by the formality of the context in which the ‘H’ variety, MSA, is reserved for formal situations like political speech, religious discourse, education, etc; while the ‘L’ variety, ADA, is allocated for spontaneous naturally occurring communicative situations as in street, home, and in certain TV emissions and series. In contrast to the L variety that is mainly acquired in a domestic sphere as a mother tongue, the H variety is for the most part acquired through formal instruction and is considered as more prestigious than the former since it represents literacy and high-quality educational background.

At its ‘classical’ stage, the notion of ‘diglossia’ was first adopted by William Marçais in 1930 from the Greek literature in order to explain the afore said linguistic situation in some North African countries in which the L vernaculars and the H codified standard variety are used to execute distinct social functions. Nevertheless, the term was essentially popularized in the English literature when the prominent linguist Charles Ferguson published his paper entitled ‘Diglossia’ in 1959. Ferguson examined the linguistic scenery of four dissimilar speech communities in which two genetically related varieties are used to fulfil different functions. In light of his work, Ferguson described diglossia as

...a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation.

(Ferguson, 1959, p.245).

Ferguson's original framework is purely dichotomous and stable in the sense that it does not stress any kind of overlap between the H and L varieties. According to him, these two varieties differ from each other in certain socio-cultural and linguistic aspects such as prestige, acquisition, literary heritage, social function, standardisation, vocabulary, grammar, phonology, etc. As far as his description of the diglossic linguistic situation in some Arab-speaking communities, Ferguson distinguished between two genetically related varieties; standard Arabic and colloquial Arabic. The former is more prestigious, formal, highly codified and is associated with the pre-Islamic literary legacy and even modern writings. Besides that, it is a 'learnt' language which is acquired mainly through formal schooling and is reserved for formal situations. In contrast, the latter represents the language of day-to-day communication and the mother tongue of most Arab speakers. Unlike Standard Arabic, colloquial Arabic is more exposed to variation and change as it demonstrates several linguistic differences from one region to another, either internally or externally. This variety is generally used in less formal situations like family talk, street, etc.

However, Ferguson's provisional framework of 'classical diglossia' has been critically reformulated by himself and by other scholars for many reasons, particularly as far as the complex and intricate linguistic situation of most Arab-speaking countries like Algeria is concerned. Hence, separation and genetic relatedness were the weakest points in Ferguson's model, simply for the reason that in Algeria for instance, the H and L varieties tend to exhibit overlaps in many real life situations like in political and religious discourse so that to address the people accurately. This has led to the emergence of Middle Arabic (generally referred to Educated Spoken Arabic) which is in fact just a mixture between the H and L varieties. All these factors lead Ferguson to re-introduce his revised model 'Diglossia Revisited' in 1996 through which he gave account to those 'in-between' language varieties which he has disregarded in his first model.

As a matter of fact, Algeria does not only correspond to Ferguson's classical as well as revisited models, but it is also a best representative of what the linguist J. Fishman (1967, 1972) referred to as 'extended diglossia'. This version of diglossia includes those linguistic situations in which two or more genetically unrelated varieties, i.e. they belong to different language families, are used in a given speech community to perform different social functions. A chief illustration of this case in Algeria is quite salient in Arabophone regions where French is used as the H variety in delivering contents for university students at the departments of science, technology, engineering, and agriculture; while the ADA is reserved for spontaneous interaction between students outside the classroom. In Berberphone areas, however, French and even MSA are reserved for high formal situations like governmental meetings and education; while local Tamazight varieties (genetically unrelated to French and Arabic) are used as mediums of day-to-day interactions among Berbers. This situation has been referred to as 'extended triglossia' (Djennane, 2017) in which more than two varieties are used in for dissimilar purposes.

As for the use of ADA among Berberphones, this case is generally referred to as bilingualism (bidialectalism) and not diglossia, since both varieties (i.e. ADA and local Tamazight dialects) are considered as L varieties. In order to tell the two notions apart, Fishman (1967, p.34) stated in this respect that "bilingualism is essentially a characterisation of individual linguistic behaviour whereas diglossia is a characterisation of linguistic organisation at the sociocultural level" (Quoted in Zahali, 2020, p.39). However, it is often easier said than done to make a distinction between the two notions, simply for the reason that linguistic diversity may be interpreted by individuals as diversity in the functions and ranks of interlocutors in a particular situation (Francescato, 1986).

In a nutshell, Algeria constitutes a melting pot complex diglossic sociolinguistic situation in which diverse varieties from similar and dissimilar world language families have co-existed due to several factors as shown earlier. Each variety is defined by its socio-cultural norms and the users' motivation and attitudes towards it. More importantly, the situation has also fuelled hot debates among researchers concerning the importance of being a bi/multilingual in today's world on the one hand, and how would such linguistic diversity affect people's ideological beliefs and identities on the other hand.

2.4. Research Methodology

Moving beyond the theoretical framework of this computer-based sociolinguistic research, this part highlights the methodological aspects, through which the research approach, design, and methods adopted in order to reach the focal objectives of the current study are introduced, discussed, and rationally justified. Said differently, this part is dedicated for bridging the gap between the literature reviewed beforehand and the forthcoming practical chapter that will display, analyse, and interpret the findings related to Algerian males' and females' text-based linguistic practices on Facebook and their attitudes towards language use on the same networking site, with reference to the current Algerian sociolinguistic situation of course. More importantly, this case study research in between our hands aims at dissecting gender-linked language differences among Algerian Facebook users, and how their gendered identities are negotiated in such CMC-based context.

Therefore, this part sheds light on computer-mediated discourse analysis as a flourishing research approach that correlates best with our empirical research design and the type of linguistic analysis and description we seek for in this work. This approach is in fact arranged under the new-fangled branch of linguistics, namely 'Internet Linguistics' which has been materialized as a result of people's extensive usages of diverse sorts of social media to satisfy different communicative needs and intentions. Moreover, the participants' profiles, sampling techniques, tools and procedures of data collection, types of the data required for the study, as well as the methods of data analysis will be all briefly and clearly explained next.

2.4.1. Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA)

As far as the research approach of the current investigation is concerned, the notion of computer-mediated discourse analysis (henceforth CMDA) is a purely an Internet-based scientific research approach that is primarily concerned with analysing people' online (socio) linguistic behaviour and how their offline, as well as online, identities and relationships are constructed and negotiated in a virtual context. The ubiquity of the Internet as a social networking tool has given birth to purely creative new forms of text-based communication that are attractively deviating from the norms of traditional writings. Besides that, it has also attracted a growing wide range of people worldwide in order to establish and reinforce cross-cultural communion, expressing thoughts, and seeking knowledge.

As a matter of fact, CMDA was coined for the first time by Susan Herring in 1995 as a research approach to delve into the mechanisms of online communicative behaviour (Herring, 2004). It employs researching methods adapted from particular areas concerned with language sciences such as rhetoric, communication, linguistics, and stylistics to the examination of CMC discourse (Herring, 2001). This approach is predominantly informed by a language-focused perspective in the sense that “it views online behavior through the lens of language, and its interpretations are grounded in observation about language and language use” (Herring, 2004, p.2). In other words, “any analysis of online behaviour that is grounded in empirical, textual observations is computer-mediated discourse analysis” (Herring, 2004, p.2). For Herring, CMDA consider language as its mainstay through which it applies a variety of traditional research paradigms and data gathering as well as analysis tools adopted from early works in verbal and text-based language such as interactional sociolinguistics, conversational analysis, critical discourse analysis, and pragmatics in order to describe the different patterns of online discourse and the choices that speakers make when they interact in such contexts.

In fact, the central practical orientation of Herring’s approach is a language-based content analysis. That is, it is concerned with defining the relevant linguistic features of online behaviour and how social meanings and identities are negotiated by online participants, especially in text-based virtual forums. In this respect, Herring (2004) clarifies that CMDA is characterized by nearly the same underlying theoretical assumptions of language focused-discourse analysis. It is supposed, thus, that this latter is essentially exercised on the basis of two assumptions: recurrent patterns and speakers’ choices (Herring, 2004).

The patterns of discourse, according to Goffman (1959), could be engendered intentionally or unintentionally since speakers may not be fundamentally conscious of the patterns incorporated in their writing. In this vein, consistent generalisations are more likely to be produced through direct observation than relying on the interlocutors’ self-reports about their linguistic behaviour. Regarding the second assumption, the choices that speakers make are, for the most part, determined by non-linguistic factors, mainly social and cognitive ones. In other words, the analysis of discourse tends to offer non-linguistic perceptions vis-à-vis language behaviour. In addition to these two assumptions, CMDA is informed by a third assumption specific to online discourse. This assumption is related to way technological affordances have contributed in constructing the discourse of CMC, especially the text-based one. Therefore, it is of a paramount importance to study empirically “in what ways, to what extent, and under what circumstances CMC technologies shape the communication that takes place through them” (Herring, 2004, p.04).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, it is worth noting that CMDA is a twofold research approach. That is to say, it can be applied to scrutinize both micro-linguistic phenomena like word and sentence structures, word choice, language alternation processes among bilinguals, etc., and macro-linguistic issues like gender identity, communities, etc. (Herring, 2004). In this research, both levels will be tackled since our aim is to dissect any gender difference in the use of linguistic features pertinent to text-based Facebook language on the one hand, and to probe their socio-cultural implications in negotiating gendered identities in the context of online communication on the other hand. It also embarks upon assessing our respondents' attitudes towards language use and choice on Facebook with respect to the current Algerian sociolinguistic situation and interpretations will be made from a gender-related perspective. More importantly, the researcher is interested just in the analysis of text-based communication on Facebook and not with other forms like audio-visual communication. Thus, an empirical research design is then opted to carry out such a text-based CMDA research.

2.4.2. Empirical Research Design

An empirical sociolinguistic research is that kind of systematic investigation that entails the collection and analysis of relevant linguistic data so that to understand the way language is used in by social groups in real life contexts. That is, sociolinguists rely on fieldwork research through which data are, on the one hand, collected by means of certain instruments like questionnaires, interviews, observations, etc., analysed, and interpreted in terms of quantity, quality or both. In such a research design, the researcher is first required to form an operational hypothesis and then he/she has to confirm or disconfirm his/her hypothesis by getting sufficient data through fieldwork (Kothari, 2004). Within the same line of thought, Herring (2004) believes also that such type of inquisition is informed by asking non-trivial research questions about an observable phenomenon that can be only empirically answered from the data collected for analysis. Besides that, Patten (2005) identified four major questions that must be answered prior to any empirical investigation as listed below

- The **purpose** behind doing an observation i.e. the *why*.
- The **participants** concerned with the observation i.e. to *whom*.
- The research **tools and instruments** selected for carry out the observation i.e. the *how*.
- **Time** as a significant constraint in any empirical study i.e. the *when*.

(Cited in: Bijeikienė and Tamošiūnai, 2013, p.12)

In view of that, an empirical research design seems to serve better the nature of such gender-related sociolinguistic research in text-based interactions on Facebook. As an active Facebook user for nearly ten years now, the research questions and hypotheses have been formulated on the basis of the researcher's long-term participant observation of people's linguistic behaviour on Facebook that has been accommodated in a certain manner to overcome the constraints of technology. More importantly, qualitative and quantitative data have been collected through suitable empirical research methods, mainly via an ethnographic online observation and a detailed self-designed questionnaire respectively for the sake of testing the research hypotheses and, hence, reaching its objectives. It is now high time to delineate the participants involved in this case study research.

2.4.4. The Participants' Profiles and Sampling Frame

Like any empirical case study research, the researcher is required to identify a target population pertinent to his/her problem statement and the phenomenon to be investigated. Besides, he/she is also necessitated to appropriately pick out a representative sample from the whole target population since it will be fairly hard and time-consuming to deal with all the members of this latter. In fact, "one of the most important tasks for a researcher is selecting settings and negotiating access to the participants" (Steyn and Vna Wyk, 1999, p.38. Quoted in Zitouni, 2013, p.144). To attain this, the researcher is entailed to adopt a given sampling technique for an in-depth analysis of the research problem in its naturally occurring settings and from which data are primarily congregated. As far as this study is concerned, the whole target population consists in all Algerian Facebook users, that is, it targets every Algerian male and female individual who uses, to some degree, Facebook in his/her daily social practices. For methodological reasons, however, we opted to carry out our empirical case study research with EFL students at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret.

The reason behind our choice of EFL students is in fact twofold. First, the researcher is familiar with this community as a member of the teaching staff at the department of English who has been teaching there for 4 years. Hence, we have had a constant direct contact with nearly all EFL students, especially second and third year Licence and first year Master students since most of them are and used to be my students. Second, we have been observing their online linguistic behaviour on their Facebook group entitled '*English Language Department of Tiaret#family#*' for almost 3 years as we have encountered many instances of informally using language innovatively, in spite of the formality of the group.

As far as this Facebook group is concerned, it is the English language that must be the only language on interaction, either in posts or comments, but this is quite different to what reality says since many language varieties are most often merged together at varied degrees, in addition to the use of creative text-based linguistic features like shortenings and transliteration when they interact either privately with me as their teacher or publicly with their mates' status updates and comments on the same Facebook group. We seek therefore to explore the use of such text-based linguistic practices on Facebook from a gender-related perspective. It is therefore presumed that all these features are, for the most part, associated with the younger generation as there would be no relevant population like university students in order to study this language-based phenomenon in terms of gender differences in a digital world like Facebook. To our knowledge, rare studies are done on this subject with reference to the Algerian context.

Concerning the sampling framework, a random sample of 240 EFL students has been chosen for our investigation and to whom a self-designed questionnaire was administered by the researcher himself and some teachers who helped us to deliver the questionnaires properly to other students. Concerning their linguistic practices on their Facebook group, we have selected through our long-term participant online observation only those hybrid instances that correspond to the research objectives and hypotheses, precisely those that were written innovatively by EFL students, either in their status updates and comments (i.e. asynchronous modes) or in private discussions (i.e. synchronous interactions through Messenger). Hence, both users' and screen data are concerned with our investigation and are analysed using a mixed-method approach.

2.4.3. The Methods of Data Collection

A wide range of sociolinguistic data in the world of online communication in general can be easily accessible to without any need for establishing an immediate contact with the users of language as in offline settings. However, researchers concerned with the discourse of CMC and how online users tend to construct themselves online are likely to draw on traditional data collection methods like interviews, ethnographic observations, surveys, and questionnaires to further understandings of people's social practices in the digital world and measuring their attitudes and beliefs towards online phenomena. Hence, research within the field of CMC can be based on both textual (screen) and ethnographic (user-based) data which

are best perceived as useful sites for gathering data in the terrain of media sociolinguistics (Androutsopoulos, 2014).

In this study, I opted for both kinds of data which have been respectively collected through two main instruments, online participant observation through which screen data were collected, and a questionnaire through which users' data have been collected. In fact, both techniques are complementary since many questions within the questionnaire have been formulated on the basis of our long-term participant observation on people's online practices on Facebook. More details about the methods of data collection are presented below.

2.4.3.1. Online Participant Observation and Screen Data Collection

As its name indicates, participant observation is considered as one of the significant data collection tools in an ethnography-based research (Johnstone, 2000), since it is more likely to offer a straight access to a great amount of naturalistic sociolinguistic data in particular social contexts. That is, participant observers tend to systematically draw on naturally occurring linguistic practices for better understanding of the real factors that influence language use and hence making primary assumptions about the socio-cultural and linguistic behaviour of the participants under investigation. According to Milroy and Gordon (2003), participant observation provides sociolinguists with two primary advantages that are represented in, first, the quantity as well as the quality of the data gathered, and secondly, gaining acquaintance with the community's activities. Hence, it is of a paramount importance for the participant observer to develop a thorough understanding of the community by getting well familiarized with its traditions, standards and its sociolinguistic dynamics (Milroy and Gordon, 2003).

Within the same line of thought, online observation refers to the process of being virtually in the digital space detecting online communication that will lead, in due course, to the analysis of this latter on a website or in a network of relations across sites (Androutsopoulos, 2014). In this respect, the researcher is required to be an active 'netizen' observing systematically the members' online practices of a particular virtual community with the aim of understanding how technology is reshaping humans' languages, cultures, and relations. More importantly, this process is not constrained by physical factors as in its offline counterpart, simply for the reason that online observers can, at whatever time and/or place, visit and revisit the target virtual space to collect data relevant to their investigations, even without being visible to the participants concerned with this process.

Regarding the current empirical computer-based investigation, the researcher has been regularly observing the linguistic behaviour of EFL students on their Facebook group for nearly 3 years in the three text-based spaces, namely posts, comments and private chats. Therefore, we took the advantage to dissect first the innovative linguistic features of text-based communication on Facebook manifesting in EFL students' public posts and comments on the one hand, and to assess their attitudes towards these features as well as language choice from a gender-related perspective on the other hand. The former objective is based on a qualitative analysis of a sample of relevant screen data that were saved in my mobile device, thanks to the service of 'screenshot' afforded by the technology of smart phones and which the researcher has used most as a procedure in collecting such type of data. For ethical and privacy issues, however, those instances that included non-moral contents were totally discarded. As for the latter objective, we opted for a detailed self-administered questionnaire.

2.4.3.2. The Questionnaire

As far as users' data are concerned, a survey questionnaire is regarded as one of the focal methods of collecting a wide range of quantitative data in social sciences since it enables the researcher to objectively get maximum information relevant to his/her research problem from the target participants in a relatively short period of time. More importantly, this research instrument guarantees anonymity and confidentiality to the participants in the sense that they are able to express their views freely and fearlessly without any requirement to identify their names or home addresses. Moreover, questionnaires are most of the time designed according to the research questions and purposes so that to get the required data to test the hypotheses suggested by the researcher in due course. Regarding the questionnaires' contents, the researcher should carefully ask concise, precise and feasible questions depending on the nature of his/her research. In fact, these questions can be inspired either by the researcher's own motivation and observation, or by the findings of previous relevant studies conducted within the same area of interest.

As far as the questionnaire that has been designed for the sake of eliciting the participants' views and attitudes towards the creative linguistic properties of text-based communication and language use/choice on Facebook is concerned, the researcher relied on his online observation as a an active Facebook user and on some previous findings related to gender-linked language differences in offline settings in order to construct some questions. In fact, it took us nearly half a year to arrive at the final design of the questionnaire since many questions were omitted, added, and paraphrased to what suits best the research aims, thanks to

the pilot studies that was undertaken with some EFL students during their regular sessions. Since some students have faced difficulty in understanding some key concepts within the questionnaire, we have decided to provide a list of definitions of some key terms illustrated with examples at the end of the questionnaire for clarity. Moreover, the questionnaire is drafted and administered in the English language simply for the reason that it targets EFL students who study English as specialty on its own at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret, West of Algeria.

As far as the structure of the questionnaire is concerned, six main sections have been outlined. The first section '*Personal Information*' includes background data about the participants, mainly their (biological) gender, age, and university level as an EFL student. Section two '*Linguistic Profile*' is meant to disclose the linguistic diversity of our participants as relatively bilingual or even plurilingual speakers/writers. The third section '*Access to and Use of Facebook*' tackles background information related to the use of this social networking site as an integral part in the participant's daily life. '*The Structural Features of Text-based Facebook Communication*' occupies the fourth section which aims at probing any gender differences in the use of certain scriptural, morpho-syntactic, and non-verbal features when interacting on Facebook. The fifth section assesses the participants' '*Attitudes towards the Linguistic Features of Facebook Communication*', mainly towards non-conventional spellings, the Romanized Arabic, the use of shortenings, switching/mixing practices, and the violation of punctuation norms. The last section '*Language Use and Choice on Facebook: Males' and Females' Preferences and Attitudes*' aims at surveying the participants' attitudes and preferences in using one language variety over another to accomplish certain functions when interacting textually on Facebook. Likert scale technique has been used also within this section as a means to measure the extent to which our participants 'agree' or 'disagree' with certain statements related to males' and females' communicative strategies and functions on Facebook.

2.4.5. Methods of Data Analysis

As a matter of fact, selecting the right data analysis methods in empirical studies is basically dependent of the type of data gathered from fieldwork. Most importantly, researchers concerned with data-based studies are actually not able to test the validity of their research hypotheses unless they execute a systematic data analysis process to find answers to their research problems. To do this, researchers are consequently required to adopt either a quantitative or a qualitative analytical method to attain their research objectives. As far as the

current CMDA research is concerned, Herring (2004,) asserts that this kind of research is methodologically oriented towards the analysis of a language-based content as this latter “may be purely qualitative - observations of discourse phenomena in a sample of text may be made, illustrated, and discussed - or quantitative - phenomena may be coded and counted, and summaries of their relative frequencies produced” (p.4-5).

However, employing a combination of the two approaches, or simply a ‘mixed-method research paradigm’, for an in-depth analysis is most often favoured among researchers it often helps out to “generate unique insights into a complex social phenomenon that are not available from either types of data alone” (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p.35. Quoted in Mehdaoui, 2017, p.126). That is to say, a mixed-method research design helps yielding more exceptional facts about a complex phenomenon since it amalgamates the strengths of both approaches for a thorough understanding of a given observable sociolinguistic problem. In the current investigation, therefore, screen text-based data and users’ data are respectively analysed qualitatively and quantitatively.

The qualitative approach is represented in a content analysis of a corpus of text-based samples collected, in light of our participant online observation, from our EFL students’ posts and comments on their Facebook group in order to dissect their innovative linguistic practices. Moreover, we opted for selecting only those unique and innovative text-based samples that serve our research aim. The sample was also categorized by theme in the sense that we classified each instance according to the linguistic feature that is most loaded of. Besides qualitative content analysis, a multimodal discourse analysis has been also utilized to some extent since we have encountered some interesting instances through which men and women are innovatively stereotyped in different manners. By way of explanation, a multimodal discourse is the one that contains both textual as well other specific semiotic recourses like pictures, colours, letters, signs, cartoons, etc. that have been creatively joint together in order to transmit a particular meaning or produce a social image about a certain phenomenon in a given socio-cultural context as will be elucidated in the next chapter.

As far as the quantitative approach is concerned, the data obtained through the survey questionnaire will be statistically analysed but qualitatively interpreted from a gender-related perspective so that to grasp any differences in males’ and females’ attitudes and views towards the creative linguistic features of text-based Facebook communication within the Algerian context and what affect their choices in using one language variety over another on Facebook. To highlight the questionnaire’s numerical findings in the next chapter, hence, we

opted for the use of both tables and graphs as the choice between the two is largely dependent on the type of the question to analyse.

2.5. Conclusion

To go over the major points discussed throughout its parts, then, this chapter drew attention to situation analysis through which emphasis was put on the most elements pertinent to the context of the research problem. Since this latter is grounded in the context of media sociolinguistics, this chapter opens first to the presentation of main issues and key concepts related to the so called OSNC in light of globalization and the ubiquity of ICTs worldwide. Thus, it threw light on the development and then the integration of CMC technologies, accompanied by attractive online services, in people's daily social practices at the global scale, particularly the social networking site Facebook. Within the same theoretical part, a special emphasis was put on the theme of gender identity construction within the virtual context as this area is still unexplored as far as the Algerian situation is concerned. It has also tackled the substantial impact that those text-based communication technologies like Facebook have brought to people's linguistic behaviour, leading therefore to the emergence of innovative online linguistic and paralinguistic features like shortenings, neologisms, unconventional spellings, emoticons, transliteration, etc.

Furthermore, the second part of this chapter embarked upon a brief description of the current (socio) linguistic situation in Algeria. It discussed the substantial historical, socio-cultural, economic, and political factors that went behind the linguistic diversity and complexity of the present Algerian linguistic repertoire. In addition to this, it presented the major genetically related and unrelated language varieties existing in Algeria today and how the contact between them lead to significant language contact phenomena like bilingualism, multilingualism, diglossia, borrowing, code switching and code mixing.

As for the last part of this chapter, details about the methodological framework of this case study research have been carefully cited since it bridges between the theoretical and practical frameworks of this thesis. Therefore, the choice of both CMDA as a research approach and empiricism as a research design have been justified as far as the research problem is concerned. As for data collection methods, we opted for both screen data and users' data have been collected via an online participant observation and a self-designed questionnaire administered to a random sample of 200 EFL students at Ibn Khaldoun

University of Tiaret respectively. Concerning the methods of data analysis, the screen text-based data collected from our EFL students' Facebook Group has been analyzed qualitatively through content as well as multimodal analytical techniques, while numeral data obtained the survey questionnaire have been processed and analysed quantitatively. The subsequent chapter is purely practical since it is devoted the analysis and discussion of the main findings obtained through our fieldwork.

Chapter Three: *Data Analysis and Discussion*

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3.1. Introduction

Moving beyond the theoretical, situational and methodological aspects, this chapter constitutes the practical framework of this research since it is fundamentally devoted for the analysis and discussion of the main research findings obtained from screen as well as users'-based data. As far as the former type in concerned, a qualitative content-based analysis has been adopted in order to pore over the major innovative linguistic practices distinguishing informal text-based communication Facebook. As for the latter, we opted for a quantitative approach through which tables and graphs will be implemented so as to present and discuss the questionnaire results in reference to the relevant literature; and hence, gaining valuable insights into the research phenomenon in-between hands. Moreover, general interpretations of the main findings; coupled with their implications to the research questions and their corresponding hypotheses stated in the general introduction, constitute that ultimate objective of this chapter.

3.2. Analysis of Online Participant Observation and Screen Data

From a purely linguistic standpoint, 'Facebooking' (*in* ADA: (v) *نفايسبوكي*) is a vernacular loan word that is often heard in day-to-day speech of Algerians as a reference to the state of being connected to Facebook at a given moment. In fact, the term is most often used in its general sense since it does not clearly state what interactional activity he/she is doing on Facebook at the moment of speaking. More importantly, the coinage of this neologism to become part of the lexicon of ADA reveals the extent to which a social networking site like Facebook has turned out to be more than a mere digital space linking people at the local and worldwide levels; yet, many users of this site have been relatively influenced by others' ideas, lifestyles, experiences, cultures, and ideologies, becoming therefore a double-edged sword. In spite of this, no one would ever deny the significance of this site in constructing as well as maintaining social ties and satisfying specific needs for its users, thanks to its advanced attractive design features and the diverse communicative modes that it encompasses today.

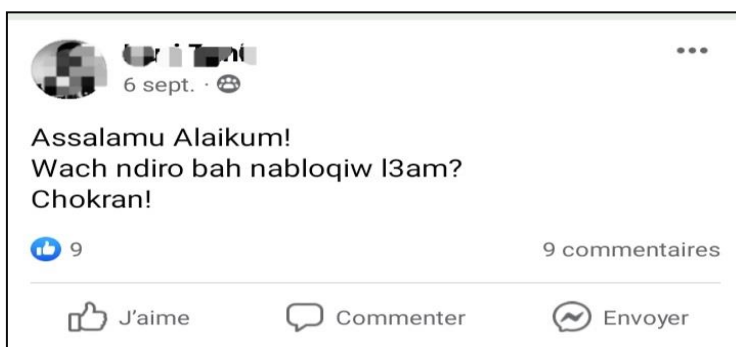
Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that Facebook has undergone consecutive technical updates to become communicatively a unique multimodal networking site that allows a human-to human communication through a variety of forms. Audio, audio-visual, and text-based interactions; besides the ability to exchange a recorded speech and other multimedia contents between interlocutors are probably the chief communicative affordances

that Facebook company has ever supplied to its clients so far, thanks to Messenger, the primary instant messaging mobile-based application of Facebook. As a prominent delegate of text-based CMC in the sphere of OSNC; however, the use of language in spontaneous text-based communicative events on this site is evidently being restyled by the digital interactional character of Facebook giving; therefore, birth to creative functionally-oriented linguistic practices appearing on the screen; ranging between morphological, orthographic, scriptural, semiotic, and lastly multimodal features. In view of that, the primary objective of this section is to shed light on those aforementioned features observed on Facebook supported with illustrative instances from the collected screen data.

3.2.1. Script-based Practices

In order to engage in a text-based online social interaction on Facebook or even before choosing a language variety either to exchange written contents via Messenger or to write comments and status updates on certain topics on the same networking site, online participants are required first to select the writing script that serves their communicative needs the most. Despite the capability of uploading of more than one script on the keyboard giving therefore legitimacy to the marginalized ones to be represented in online contexts, Algerian Facebook users still adhere to the use of Latin scripts to represent Arabic varieties and vice-versa. This has led to the emergence of creative linguistic practices associated with hybrid e-varieties namely the Romanised Arabic varieties (ADA and MSA) and the Arabised foreign languages (mainly French and English) that are being used alternatively in different writing spaces, by different interlocutors, at different levels, and to serve different functions. More importantly, these non-standard varieties tend also to exhibit a sense of idiosyncrasy since varied spellings of the same word and/or expression are often encountered on Facebook. As far as our case study research is concerned, various script-based practices have been found and which are portrayed in the following screenshots:

Example 01: The Scriptural Romanization of Arabic Varieties: MSA and ADA



Translation: 'Peace be upon you! What shall we do in order to block the academic year off? Thank you!'

Transliteration is regularly observed in the linguistic behaviour of many Algerian Facebook users. The manifestation of such hybrid e-varieties; revealed in the spelling of Arabic words and expressions using Latin scripts as demonstrated in screenshot 01 above, are likely to designate Algerian's linguistic potential to acclimatize their day-to-day spoken variety (ADA) and its standard counterpart (MSA) to suit the nature of text-based online interactional contexts. In doing so, they tend to type Arabic words and expressions in the way they are pronounced; escorted with the employment of given numbers and/or letters to represent given sounds in either variety.

However, such kind of transliteration is not always mutually intelligible among Algerian Facebook users since many are likely to encounter difficulties to understand it or even to communicate through it. On the one hand, the increasing adoption of such hybrid e-varieties on Facebook despite the ability to switch to or to upload Arabic scripts within the keyboard has eventually lead to the manifestation of diverse words forms characterized by idiosyncratic context-bound creative features as it shall be discussed later on. At the macro-level, on the other hand, the RA is deemed as the result of the wider adoption of text-based communication technologies in people's social lives and it is more likely to be associated with teenage identity more than with elders' since the former are probably less conservative and linguistically more competent to produce the RA words and expressions in the digital space. Besides that, the global character of OSNC is actually fostering a clash between the authentic socio-cultural identities of a given community and foreign ones; and this is what is being noticed in the habitual usage of RA by our Algerian EFL students on their Facebook group or even in the occurrence of the so called Arabised foreign languages.

Example 02: The Scriptural Arabisation of Foreign Languages: French and English



Translation: 'As you like miss, Oh! I mean madam (emoji of laugh)'

Due to the relatively rising shift towards the use of Arabic scripts to represent Arabic varieties on Facebook and the fact that Algerians' spontaneous interactions are loaded with varied language alternation practices like borrowing and code switching/mixing, many foreign words/expressions are most often spelled in Arabic scripts instead of switching to its Latin counterparts for many reasons. In the comment above conducted by an EFL Algerian student, three main varieties, namely English, French, and ADA, have been employed as a form of an intra-sentential code switching/mixing. Interestingly, the expression 'از يو لايك' stands for the English sentence 'As you like' while the terms 'مادموزال' and 'مادام' represent the two French words 'mademoiselle' and 'madame' respectively. In doing so, users often draw on sound for sound homophones in spelling the scripturally Arabised foreign words; issuing therefore a challenge to its counterpart, the RA. In other cases, Facebook users often switch back and forth from Arabic scripts to the Roman ones or vice-versa at different levels within written discourse.

Example 03: Intra-Sentential Script Switching



Translation: 'When the timetable was really a worthy timetable then (emoji of an hourglass)'

As its name indicates, intra-sentential script switching takes place when at least one word or phrase is completely typed in one script that is entirely different from the one in which other words or phrases has been written in within the same sentence. As revealed in the screenshot above, the user has shifted twice from Arabic script to the Roman ones to represent the English word ‘timetable’ in its original orthographic form so that to sound more accurate and easy to be comprehended by others. Moreover, this can also be considered as a type of intra-sentential code switching/mixing since the user has alternated between ADA and English within the same sentence two times. However, this in is not always true since such scriptural alternations are rather likely to take place to signify either Arabic or foreign meanings solely. Interestingly, the word ‘timetable ال’ has been written in two different scripts, representing therefore another level of script switching that is discussed in the following illustration.

Example 04: Intra-Word Script Switching



Translation: 'Reply to me in private'.

Besides intra- and inter-sentential scriptural alternation processes, online participants are also predisposed to the exhibition of an intra-word script switching (also labelled as ‘script fusing’ according to Panovic (2018); a process that involves the amalgamation of two different scripts (mainly Arabic and Latin) within the same word. In fact, this linguistic behaviour is usually displayed in text-based online interactions in order to compensate the lack of given sounds that cannot be properly represented in foreign scripts such as /p/, /g/, /v/, /ض/, /ص/, /ذ/, etc. In the above screenshot, however, script fusing has occurred between the standard Arabic definite article ‘ال’ and the French contracted word ‘prv’ (privé). Yet, this can be also be considered as a sort of linguistic borrowings (a loanword) since two dissimilar grammatical systems have been merged together in one word despite the availability of an equivalent to the word ‘privé’ in the lexicon of MSA.

3.2.2. Morphological Processes

In spite of the fact that the three major writing spaces; namely comments, posts, and instant messaging on Facebook are not constrained by limited amount of items as found in SMS, users of Facebook in Algeria seem that they are still au fait with the use of reduced words forms to that to deliver their messages as quick and as short as possible, especially when private discussions are concerned. Interestingly, such informal morphological usages tend to occur in online communicative contexts where their formal counterparts are supposed to take place instead. The major morphological processes observed on EFL students' Facebook group are: omission of vowel sounds for shortenings, clipping, acronyms and/or abbreviations, and morpho-phonological adaptation practices.

A. Omission of Vowel Sounds for Shortenings

As a matter of fact, the deletion of vowel sounds within lexemes might be the most prominent morphological process typifying online text-based communication of Algerian Facebook users when compared to other morphological practices. More importantly, we have observed that the production of such reduced word forms is more pertinent when the RA, French and English varieties are considered since dropping vowels sounds in Arabic-based words is linguistically impossible as this would relatively create a semantic as well as structural ambiguity. Yet, the use of shortenings via the partial and/or the complete deletion of vowels sounds within words might be motivated by the interlocutors' needs to deliver their messages as quick and as short as possible. Moreover, these informal practices have turned out to be a habit among our target population since they are quite widespread in their posts, comments, and private messages. The following examples illustrate best this morphological process:

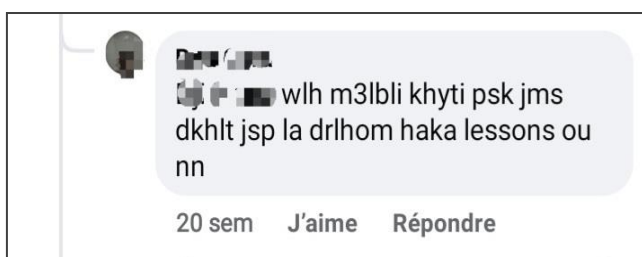
Example 05: Shortenings in the RA and the French Language



Translation: 'I could not upload the file, send it in private please'.

As far as the above example is concerned, all vowel sounds may have been deliberately removed from the Romanized ADA words ‘Mbghch’, ‘yt13’, and the French word ‘prv’; while a partial deletion of vowel sounds has occurred only in the word ‘rsli’. These words are supposed to be ‘Mabghach’, ‘yetla3’, ‘privé’, and ‘rseli’ respectively. Additionally, the user has drawn on the abbreviated version of the famed French polite expression ‘stp’ instead of ‘s’il tous plait’ as a sort of code switching that serves a given purpose.

Example 06: Shortenings in the RA and the French Language



Translation: ‘I swear I do not know dear since I have never checked it out.. So I do not know whether the ones included are lessons or not’

By analogy to the previous example, the Romanized ADA items ‘wlh’, ‘m3lbli’, ‘khyti’, ‘dkhlt’, and ‘drlhom’ have been shortened by removing nearly all the vowel sounds that normally constitute them. If we consider their formal structures, the words are expected to be spelled ‘wellah’ (والله), ‘ma3labali’, ‘khayti’, ‘dkhalt’, and ‘darolhom’ correspondingly. In a similar vein, the French word ‘jamais’ has been contracted to become ‘jms’, whilst the two French expressions ‘par ce que’ and ‘je ne sais pas’ have been abbreviated as ‘psk’ and ‘jsp’ respectively. However, we can notice that the French subordinate conjunction ‘par ce que’ has been abbreviated as ‘psk’ instead of ‘pcq’ which indicates that such non-standard usages of Romanized linguistic items and expressions in the digital sphere demonstrate a sense of idiosyncrasy, standing on the fact that different ways of their spellings can be encountered. For instance, the adverb ‘no’ has been eccentrically spelled as ‘nn’, seeing that people tend to exaggerate in repeating the letter ‘nnnnnnn’ to express a strong disagreement in some cases.

Example 07: Shortenings in the RA and the English Language



Translation: 'Send me a message so that to send you them'.
'I did'.

Both interlocutors in the example above tend to leave out all vowel sounds from certain words in their comments. The first one has used English/RA code switching and through which both the English word 'message' and the Romanized ADA word 'neb3athomlek' have been shortened as 'msg' and 'nb3thmlk' respectively. Similarly, it seems that the second interlocutor tend to accommodate their comment given that they replied by 'b3tlk' instead of 'b3atlek'.

Example 08: Shortenings in the RA and the English Language



Translation: 'I will do that sir, thank you so much. May God preserve you'

It is quite obvious in example 08 above that this interlocutor has reacted to a person of a higher social status than theirs since the latter was addressed by 'sir'. In spite of the formality of this context, however, the addresser has contracted the English expression 'thank you' to become 'thnk y' and the Romanized ADA word 'ykhlik' to 'ykhlk'. Although Facebook's writing spaces are not constrained by a limited set of characters, users still prefer the implementation of shortenings as possible as they can so that to correspond to the interactive and instantaneous nature of online text-based communication without paying much attention to the standards of writing as well as the formality of the context in which communication takes place. Besides the omission of vowel sounds to create shortenings,

Facebook users are also predisposed to drop initial as well as final letters from words. This morphological process is commonly known as clipping.

B. Clipping

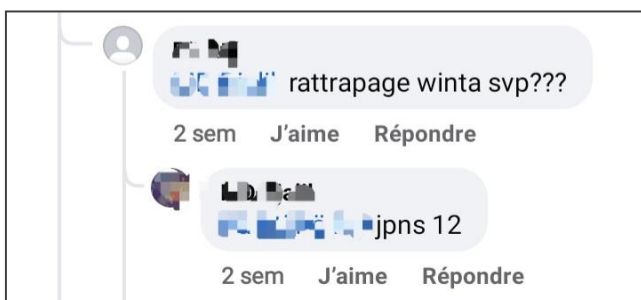
In fact, clipping is a further style of non-formal writing that resembles to some extent the omission of vowel sounds within words as a means to save time and efforts while typing a particular piece of writing on Facebook as illustrated beforehand. However, this morphological process is not restricted to the subtraction of vowels sounds within words only as elucidated in the former case, but it also includes the extraction of consonant and syllables at different positions within words as in the following examples:

Example 09: Clipping in the RA



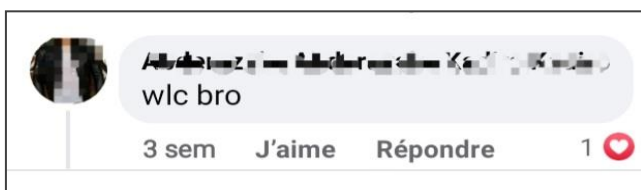
Translation: 'I have sent you them sister'.

Example 10: Clipping in the French Language



Translation: When will the makeup exams take place, please?
I think on 12th.

Example 11: Clipping in the English Language



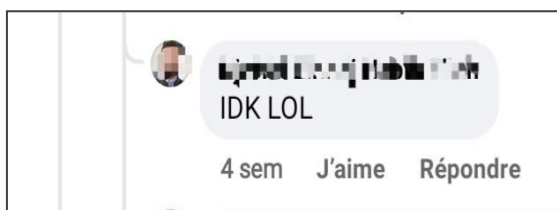
For purely linguistic factors, clipping larger parts within RA words is in fact not as widespread as the omission of vowels sounds to produce shortened forms of those words when interacting textually on Facebook. Thus, rare instances have been encountered during the process of data collection as far as this case is concerned. In example 09 above, a Facebook user has dropped the first syllable of the Algerian dialectal Arabic word ‘**rani**’ (I am/have) and used only the second syllable ‘ni’ in his comment. This sort of clipping is by and large known as fore-clipping.

Concerning the tenth example, the whole French simple sentence ‘**je pense**’ has been creatively reduced as ‘jpbs’ whereby the subject ‘je’ has been directly attached to its main verb ‘pense’ as if they were one word. This indicates that shortenings can be relatively applied to larger linguistic units, as understanding the meaning of such formative features depends, on the one hand, on the extent to which online users have been acquainted to such non-standard linguistic practices, and the context in which they occur on the other hand. As for the eleventh example, the English sentence ‘**welcome brother**’ has been clipped to become ‘wlc bro’ through which middle as well as final letters in both words were dropped. While the term ‘bro’ is very common in the English language as the only informal version of ‘brother’, the term ‘welcome’ is likely to be shortened in different manners such as ‘wlc m’ , ‘welcm’, etc. In addition to shortenings and clipping, online users tend to use abbreviated forms of certain stretchers linguistic units when they interact on Facebook.

C. Acronyms and Abbreviations

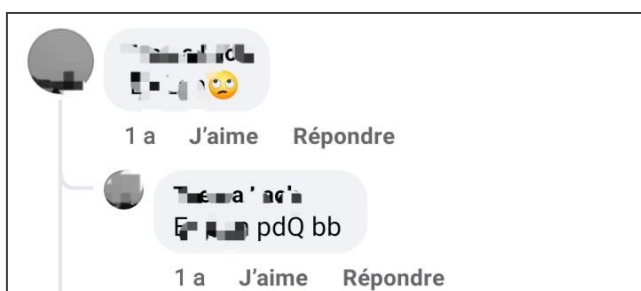
In order to avoid typing longer communicative expressions that may take much time and efforts, online users are likely to employ the abbreviated versions of these expressions as a means to adapt to the communicative character of the digital context and to convey their messages as immediately as possible. Moreover, it is worth reminding that a variety of acronyms and/or abbreviations are the products of the new communicative medium, yet some of them are rather spelled in different ways and are significantly dependent on the contexts in which they crop up. Consider the following examples:

Example 12: Acronyms and Abbreviations in the English Language



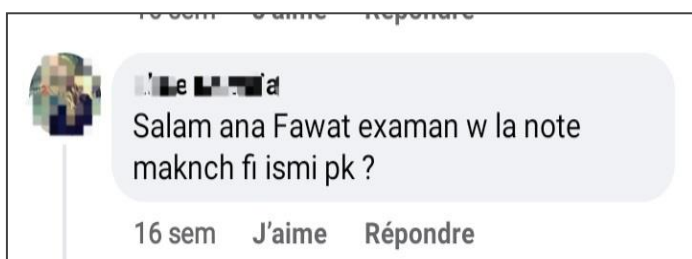
This user seems quite aware of the fact that acronyms and abbreviations are generally capitalized as far as formal writing is concerned in order to differentiate them from non-abbreviated units within discourse. Thus, he may have deliberately switched from small letters to their capitalized counterparts on the keyboard of his device since his comment consists of two initialisms only that stands for ‘**I do not know**’ and ‘**laughing out loud**’ respectively. While these two initialisms are orthographically correct, other ones may not correspond to the norms of their proper spellings as revealed in the subsequent two examples:

Example 13: Acronyms and Abbreviations in the French Language



This Facebook user utilized a combination of small as well as capital letters to write the abbreviated form of the French expression ‘**Pas de quoi**’ (you are welcome) as ‘pdQ’ instead of ‘PDQ’. In doing so, this user may have intentionally exhibited this shift so that to differentiate the letter ‘Q’ from other ones for more emphasis, meaning precision and draw the readers’ attention. Surprisingly, many other acronyms and/or abbreviations are regularly exploited in different writing spaces on Facebook, however, they also display idiosyncratic usages in the sense that they are spelled differently by different people in different contexts as in the following example:

Example 14: Acronyms and Abbreviations in the French Language



Translation: ‘Peace, I passed the exam but I did not find the mark next to my name, why?’

This piece of writing has been typed in the Romanized ADA variety and the producer of this content has integrated the French word ‘**pourquoi**’ in a form of an abbreviation ‘pk’. Yet, the letter ‘q’ has been substituted by its correspondent ‘k’ since, phonetically speaking; both of these voiceless sounds share the same place and manner of articulation. This phenomenon is considerably noticeable in many casual online written contents given that a variety of Facebook users, mainly the younger ones, tend to write what they speak; especially when they communicate in the RA that exhibits either the insertion of single items borrowed from other foreign languages or the frequent shift back and forth from one variety to another at different sentence levels as we shall see later. In addition to acronyms and abbreviations, another morphological feature that is reshaping language use in online text-based interactions is referred to as morpho-phonological adaptation/accommodation process.

D. Morpho-phonological Adaptation Processes

In addition to the partial and/or full deletion of vowel sounds within words, clippings, and acronyms, shortenings can also be created through the use of certain letters and/or numbers that can phonologically substitute either a whole word or just a part of it. That is to say, instead of typing whole words, people often prefer the use of given letters or numbers that are pronounced the same way as words or parts of certain words are. Consider the following screenshots:

Example 15: Letter for Letter Homophones in the French Language



*Translation: ‘Thank you, may God preserve you (emoji of love)’
‘Not at all (emoji of love)’*

Both interlocutors’ comments in the above example include short forms of some items. While the first interlocutor tend to drop all vowels sounds within the French word ‘**merci**’ and the ADA word ‘**yehafdek**’ as well, the second one to use the letter ‘**c**’ as a substitution or a shortened form for the French expression ‘**c’est**’ (it is). Phonologically speaking, both of ‘**c**’ and ‘**c’est**’ have nearly the same pronunciation, while the meaning of the

letter ‘c’ can be easily understood by others only with reference to the context in which it occurs. For instance, the French acronym ‘jcp’ (sometimes ‘jsp’) is generally interpreted as a reduction for the French sentence ‘je ne **sais** pas’ (I do not **know**). Letter for letter homophones are also found in the English language.

Example 16: Letter for Letter Homophones in the English Language



Example 17: Letter for Letter Homophones in the English Language

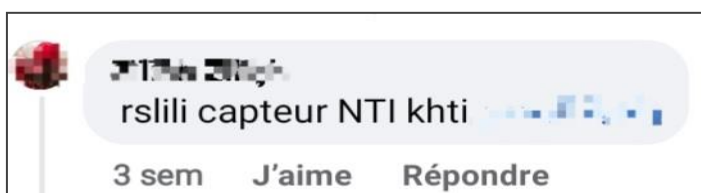


As far as example 16 is concerned, the producer of this Facebook comment has fascinatingly changed the formal structure of the English w/h question ‘**what**’ to become ‘wut’ /wʌt/. In spite of the fact that this latter is spelled differently, one should bear in mind that this person gives the impression that they are quite aware of the fact that this English word is phonetically pronounced the same way as other words like ‘but’, ‘cut’, ‘shut’, etc. do. Therefore, they have artistically implemented this atypical strategy to write shortenings and, most importantly, to be creative as possible as they could in typing his/her messages. Within the same line of thought, another person tend to reduce the English phrase ‘**thanks sister**’ to ‘thx sis’ as shown in example 17 above. In doing so, they have first omitted middle letters ‘**an**’ from the word ‘thanks’ and used the letter ‘**x**’ instead of ‘**ks**’ since both of them are equivalently pronounced as far as the word ‘thanks’ is concerned. These morpho-phonological adaptation processes pave the way for us to talk about non- standard orthographic practices in the subsequent section.

3.2.3. Non-Standard Orthographic Practices

As a matter of fact, cases in which non-conventional ways of spelling Latinized words are quite widespread on Facebook. As far as the Romanized ADA is concerned, we regularly find diverse spellings of one particular word, but this is not fairly surprising simply for the reason that this variety is neither standardized nor codified. Conversely, some Algerian Facebook users tend to spell foreign words as they are pronounced in spite of the availability of their standard versions as demonstrated in the following screenshots:

Example 18: Non-Standard Spellings in the French Language



Translation: 'Send me a screenshot dear sister'

Example 19: Non-Standard Spellings in the English Language



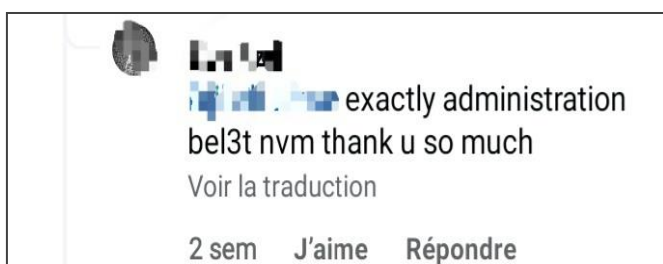
Even though non-standard spellings in text-based online synchronous/asynchronous interactions on Facebook may be deemed as writing errors committed by relatively non-competent passive language users, this latter may also execute such errors so as to write short word forms, attract the readers' attention, and maintain the rapidity of synchronous interactions as much as they can. Nevertheless, users may not be aware that they have exclusively communicated a different word meaning than the intended one as illustrated in example 18 above. By way of illustration, the French word '**capture**' has been typed as '**capteur**' (i.e. 'sensor'), but here we cannot assume that this is a matter of incorrect spelling because the latter French word is totally grammatical and meaningful as well. More importantly, the readers of this comment can still recognize the accurate word that this interlocutor wanted to communicate from the context in which has been used.

Concerning example 19 above, the English sentence ‘**what is (what’s) your**’ has been shortened as ‘whts ur’ by another online user. On the one hand, the apostrophe (’) has been omitted and the already contracted verb ‘to be’ (s) has been directly attached to the reduced word ‘wht’ without any space between them. On the other hand, this user was also inclined to morpho-phonologically adapt the English pronoun ‘**your**’ to ‘**ur**’ since both ‘you’ and the letter ‘u’ have the same pronunciation. Besides the non-standard spellings of word forms, punctuation seems untypical of such ‘new writing’; a casual speech that has been written down on the screen.

3.2.4. Deficient Punctuation

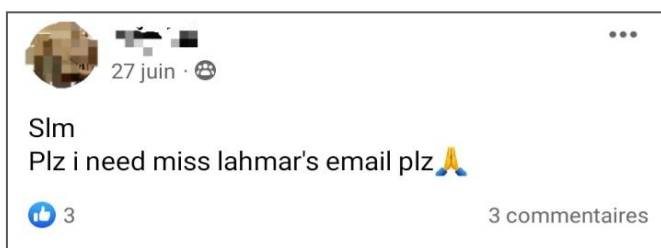
In fact, punctuation is conventionally attributed to standard writing and it is a crucial linguistic gadget that organizes the structure and meaning of larger linguistic units like sentences and paragraphs in written formal domains. In many text-based online interactions on Facebook, however, punctuation is sometimes either relatively neglected (as visibly illustrated in example 19 beforehand) or employed in a non-conventional way by language users. This suggests that spontaneous online text-based communicative styles are comparatively being stripped from proper grammatical features besides non-standard spellings of words and expressions to accomplish certain functions. In this respect, deficiency in the use of punctuation marks in certain online communicative contexts on Facebook is considerably originating from people’s sub-consciousness to save the typing efforts and exchange content rapidly. Full stops, commas, apostrophes, exclamation/interrogation marks, capital letters are most often omitted, yet readers are able to understand others’ messages fairly easily. Here are some instances in which punctuation marks are either fully or partially omitted:

Example 20: Full Omission of Punctuation Marks



Translation: Exactly, the administration was closed in November, thank you so much.

Example 21: Partial Omission of Punctuation Marks



Translation: 'Peace, I need Miss Lahmar's email please. (emoji of prayers in non-Islamic religions that conveys a polite request in this context)'

The degree of solidarity shared among EFL students on their Facebook group is a decisive factor that influences their online linguistic behaviour even in spite of the presence of some of their teachers on that group. Moreover, the anonymity of most participants and being physically non-present in such virtual text-based interactional contexts on Facebook have created a sense of linguistic liberalism for participants to violate the norms of standard writing and adopt spoken-like features in producing their screen-based messages. Hence, non-punctuated and/or improperly punctuated online written contents reflect the informality of the digital communicative context; in view of the fact that participants can express themselves freely without any linguistic restrictions imposed on them by the administrator of the Facebook group under investigation.

According to Herring (2001), the exhibition of non-standard orthographic practices in the language of CMC does not always indicate people's insufficient knowledge in standard grammar and spellings, but most of these practices are "...deliberate choices made by texters to economize on typing efforts, mimic spoken language features, or express themselves creatively" (Herring, 2001, p. 615-616). For instance, participants often write comments by only exaggerating in the use of full stops to indicate 'interest' in a given Facebook post and to get notified once a new comment on that post is published online by other people. In addition to this, people could rather compensate the lack of paralinguistic features such as facial expressions and tone of voice in text-based online interactions on Facebook through the use of punctuation marks, capitalization, letters and other symbols in a stylistic ingenious way. That is to say, online users could accommodate to such communicative contexts via the implementation of given semiotic meaningful cues that contribute in transmitting non-verbal displays such as anger, sadness, happiness, shouting, etc. within discourse.

3.2.5. The Transmission of Non-Verbal Cues

Even before the advent of text-based communication technologies, humans' feelings, moods, voice tones, and body movement have always been judged as vital non-verbal cues that boost face-to-face interactions and hinder communication breakdown among interlocutors to a large extent. People can accomplish numerous communicative functions using certain semiotic resources without articulating a single word as they can change the meaning of their utterances just by a change in the tone of their voices. Yet, with the intensive augmentation of diverse Internet-based interactional modes that has become deeply amalgamated in people's day-to-day social practices these days, text-based networking communication has been charged of deficiency at the level of those prosodic displays that function as crucial paralinguistic ingredients in constructing and interpreting social meanings among interlocutors in offline interactional contexts.

Furthermore, text-based social networking communication sites like Facebook can be regarded as powerful online communicative instruments that are being used to realize a variety of personal and interpersonal objectives. The enormous espousal of such mode of communication technologies in people's lives can be reckoned as a support to the reality that virtual written communication has finally reached an unprecedented stage in conveying those paralinguistic features, challenging therefore the criticisms that such communication mode is not as efficient as its face-to-face counterpart. Said differently, text-based online communication is not deficient in expressing those paralinguistic cues, but this latter have been adapted and represented in a rather artistic way that fits the character of such virtual interactional environment. As far as the present investigation is concerned, we have encountered various strategies through which our participants can convey a non-verbal meaning on Facebook. The following screenshots expose the most common strategies that have been used by EFL students to transmit such paralinguistic contents in their text-based Facebook interactions.

A. The Repetition of Letters

Despite the availability of more advanced methods to convey a non-verbal cue in such distant communicative contexts, this kind of non-conventional spelling is perhaps the major communicative strategy that is still being used by people to a certain extent in text-based online contexts to express a paralinguistic meaning. The repetition of letters is in fact a purely informal context-dependent linguistic phenomenon that can compensate the lack of particular

prosodic as well as paralinguistic elements like interlocutors' tones of voice, reactions and attitudes in casual online written interactions on Facebook. Here are some illustrations chosen from our web corpora:

Example 22: Letter Repetition in French/ADA



Translation: 'Hey, Allah's worshippers! We need the scholarship'

This participant seems in a desperate need for the university scholarship; an amount of money that is paid quarterly each academic year to all university students by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. To express their bad mood and dissatisfaction towards those who are in charge in paying this scholarship out in time, the student tend to idiosyncratically exaggerate in spelling the same Arabic letter /و / in both the ADA word 'طلقوووووو' and the Arabised French word 'لابووورس' (la bourse. i.e. the scholarship) as an indication of unsympathetic voice tone that one can imagine. More importantly, the use of the informal exclamatory Arabic expressions 'ياو' and 'عباد الله' in this anonymous communicative context has also diminished the degree of solidarity between this student and those in charge of this university scholarship. Surprisingly, such a functionally-oriented linguistic strategy is also apparent in Standard Arabic as demonstrated in the succeeding example.

Example 23: Letter Repetition in MSA



Translation: 'What such ignorance!! (emojis of crying and surprise)'

Once more, the manifestation of non-conventional spellings when using the standard version of a given language variety to communicate textually within a digital context like Facebook signifies the extent to which such communicative modes are reinforcing the use of informal linguistic styles over the formal ones in an unprecedented way. The repetition of all letters in the above example that is originally written in MSA is definitely governed by the interlocutor's strong shock from something that is abnormal for them as clearly specified by the use of the emoticons of surprise and crying. Hence, it would unproductive for this user to communicate this strong attitude in such context if they opted for the use of the relevant emoticons only without repeating the letters as indicated in their comment. Besides that, the exclamation mark that is assumed to crop up in this situation has been substituted by those emoticons for more emphasis and meaning reinforcement. By analogy to MSA, letter duplication has been also detected in (Romanized) foreign languages such as English to serve particular functions as elucidated in example 24 underneath.

Example 24: Letter Repetition in the English Language



Likewise, this EFL student is apparently so bothered about the delay in displaying the list of averages by the administration. To communicate such an unpleasant emotion which is evidently expressed in the English sentence ‘**we (are) sick of this**’, the author of this post used the Romanized ADA to write the first sentence ‘**Ma3lich t affichou?**’ (Would you display (our averages?) and then they switched directly to English. In doing so, the author has inserted an emoticon that separates between the two English sentences instead of putting a full stop. In fact, the inserted emoticon has been purposely included in this post since it represents a familiar hand movement usually performed by Algerian speakers who suddenly fall in a face-to-face dispute over a given issue. As for the second English sentence, the key words ‘average’ and the adverb of time ‘now’ have been typed in a non-standard fashion by repeating certain letters many times in order to signify emphasis and the interlocutor's discontent as if they were shouting. To attain the same goal, users often written particular

Romanized words and/or expressions using upper case letters as will be highlighted in the following section.

B. The Use of Fully Capitalized Words and/or Expressions

Capitalization is a very important trait of formal writing that is hardly ever adhered to in naturally occurring text-based online interactions as shown earlier in this chapter. In fact, the improper manifestation of capitalization in such communicative contexts can be manipulated by several factors like the user's lack of knowledge, the impact of the medium itself, and the informality of the interaction. In certain cases, however, capitalization can also be applied as a paralinguistic strategy that communicates a specific context-dependent meaning to others as revealed in example 26 below:

Example 25: The Use of Capitalization as a Paralinguistic Strategy



A first year master (M1) student, the author of this status update, seems pretty irritated by the administration's delay in posting the final averages (generally known as the deliberation) of all EFL students who study didactics as a specialty in Master degree. In order to lay much emphasis, draw others' attention mainly the administrators, and express their awful mood, this student tend to capitalize all the words put in between quotation marks since they embodies the most crucial phase within their post. In this respect, such deliberate non-conventional capitalizations occur when online users are motivated to convey a given non-verbal attitude and to place more emphasis on the thing that concerns them the most.

On the whole, standing on the fact that text-based online communication on Facebook takes place among two or more people who are not physically nearby within such an interactional context, the conveyance of paralinguistic cues are no longer regarded as an obstacle since people are constantly developing creative and successful strategies to transmit such cues that can at least achieve an equivalent effect as in face-to-face interactions. That is

to say, the language of text-based online communication is in a constant change as several innovative linguistic as well as semiotic features are floating to the surface for the sake of executing a successful communicative process. For instance, above and beyond letter repetitions and capitalization, punctuation marks are usually used along with other symbols to create certain semiotic recourses known as ‘smileys’ in order to symbolize a number of facial expressions and feelings.

C. The Use of Punctuation Marks, Letters and Other Symbols to Create ‘Smileys’

Smileys (currently identified as emojis) are considered as the preliminary communicative means that have been used as representations of diverse facial expressions in text-based digital interactions. These semiotic modes are generally created by combining certain punctuation marks, letters, numbers and other keyboard’s symbols in an innovative manner to represent a certain emotion and/or a facial expression. This indicates once more the humans’ ability in coping with the character of this new communicative medium and adjusting its accessible resources in a way that serves their requirements. Here are some random instances selected from our corpus in which only two ‘smileys’ have been used in two different comments

Example 26: The Functional Character of Smileys



Translation: ‘Hardworker²’.

‘I swear by God. Though boredom has killed me (smiley of joy)’

These two comments have been written in three main varieties namely ADA, MSA, and French using Latin characters. In the first comment, the mathematic symbol ‘²’ has been attached at the end of the feminine Romanized ADA word ‘khebasha’ to portray the double hard work that the first interlocutor, an EFL student, has done. In fact, this vernacular word is very common among our Algerian university students and it is mostly used to address those students who always attend their lectures and get good grades in the exams. As a reaction to the first comment, a smiley made up by merging three punctuation marks namely a colon,

apostrophe and a closing bracket in a stylistic way has been added at the end of the second comment as a paralinguistic cue that represent a joyful smiling face with a tear. This may be due to the fact that the second interlocutor has accomplished a great work (preparing summaries for lessons) during leisure time, a work that this interlocutor may have not done before; making, therefore, the situation quite ironic.

Example 27: The Functional Character of Smileys



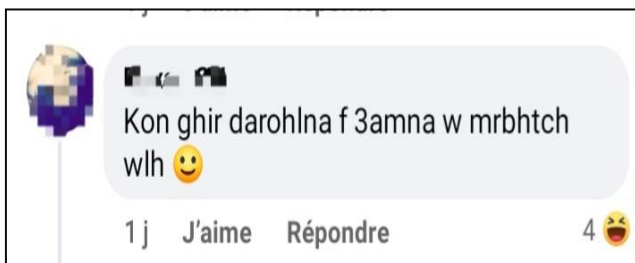
In a similar vein, another Facebook user has integrated a smiley of love and admiration at the end of their comment. This facial expression has been represented by placing a hyphen (symbolizing the nose) between two asterisks (symbolizing the eyes), without the need to represent the mouth. As a matter of fact, the choice of such smiley in this context is apparently prompted by the action of spoiling a girl by another person in a rather gorgeous way. Yet, this may also connotatively signify sarcasm and mocking the person mentioned in the comment depending on the two emojis of laughter appearing below as a reaction to this comment.

D. The Use of Ready-Made Smileys: Emojis and Animated Stickers

For practical reasons, technologists have afforded Facebook users around the globe more advanced and attractive versions of smileys acknowledged today as emojis and stickers. These new ready-made types are actually larger in number, widely used, and likely to perform a variety of functions within text-based discourse further than representing a given emotional facial expression only. Therefore, taking into consideration their spot within discourse is so crucial to understand their actual meanings instead of recognizing them as straightforward reflections of facial expressions in view of the fact that the same emoji is likely to symbolize different things in different contexts (Darics, 2013). By way of explanation, these new forms can be used to clear up meanings and/or to support them; to express various feelings in a more sophisticated way as they can also be employed as alternatives to certain words/expressions within discourse or substitute a whole message especially in writing Facebook comments. The

following are randomly selected screenshots highlighting some functional uses of emojis as well as stickers.

Example 28: Using Emojis to Clear up Meanings



Translation: 'I wish they had initiated this in our time and did not succeed then, I swear (emoji of joy)'.

Frankly speaking, considering the above statement alone without taking the inserted emoji of joy into account would simply imply that this person is feeling very upset about not have the chance to play a part in a contest before they graduate from university. Instead of incorporating any emoji of depression or regret, therefore, this user has inserted an emoji of happiness at the end of their comment to clear up the reality that they are not very interested in such contest as passing it or not will probably make no difference for that person. In this respect, the situation is quite paradoxical and ironic since what is textually stated and what is expressed by the emoji itself is totally different.

Example 29: Using Emojis to Underpin the Content of a Given Message



Translation: 'I wish they don't call me, please God' (Repetition)

In contrast to the foregoing case in which the emoji has been used to clarify the hidden meaning of the message, the consecutive insertion of the same emoji (joint two hands) in example 29 above is supposed to serve a distinct function within the comment. The nature of the written text (Douaa) is in fact being reinforced by those repeated emojis that symbolize the act of asking our God, the Almighty Allah, for good in our prayers and religious ceremonies as well. In this context, the inserted emojis are actually functioning as

paralinguistic devices that boost the meaning of the content that is already underpinned by the repetition of the same sentence twice in that comment.

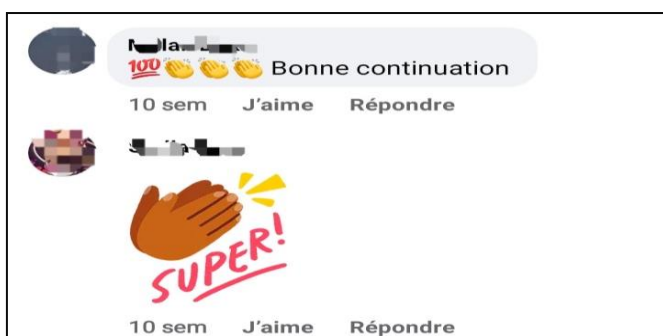
Example 30: Using Emojis to Express an Attitude towards Someone/Something



Translation: 'The most awful system (emojis of anger and disappointment)'

Conveying moods and expressing attitudes towards particular people, ideas, and things is almost certainly the core function that Facebook emojis are deemed to accomplish. In the comment displayed in the screenshot 30 above, two emojis that represent fury and displeasure respectively have been inserted in conjunction with the written content. The author of this comment is evidently in a mood of dissatisfaction towards the schooling system known as 'groupings' that has been urgently adopted by the Algerian government in all schools and universities due to the spread of Corona virus in the country and the whole world in recent times. Hence, these two emojis alongside the written statement reflect the extent to which this student is opposing the idea of re-implementing that system in the forthcoming academic year, as they can also facilitate the disclosure of people's feelings and attitudes towards a given topic by other interlocutors.

Example 31: Using a Sticker to Convey a Whole Written Message and Substitute it



As far as stickers are concerned, this latter tend to differ from emojis in many aspects. While emojis can occur at whatever position within written discourse as if they were punctuation marks, stickers can either occur alone as shown in example 31 above to express a specific meaning or used as supplements just below written messages to reinforce their

meanings. Besides that, while emojis are smaller in size and lack animation, most stickers are rather larger, animated, and multimodal in the sense that some of them have been created with words and expressions to convey certain meanings in a more decorative way.

As illustrate in the above screenshot, both comments have been produced as constructive feedbacks for another person's status update. The first one consists of two different emojis that represents admiration and approval in addition to the statement '*best of luck*' which is in fact operating as a supplement to those inserted emojis since they were typed first in that comment. As for the second comment, a sticker consisting in two clapping hands and the exclamatory red word 'super!' has been inserted by another participant to express their approval as well, without the need to type a single word along that sticker. Due to their attractive design features, stickers are functioning as powerful tools in transmitting emotions and expressing attitudes in a more ornamental means, however, Facebook interlocutors are required to share the common knowledge that enables them to use these stickers appropriately so that to keep away from any misunderstanding.

E. The Use of Expressive Pictures

Interestingly, the interactive constraints of text-based networking communication have fostered the adoption of more effective semiotic resources that help the transmission of non-verbal cues in a rather realistic way. Relevant expressive pictures taken from real life situations, films, series, cartoons, etc. are sometimes employed in online interactional text-based contexts on Facebook in order to communicate particular social meanings and/or given paralinguistic features that are not likely to be conveyed in words themselves. More importantly, these semiotic resources tend to supply other users with clues to familiar events, stories, voice tones, facial expressions, and sayings that they may have encountered in their day-to-day social practices; influencing therefore the construction and the interpretation of the meanings associated with them.

Apart from transmitting people's feelings and representing their facial moods, most of these meaning-oriented pictures are in fact loaded with significant implications linked to particular celebrities and cultures around the world. Yet, understanding the intended meanings constructed through such kind of pictures entail the users' acquaintance with the specific actions or sayings of those celebrities and cultures revealed in the picture. In order to achieve an efficient communicative practice through these pictures, however, users tend to insert specific written texts in the pictures themselves as if they were simply 'talking' so that to

attract the readers' attention and gain their recognition (see appendix 02). Consider the following illustrations:

Example 32: The Use of Pictures to Express Emotions



Translation: The status regarding the national service (an emoji of human skull representing a nightmare).

This comment contains three main elements: a written text in MSA variety, an emoji of a human skull, and an inserted picture representing a human facial expression. The author of this comment is evidently a male Algerian student since he is much concerned about the national military service; a condition that hinders his opportunity to get a job as an EFL teacher in a primary school, while females are rather left out. More importantly, both the inserted emoji of human skull that symbolises a nightmare (referring to the national service) in such context and the picture that represents a sad human face give the impression that this male student is fairly afraid of the possibility that his file will be rejected by the committee concerned with processing the candidates' files and, hence, being in face-to-face with the nightmare of unemployment.

Example 33: The Use of an Expressive Picture to Disambiguate a Written Message



Translation: 'How sweet is your silence!'

Unlike the previous case in which the picture has been added as an indicator of the user's emotional state, the picture highlighted in example 33 has been employed by a different user to serve another function in favour of the written text. If this letter occurred alone in the comment without any supplementary resources, it would be then clear that this user is truly admiring the silence of another person who wrote in their Facebook post that reading novels is a waste of time simply because they are useless and full of nonsense in their view. Yet, the attached comic picture, which belongs to a famous Egyptian actor, has turned all things around since it is in a paradoxical relationship with what has been typed by the commenter. That is to say, the facial expression of the actor in the picture is actually pointing to the fact that the author of the comment is mocking the writer of the post as if the former wanted to reply to the latter "you talk nonsense too".

Example 34: The Use of an Expressive Picture to Represent a Voice Tone



Translation: 'No polite speech, no correct language, no education, no national service exemption, no grandfather of their relatives. Everything has gone...'

Unlike the two previous comments in which the two pictures were employed as representations of emotional states, facial expressions and reinforcements to the written texts associated with them, the one highlighted in example 34 embodies the voice tone in which the written text should be read or even uttered. The picture is taken from a famous Algerian movie known almost by all Algerian people; especially its main character the renowned comedian Othmane Ariouet standing in the middle. The scene from which the picture has been taken represents a well-known casual speech performed by that Algerian actor in a humorous tone of voice that can be remembered and envisioned by all people who watched the full scenario. For the sake of mimicking Ariouet's hilarious oral performance, thus, the written text has been structurally accommodated by its author through the reoccurrence of the word 'لا' (no) after each phrase and reserving the expression 'لا جد موالهم' (No grandfather of

their relatives) for its cultural significance on the one hand, and for being an indicator to the way the written statement ought to be pronounced since it is originally part of Ariouet’s utterance on the other hand.

3.2.6. The Grammatical Markers of Gender Bias

The idea that text-based online communication is hindering or at least lessening the extension of sexist (socio) linguistic attitudes towards women and seems to be questioned as far as the current CMC-based gender research is concerned. Our online observation has revealed that the linguistic markers of female EFL students are fairly invisible when compared to their male counterparts; indicating therefore the persistence of the generic ‘he’ in a virtual Facebook community of practice characterized by its particular interests and unique linguistic norms. More importantly, the phenomenon is being more salient when informal Arabic text-based interactions are considered, as it has been noticed in status updates more than in comments and exhibited by both genders to a certain degree as illuminated in the following examples:

Examples 35: A Male’s Status Update

Example 36: A Male’s Status Update



Translation: ‘Peace be upon you. The one who got the list of averages of the second semester, he or she send it to me (emoji of black heart)’

Translation: ‘Peace be upon you. The one who knows the user name and the password of that application tells us’

The above screenshots represent two dissimilar purely informal status updates published by two different EFL male students. The one on the left side is asking his male or female online classmates to send him the grades of the second semester (S2) as overtly expressed in the Romanized ADA phrases ‘**li 3ando**’ (if he has them) and ‘**wla 3andha**’ (or if she has them). Despite this partial grammatical gender awareness in such context, the participant ended his statement by the masculine action verb ‘**ybe3toli**’ (he sends me them) as

if he were merely addressing males in view of the fact that the feminine counterpart of that ADA verb ‘**teb3tholi**’ (she send me them) has not been used. As for the other status update displayed on the right side, another EFL male student is in need for information related to the registration number (**lmatrikile**) and the password of an application (**app**) launched by the faculty of Letters and Languages and which allows students to check their grades easily on their smart phones. Unlike the former example, however, male generics are rather all-pervading in his post, mainly expressed in the two ADA words ‘**3rf**’ (he who knows) and ‘**ygoulna**’ (he tells us) that are specifying the gender of the addressees. Consequently, their feminine counterparts ‘**3rfa**’ and ‘**tgoulna**’ are fairly invisible and understood since this male student will surely not mind if a female student equipped him with the required information.

Unlike face-to-face interactions, Facebook text-based posts are rather more asynchronous/one-to-many in the sense that they allow users to construct their messages freely before they publish them and even to modify them after being published and viewed by a large audience. In spite of this, feminine linguistic markers are rarely expressed, if not completely ignored, in the favour of male-based generics within spontaneous Facebook text-based interactions. Such grammatical gender discrimination is in fact deeply rooted in Algerian people’s day-to-day spoken interactions regardless of their age, gender, level of education, occupation, etc. indicating therefore the presence of a patriarchal normative belief system in the linguistic repertoire of most Algerians which has been transmitted into the ‘blue world’. In this respect, Spender (1980) argues that linguistic meanings are profoundly man-made and women are simply viewing the world from the perspective of men’s meanings. This can be relatively proved in the following female EFL students’ Facebook posts.

Examples 37: A Female’s Status Update Examples 38: A Female’s Status Update



Translation: ‘Peace, who wants to make a change? I was selected in the specialty of linguistics and I want to transform to didactics. Please contact me.’

Translation: ‘Who has commanded the certificate of high-quality career and they prepared it for him?’

Two different topics are being tackled by two different female EFL students in the above screenshots. On the right side, 'Per La' is enquiring whether the certificate of 'high-quality career' (حسن السيرة) has been handled to those who have submitted an official demand to get it. She communicated this matter in ADA variety using Arabic scripts so that to clear up the certificate name since this latter may not be comprehensible if spelled in Latin scripts. Albeit the reality that her post addresses both genders, she employed only the masculine grammatical gender as revealed in the morpho-phonologically adapted French loanword 'دوموندا' (demanded) and the vernacular Arabic action verb 'خدمو هاله' (have prepared it for him) given that their conventional feminine counterparts are 'دوموندات' and 'خدموها' respectively.

On the left side, 'Meriem' wants to change her specialty as a first year EFL master student from Linguistics to Didactics and she is searching for one of her classmates to make an exchange with her. Her writing style is purely more informal as characterized by the use of the Romanized ADA, poor punctuation, use of shortenings (slm, ybdl, yrsli, etc), clippings (ling 'linguistics', did 'didactics'), non-conventional spellings like 'pllllz' (please), and code mixing. Moreover, Meriem would possibly be more comfortable to make that exchange with a female classmate more than with a strange male, but the exclusive manifestation of the masculine grammatical markers in her post, mainly in the words 'baghi' (he who wants to), 'ybedl' (he who wants to change), and 'yrsli' (he contacts me), implies that her post addresses males as well as she went to the extent of being unaware of such sexist attitude. Nevertheless, she might be quite conscious that her chances to make the exchange will shrink if she has employed only their feminine counterparts 'baghya', 'tbedl', and 'trsl' respectively.

In a nutshell, the traditional social positioning of women to perform less powerful social roles and the early ideological sexist beliefs held by a patriarchal social order is perhaps the major factor that has given legitimacy to the domination of male generics in ADA. In casual interactions, feminine linguistic markers are most often context-bound and hardly ever expressed within discourse in contrast to their masculine counterparts such as 'بطاقة الطالب' (student's card), 'ملف استاذ متعاقد' (a contractual teacher file), 'شكون جا' (who has come?), and so on. Interestingly, such gender-prejudicial linguistic features are likely to be categorized in the column of implicit stereotypes since they are generally exhibited beyond people's consciousness in day-to-day offline as well as online interactions. Hence, eliminating this grammar-based gender discrimination from the linguistic behaviour of Algerians is easier said than done since the process entails the eradication of patriarchal social beliefs deeply-seated in people's minds. Additionally, particular offline ideological socio-cultural representations of

men and women in the Algerian context are frequently shared on Facebook through the use of novel multimodal expressive pictures that convey specific meanings as will be highlighted in the next section.

3.2.7. Multimodal Gendered Stereotypes

Texts, symbols, pictures, caricatures, colours, photo-shopped images, and many other semiotic, digital, and linguistic resources are very often merged together in creative styles constituting therefore novel multimodal Facebook pictures that negotiate significant socio-cultural identities and meanings. Many Facebook users find these pictures quite entertaining and attractive because of the way they have been constructed as they can fairly easily deduce the hidden and/or the explicit messages held within them. To attain this, online users draw on each and every element inserted within multimodal Facebook pictures to get the overall meaning since each ingredient is deemed to fulfil a particular function within them. As far as the current investigation is concerned, men and women in the Algerian context tend to be stereotyped differently as illustrated in the subsequent screenshots:

Examples 39, 40: Gender Roles and Expectations



Both of the above attached Facebook screenshots essentialize the social roles of Algerian men and women and stereotype them in an unprecedented way. The one on the left side has been shared by an EFL student on the target Facebook group and attached the statement ‘*Have a nice ride*’ which was ended by two different emojis expressing enjoyment. The shared content is a picture that is comprised of two cartoon characters from both genders staring at one another; a woman wearing a wedding dress and a man wearing a military uniform with a weapon in his hands. Moreover, the picture also contains an opening phrase

written in ADA variety 'بعد لافيشاج' (After the disclosure of grades) and the two Arabic singular personal pronouns 'هو' (he) and 'هي' (she) that have been placed just above their corresponding characters.

The overall message behind this humorous shared post is to give a picture of the ultimate future of male and female students if they continue getting catastrophic averages in their university exams. However, the content transmits and reinforces an implicit gender-based ideology that is purely related to the roles of men and women in the Algerian society. With reference to their different emblematic cloths and the places in which they are standing, female students are socially expected to enter the private sphere as housewives and handle the responsibility of doing housework and raising children if they failed in their university studies. Males on the other hand are rather exposed to do labour in the public sphere if they fail too, and there is may be no such a demanding physical work as joining the national military which remains the primary alternative option for such category. Consequently, the multimodal picture highlighted in example 39 portrays the patriarchal division of power between the two sexes and the binary ascribed socio-cultural roles that males and females are expected to perform in society if they fail in their university studies.

As far as the picture on the right side (example 40) is concerned, it highlights three women eating two pizzas independently from three men having just one pizza together. Interestingly, three images of a 200 Algerian Dinars (AD) coin has been placed in front of each woman, while only two unequal Algerian coins (500 AD and 100 AD) have been inserted in front of just two men. This gender disparity is in fact not haphazard since it strengthens the postulation that men and women have been socialized differently as if they were living in two dissimilar cultural worlds characterized by their own attributes. Thus, the fifty-fifty division of the pizzas' price among the three women is likely to reinforce the stereotype that women are more tight-fisted than men and are not willing to spend much for the benefit of others. Yet, this can also signify mutual aid and solidarity among women. As for the unbalanced distribution of the pizza's price among the three men, this can stereotypically signify that men tend to seize opportunities at the expense of others whenever they come across them as evidently shown in the man who paid a very small amount of money and the one who paid nil.

Examples 41, 42: Dehumanizing Multimodal Gendered Stereotypes



The ubiquity of the Internet accompanied with attractive digital affordances has enabled online users worldwide to represent the offline world creatively in a virtual text-based space like Facebook. The way Algerian men and women are stereotypically depicted in multimodal Facebook discourse points towards the fact that people's online behaviours are reasonably influenced by their offline ideologies and life experiences to the extent that a certain belief can be represented in different ways and at the same be exposed to a wide heterogeneous audience. The ideological representation of men and women through the use of animal metaphors in the Algerian culture is commonly manifested in people's day-to-day spontaneous offline interactions. Yet, they have been artistically crystallized on Facebook and adapted in a way that creates a centre of attention and analysis as revealed in examples 41 and 42 above.

In fact, the two examples have been taken from two different Facebook groups since we have hardly ever encountered instances like these gender- based multimodal pictures on the target EFL group. Two women in the first picture on the left side are metaphorized as two lizards hugging one another in the wild. The inserted text that is typed in the ADA variety represents an utterance produced by one of those two lizards (women) in which it tells the other one '*do not worry darling, we are good people with good intentions but we lack good fortune*'. Moreover, the two elements constituting the picture are in a paradoxical relationship. While the written text indicates that women are innocent and handicapped, the enclosure of the two lizards as if they were two women hugging one another have disambiguated the implicit stereotype that women are rather a source of evil and bad fortune in society instead; especially in demolishing social relationships between married couples and family members.

In a similar vein, the multimodal picture on the right side represents a chair constructed in a form of a scorpion. This peculiar chair has been correlated with the uncle's wife, but not necessarily that of the user who shared this content despite the utilization of the first personal pronoun in the ADA phrase 'كرسي مرت عمي' (the chair of **my** uncle's wife) which was typed by the user (him) herself. As a matter of fact, the virtual stereotyping of that wife in such way corresponds to offline proverbial derogatory gendered metaphors in the Algerian culture, and which use specific animal vehicles like scorpions, snakes, goats, etc. to represent the woman as a troublesome social member (Boudjema, 2021). Accordingly, the stylistic uses of multimodal communication on Facebook are regarded as revolutionary screen-based phenomena that are fostering the transmission and the preservation of gender-based essentialist beliefs in a way that has never existed before. However, most of these digitalized gendered stereotypes remain the product of androcentric socio-cultural beliefs lacking sufficient scientific bases; except the fact that they have just found their own way to invade the virtual world and hence being exposed to a wide range of people.

3.3. Analysis of the Questionnaire

As a matter of fact, the subsequent quantitative analysis of the questionnaire aims at unveiling the participants' usages, choices, opinions and attitudes towards the target linguistic features already examined in this chapter. Accordingly, the questionnaire results are statistically presented and grouped into tables and graphs so that to compare and discuss them from a gender-related perspective as far as the research objectives and hypotheses are concerned. It should be noted also that certain numbers and percentages go beyond the accurate number of the participants simply for the reason that they were not asked or obliged to select one answer to a number of questions.

3.3.1. Personal Information

This section is devoted to divulge our participants' personal details concerning their gender, the most relevant variable to this study, and age since this latter correlates to the postulation that innovative features of online text-based informal interactions are exhibited by the younger generation more than the elder one. In fact, this kind of data is quite significant for the reason that many researchers assume that sociolinguistic variation has been blurred due to the anonymous character of text-based OSNC on Facebook and it would be then easier said than done to detect differences and/or similarities in using language in the virtual space because of identity deception in terms of users' bio-data. More importantly, disclosing such

sort of data will help us to understand the extent to which genuine gender-linked language differences/similarities are salient in online text-based communication since such variables plays an immense role in the linguistic diversity of particular communities. Accordingly, table 3.1 below summarises best the ultimate number of the participants' who took part in this survey questionnaire.

Table 3.1 The Distribution of the Participants According to their Gender and Age.

Gender	Males				Females				Total
	75				86				161
	47%				53%				100%
Age	≤ 20	21-30	31-40	≥ 41	≤ 20	21-30	31-40	≥ 41	Total
	10	60	2	3	21	59	4	2	161
	13%	80%	03%	04%	24%	69%	05%	02%	100%

It is worth reminding that the survey has been randomly administered to a sample of 200 EFL students at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret by the researcher himself and his colleagues at the department of English. Nevertheless, it was carried out with a sample of 161 participants since many of them did not bring back the copies on time whilst others did not fill in their copies properly. Consequently, the eventual sample has comprised 75 (47%) of males and 86 (53%) of females distributed at four main age groups. The first group consists of 10(13%) of males and 21(24) of females whose ages are (≤ 20). The second group (**21-31**) occupies the largest number of the whole sample in which 60(80%) are males while 59(69%) are females. Thirdly, only 2(03%) of male and 4(05%) of female participants belong to the age group **31-40** with a collective amount of 6(3.72%). As for the fourth age group (≥ 41), this latter is made up of 3(04%) of male and only 2(02%) of female participants with a total number of 5(3.10%) from the sample as a whole.

On the basis of the participants' rates, we can deduce that the large majority of them belong to the younger age group (aged between 21 and 31). In fact, it was easier for the researcher himself to get in touch with such age group who found the topic of our investigation quite attention-grabbing as they did not even hesitate for a second to take part in our research. Besides that, we can infer that such generation were more cooperative than the other aged groups as this can also be explained by the reality that innovative text-based linguistic practices in Facebook interactions are mostly employed by the youth.

As far as the last two age groups are concerned, it was actually hard for the researcher to come across with participants' from both age groups despite the many attempts made by us to assemble a satisfactory sum of data from these categories. In reality, many of the reached ones did not express their readiness to participate in our survey once they were informed about the questionnaire's objectives simply for the reason that they rarely, if not never, use Facebook in their daily lives. Therefore, we managed to consider that sum of participants instead of spending much extra time without getting anything in return.

3.3.2. Linguistic Profile

This section is principally projected to give a picture of the participants' linguistic budget and to unveil the current patterns of linguistic diversity of Algerian Facebook users. Interestingly, both tables 3.2 and 3.3 beneath reflect, on the one hand, varied degrees of the participants' linguistic competencies as they can be considered as a straightforward evidence of the linguistic melting-pot situation existing in Algeria today on the other hand. While table 3.2 discloses the participants' mother tongues, table 3.3 exposes the language varieties that they usually speak and/or write without any specifications.

Table 3.2 The Participants' Mother Tongues.

Gender	Age	Language Varieties					Total
		MSA	ADA	Tamazight	French	English	
Males	≤ 20	02	08	00	00	00	10
		2.6%	10.4%	00%	(00%)	(00%)	13%
	21-30	26	31	02	00	01	60
		34.67%	41.33%	2.67%	(00%)	1.33%	80%
	31-40	01	01	00	00	00	2
		1.5%	1.5%	(00%)	(00%)	(00%)	3%
	≥ 41	02	01	00	00	00	3
		2.67%	1.33%	(00%)	(00%)	(00%)	4%
Females	≤ 20	11	09	00	01	00	21
		12.57%	10.28%	(00%)	1.14%	(00%)	24%
	21-30	14	41	04	00	00	59
		16.37%	47.95%	4.68%	(00%)	(00%)	69%
	31-40	03	01	00	00	00	4
		3.75%	1.25%	(00%)	(00%)	(00%)	5%
	≥ 41	00	02	00	00	00	2
		(00%)	2%	(00%)	(00%)	(00%)	2%

In view of the displayed results in table 3.2, we can notice that an outsized number of the participants 94(58.38%), who are in turn partitioned into 41(54.66%) of males and 53(61.62%) of females, declared 'ADA' as their mother tongue. Both males' and females' view is fairly reasonable standing on the fact that this variety is widely used in day-to-day social practices and in diverse informal as well as formal communicative situations, be it virtual or face-to-face. It is also the first language variety that is mostly acquired by children at an early age; especially those born in Arab-speaking families in Algeria. More importantly, this variety is being accommodated to the world of writing; particularly with the advent of text-based social networking communication technologies nowadays as Algerian online users are constantly adopting innovative linguistic strategies to represent the non-codified ADA in the virtual sphere in idiosyncratic ways as seen earlier in this chapter.

Regardless of being a hybrid local variety that embraces countless adapted and/or adopted borrowed items from CA, MSA, Tamazight, Turkish and Spanish, one should bear in mind that ADA has been greatly influenced by the French language since it is the most perceptible foreign language in the speech repertoire of Algerians. That is to say, Algerian speakers can easily switch back and forth from French to ADA at different structural levels within discourse either consciously or unconsciously to serve different functions. Therefore, the elimination of French loanwords of whatever kind is in effect easier said than done since heavy loads of lexical French items have been morpho-phonologically adapted and glided to the system of ADA as if they were parts of it.

To our surprise, a considerable number of participants representing 59(36.64%) out of the whole sample, most of whom were males 26(34.66%) and 14 (16.37%) of females belonging to the younger age group, stated that 'MSA' is their mother tongue. It seems that the rates of MSA, the formal codified variety, are quite challenging to that of ADA. The situation is quite sarcastic since the prestigious MSA, unlike the vernacular ADA, is acquired by children at the age of six or seven through a formal education at schools just like the other foreign languages namely French and English. Hence, their assumptions may have been misled by the declaration of 'the Arabic language as the official and national language for all Algerians' in the constitution since it is not quite clear from the statement which Arabic variety represents the mother tongue of all Algerians and which variety suits formal spoken/written domains. As for 'Tamazight', only 02 males and 04 females aged between 21 and 30 declared that it is their mother tongue simply for the reason that it represents the language of minority speech communities (20%) in Algeria (Boucherit, 2002) and it is not widespread in non-Berber speaking Algerian cities like Tiaret when compared to Berber-

speaking regions. In fact, table 3.3 below provides much more support to all of the aforesaid explanations as it highlights results related to the participants' most spoken/written languages and/or dialects without limitations to specific domains.

Table 3.3 Participants' Most Spoken/Written Languages and/or Dialects.

Gender	Age	Language Varieties						
		MSA	ADA	Tamazight	French	English	Spanish	German
Males	≤ 20	05	02	00	01	02	00	00
		6.5%	2.6%	00%	1.3%	2.6%	00%	00%
	21-30	31	30	03	19	42	03	01
		41.33%	40%	04%	25.33%	56%	04%	1.33%
	31-40	01	00	00	00	01	00	00
		1.5%	00%	00%	00%	1.5%	00%	00%
≥ 41	02	01	00	00	00	00	00	
	2.67%	1.33%	00%	00%	00%	00%	00%	
Females	≤ 20	9	4	00	04	18	01	00
		10.28%	4.55%	00%	4.55%	20.58%	1.14%	00%
	21-30	30	36	03	18	34	03	02
		35.08%	42.10%	3.50%	21.05%	39.77%	3.50%	2.33%
	31-40	02	02	00	02	02	00	00
		2.5%	2.5%	00%	2.5%	2.5%	00%	00%
	≥ 41	2	2	00	2	2	00	00
		2%	2%	00%	2%	2%	00%	00%

It is pretty evident in table 3.3 that our participants are likely to speak and/or write different languages and/or dialects at miscellaneous scales of proficiency and even mixing them in varying structural levels within discourse. Apart from ADA, the spontaneous non-formal local variety that is profoundly used in daily social interactions, 82 of the participants (39 males and 43 females) stated that they master MSA to certain degrees since it is much simpler and easier than its frozen counterpart CA. In online written domains, the ADA is being represented either by the use of Latin or Arabic scripts as such choices may be affected by the interlocutors, the topic of interaction or communication, the degree of formality of the situation, and even the availability of either one of the two scripts in the users devices. As for MSA, it has become compulsory for online users to represent this Arabic variety using its original letters instead of Latin ones; in view of the fact that the use of the latter would require much more time, efforts, space and even enough linguistic competencies to Latinise it the same as it would lead to the loss of identity.

As far as *Tamazight* is concerned, this variety is spoken and/or written only by 03(4%) males and 03(3.5%) females aged between 21 and 30; whilst the rates of first and second foreign languages in Algeria namely French and English respectively surpass that of Tamazight to a great extent. In this respect, the lowest rates of Tamazight may be related to the non-willingness of our younger participants to master it may be due to its non-functionality in getting employed after graduation when compared to French and English. Despite its status as a national and an official language like Arabic, its elaboration in function in non-Berber speaking regions remains very limited in scope as far as the contemporary socio-economic changes are concerned. It is therefore high time for Algerian decision-makers to broaden the teaching and/or the learning of Tamazight as an optional school subject matter in those regions so that to prove its socio-cultural significance in the general public for the sake of perking up its status within the whole country.

From a logical viewpoint, *French* is used by 20 males and 28 females due to its status as a first foreign language in Algeria after so many years of the colonisation. As EFL university students, of course, the large majority of our participants (45 of males and 56 of females) have demonstrated their ability to speak and write *English* since it is their field of study at university. With an equal footing to *Spanish* (used by 03 males and 4 females), *German* is also rarely, if not never, used by our participants (01 male and 02 females) in their interactions as such languages may be limited to classroom contexts at secondary schools, university (as modules or specialties) and even in some private schools where they communicate with their peers and instructors.

Despite the disparate distribution of gender in our sampling framework, we can deduce that males' and females' rates are nearly analogous so far in the sense that gender-preferential language use and choice has occupied most of our findings up till now.

3.3.3. Access to and Usage of Facebook

As its heading indicates, the following section is basically projected to provide numerical data vis-à-vis the usability of the social networking site Facebook and how frequent it is used by our participants in their daily lives. More specifically, this section wishes to highlight the most preferred languages that are chosen by our participants to log in their Facebook profiles to attain communicative goals and satisfy their needs. Furthermore, it

addresses some general aims and motivations that push our participants to surf in that ‘blue world’ as a worldwide social network that connects people locally and globally.

With reference to the aforementioned objectives, tables 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 underneath are hopefully thought-out to assess the extent to which frequencies, home page languages, aims and motivations of using Facebook are shaped by the gender of the participants.

Table 3.4 *The Frequency of Using Facebook.*

		The frequency of using Facebook				
Gender	Age	Always	Very often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Males	≤ 20	03	05	02	00	00
		3.9%	6.5%	2.6%	00%	00%
	21-30	24	21	14	01	00
		32%	28%	18.67%	1.33	00%
	31-40	00	01	01	00	00
		00%	1.5%	1.5%	00%	00%
≥ 41	00	01	02	00	00	
	00%	1.33%	2.67%	00%	00%	
Females	≤ 20	08	05	05	01	02
		9.14%	5.72%	5.72%	1.14%	2.28%
	21-30	25	05	22	06	01
		29.23%	5.85%	25.74%	7.01%	1.16%
	31-40	03	00	00	01	00
		3.75%	00%	00%	1.25	00%
≥ 41	01	01	00	00	00	
	1.50%	1.50%	00%	00%	00%	

The truth that Facebook has grown as one of the biggest worldwide companies that is frequently being utilised by nearly every mature individual in the world regardless of his/her gender, age, level of education, etc to attain specific intentions is comparatively supported by the results displayed in table 3.4. Males, on the one hand, have positively confirmed that they habitually use Facebook in their daily lives with different rates arrayed as follows: ‘*always*’ 27(36%), ‘*very often*’ 28(37.33%), ‘*sometimes*’ 19(25.33%) and ‘*rarely*’ 01(1.33%); whilst none 00(00%) of them have stated the opposite. Females, on the other hand, are also active Facebook users as the large majority of them ‘*always*’ 40(46.51%) utilise this social networking site in their day-to-day affairs. The other frequencies are listed as follow: ‘*very often*’ 11(12.79%), ‘*sometimes*’ 27(31.39%) and *rarely* 08(9.30%); whereas, only 03(3.48%) female participants whose answers were negative ‘*Never*’.

On the basis of the obtained results, we can deduce that Facebook is no longer limited to a certain gender category. Interestingly, it has become a free and a reachable virtual environment that offers multiple attractive affordances to men and women and the phenomenon has become much more prominent with the development of sophisticated multimodal asynchronous/synchronous communicative services within Facebook as a smartphone application. Hence, men and women are likely to represent themselves differently, (re)construct their beliefs and attitudes in various manners, and are even able to negotiate different and/or overlapping gendered identities in diverse Facebook communities. In other words, Facebook is regarded as an escape for both genders to engage in several online communicative activities defined by their specific objectives and registers.

Moreover, women would participate and even administer Facebook communities related to cooking, clothing, childcare, beauty, etc; whereas men are likely to join dissimilar online communities like cars, bodybuilding, etc. However, this assumption is not always valid since Facebook does not impose any gender identification in order to join a particular Facebook community except those groups directed by gender-sensitive administrators. Once more, the uppermost total rates of males and females' responses Facebook using frequencies have showed that Facebook communication has been converted into a dynamic interactional social network that tolerate the participation of assorted social categories of whatever gender, age, educational background, socio-economic status, etc in different text-based communicative spaces.

Table 3.5 Languages Used by the Participants to Log in their Facebook Accounts.

Gender	Age	Languages				
		Arabic	French	English	Spanish	German
Males	≤ 20	03	02	05	00	00
		3.9%	2.6%	6.5%	00%	00%
	21-30	08	11	41	00	00
		10.66%	14.66%	54.66%	00%	00%
	31-40	00	01	01	00	00
		00%	1.5%	1.5%	00%	00%
≥ 41	02	00	01	00	00	
	2.67%	00%	1.33%	00%	00%	
Females	≤ 20	03	06	10	02	00
		3.43%	6.86%	11.43%	2.28%	00%
	21-30	07	18	33	01	00
		8.18%	21.05%	38.60%	1.16%	00%
	31-40	02	01	01	00	00
		2.5%	1.25%	1.25%	00%	00%
	≥ 41	01	00	01	00	00
		1.50%	00%	1.50%	00%	00%

As far as language choice is concerned, table 3.5 above exhibits statistical information related to the most preferred language(s) used participants to log in their Facebook profiles. To begin with, *Arabic* (the MSA in this respect) is used by 13(17.33%) of males and 13(15.11%) of females only. In view of that, we can deduce that our participants seem unacquainted with Arabised homepages on Facebook due to their familiarity with foreign language(s)-based Facebook instructions and/or notifications. In this respect, *French* is favoured by 14(18.66%) of males and 25(29.06%); while *English* is preferred by 48(64%) of males and 45(52.32%) of females.

In light of this, it can be inferred that despite the possibility of choosing Arabic as a language of Facebook wall page, it appears that language marginalisation is implicitly reflected in our respondents' negative attitudes towards Arabic as this latter is less used as it was not expected. Yet, the educational background of our respondents as foreign language students at university plays a great role in this concern and that's way both males and females' rates of French and English are higher than those of Arabic. This can also implicate that Arabic is less prestigious or less technical for our respondents as young EFL students while their preference of using foreign languages, mainly English, might be an indication of their willingness to keep up with the modern world changes.

One must not refute the fact that English has also grown as the most outstanding lingua franca of the world today due to the advance of globalisation and technological industries. As for French, this language constitutes many of Algerians' daily social interactions in many contexts due to historical factors and hence its use is not out of the ordinary. Unfortunately, it is quite disheartening to notice that there is growing implicit stereotype that perceives a bunch of Facebook users who surf on this networking site using Arabic as conservative non-educated individuals, although such case could be explained in terms of their awareness of the Arabisation policy that bears greater implications of their national identity and belonging.

Table 3.6 Purposes and Motivations of Using Facebook.

		Purposes and Motivations					
Gender	Age	To maintain existing relationships and build new ones.	For Leisure and entertainment.	Educational purposes.	Seeking knowledge.	Searching for job opportunities locally and abroad.	Openness to the other world cultures and communities .
Males	≤ 20	04	02	03	03	00	01
		5.2%	2.6%	3.9%	3.9%	00%	1.3%
	21-30	23	32	19	17	08	16
		30.66%	42.66%	25.33%	22.66%	10.66%	21.33%
	31-40	02	00	01	01	00	00
		03%	00%	1.5%	1.5%	00%	00%
≥ 41	02	01	02	01	00	01	
	2.66%	1.33%	2.66%	1.33%	00%	1.33%	
Females	≤ 20	8	7	6	5	01	6
		9.14%	08%	6.86%	5.71%	1.14%	6.86%
	21-30	17	14	36	15	07	14
		19.89%	16.38%	42.10%	17.55%	8.18%	16.37%
	31-40	00	03	01	01	01	02
		00%	3.75%	1.25%	1.25%	1.25%	2.5%
≥ 41	00	1	1	00	00	00	
	00%	01%	01%	00%	00%	00%	

In is undeniable that users of Facebook are oriented by different motivations and specific purposes. In view of this fact, table 3.6 highlights some of the intended purposes that our participants are more likely to fulfil on Facebook. The prearranged choices can be categorised into three binaries ranging from specific to more general. As far as the first two choices are concerned, 31(41.33%) of males and 25(29.06%) of females declared that they use Facebook ‘to maintain existing relationships and build new ones’, while 35(46.66%) of males and 25(29.06%) of females stated that they log in this networking site ‘for leisure and entertainment’. We can notice that males’ rates outnumber that of females in both choices. Apart from their authentic online friends whom they know better, it can be relatively deduced that females might be afraid of being victimised by anonymous and fake Facebook accounts while males seem quite secure to handle such online deceptions and endure their consequences that they encounter through building new online friendships and thus enlarging their network. Yet, the second choice implies that Facebook is an escape for its users, mainly young males, to pass on their free time; going up and down visiting its various sub-communities (groups and pages that differ in their themes), checking others’ profiles, conducting particular status updates, watching videos, etc.

As for the second two options, there are 25(33.33%) males and 44(51.16%) females who have a propensity towards using Facebook '*for educational purposes*'; whereas 22(29.33%) males and 44(51.16%) females use it '*for knowledge*'. Surprisingly, it can be clearly observed that females' rates have immensely exceeded those of males in comparison to the first two options. It can be deduced that our female participants consider Facebook not just a mere purposeless social network, but they are pretty more aware of the benefits of this networking site as an online educational tool and a source for gaining knowledge of whatever type as well. This can also signify that females tend to pay more attention to the matters that concern their university studies on Facebook and this line of thought supports the fact that females tend to do well in education than their male counterparts.

In order to widen the scope of their motivations, we have provided our participants with two more general choices concerned with the job opportunities on Facebook and the use of this latter for intercultural communication and openness to the world's cultural groups. In this regard, only 08(10.66%) males and 09(10.46%) females declared that they use Facebook '*to search for job opportunities locally and abroad*'. As far as employment is concerned, the lowest rates of our male and female young participants seem quite logical in view of the fact that they are still undergraduate students and are not ready yet to enter the labour world. Nevertheless, there is a considerable amount of those students who are employed in different jobs and are at the same time continuing their studies at university. In fact, such cases are rather challenging for them as far as we know, since many of them could not balance between the two and consequently affecting their achievements in their studies to a certain degree.

Regarding the second choice, the participants' rates appear fairly lower than it was expected in which 18(24%) males and 22(25.58%) females said that the use Facebook for '*openness to the world's cultures and communities*'. In spite of this, Facebook remains one of the outstanding worldwide web-based social networking sites that bond individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds, ethnicity, religions, and beliefs. Nonetheless, openness to the world's cultures does not always necessitates face-to-face interactions since Facebook offers different multimodal services such as related videos, status updates and comments, photos, groups and pages, live events to negotiate particular cultural meanings. With an equal footing to males, therefore, our female participants give us the impression of being not interested in worldwide cross-cultural communication, at least in this particular age which entails more intrapersonal motives to be attained.

3.3.4. Structural Features of Text-based Facebook Communication

By and large, this section brings to light, besides some recognizable contact-induced linguistic practices, a variety of innovative online language-linked features that are likely to crop up to in text-based interactions on Facebook. More to the point, it aims at analysing the extent to which scriptural processes, morpho-syntactic features and paralinguistic cues are salient in our participants' casual text-based interactions on this networking site. For a better and a well organised body of data analysis, this section has been segregated into two subsections as follows:

3.3.4.1. Scriptural Processes

As its name designates, the chief objective of this subsection is to present statistical information concerning the manifestation of script-based processes, mainly transliteration from Arabic to Latin or vice-versa, script switching/fusing at different structural levels in the discourse of social networking communication on Facebook. Accordingly, table 3.7 underneath is meant to measure our male and female participants' frequencies about the manoeuvring of such scriptural processes in text-based interactional contexts on Facebook.

Table 3.7 Scriptural Processes in Facebook Text-based Interactions.

When you interact on Facebook, 1. Do you... ↓	Yes... ↓								No ↓	
	Always		Very often		Sometimes		Rarely		Males	Fem
	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem		
..use Latin scripts to write Arabic?	28	34	17	13	15	12	04	08	11	19
	17.54%	20.95%	10.66%	8.01%	9.4%	7.39%	2.50%	4.93%	6.90%	11.70%
..use Latin scripts to write Berber?	04	01	01	02	01	05	02	06	67	72
	2.50%	0.62%	0.63%	1.23%	0.63%	3.08%	1.25%	3.70%	41.99%	44.37%
..use Arabic scripts to spell foreign words?	03	05	05	15	35	28	13	22	19	16
	1.89%	3.08%	3.13%	9.24%	21.94%	17.25%	8.14%	13.56%	11.9%	9.87%
..switch from Latin scripts to the Arabic ones or vice versa within the same sentence?	09	15	19	16	22	30	14	11	11	14
	5.64%	9.24%	11.91%	9.87%	13.78%	18.48%	8.79%	6.77%	6.90%	8.62%
...use the two different scripts within the same word?	07	07	11	18	22	26	18	12	17	23
	4.3%	4.31%	6.90%	11.06%	13.78%	16.02%	11.28%	7.39%	10.66%	14.17%
..use any symbols like numbers to represent some Arabic sounds when using Latin scripts to write Arabic?	35	42	14	08	15	10	04	14	07	12
	21.94%	25.89%	8.77%	4.93%	9.40%	6.16%	2.50%	8.62%	4.38%	7.39%

First, when enquired if they ‘use Latin scripts to write Arabic’, the large majority of our participants confirmed that they do it as they replied with ‘yes’ with varying degrees. Hence, 64(40.10%) males have answered by: 28(17.54%) *always*, 17(10.66%) *very often*, 15(9.4%) *sometimes*, and 4(2.5%) *rarely*; while 11(6.90%) of them whose answers were negative ‘No’. In a similar vein, most of the females 67(41.29%) have also answered by ‘Yes’ with varying frequencies distributed as follows: 34(20.95) *always*, 13(8.01%) *very often*, 12(7.39%) *sometimes*, and 8(4.93%) *rarely*, whereas 19(11.70%) of them have answered by ‘No’. On the basis of these results, we can infer that women’s use of standard speech forms is questioned while men’s use of vernacular speech styles is maintained. Hence, the change of the context from face-to-face to virtual is perhaps the foremost factor that influenced women’s sense of confidentiality in using language due to the anonymous character of text-based online interactions. In fact, it should be pointed out that Latinised Arabic is a non-prestigious hybrid e-variety that can be in essence motivated by purely linguistic reasons such as word formation

processes, unconventional spellings; language alternation processes and so on as if they were habits in their daily interactions on Facebook.

As far as the '*use of Latin scripts to write Berber*' is concerned, the large majority of the respondents 139(86.33%), in which 67(41.99%) males and 72(44.37%) females, confirmed that they never '*No*' exhibit such process in their online interaction. This can be attributed to the fact that, as revealed beforehand, Berber (Tamazight) is rarely used among our participants either as a mother tongue or as second language. Yet, results have shown that Latin scripts are still more preferred than those of Arabic by Berber people (Zahali, 2020) due to the limited usage of its indigenous writing system (Tifinagh) in Facebook interactions.

Regarding the third mode namely the '*use of Arabic scripts to spell foreign words*', we can notice in table 3.7 that such novel process is not as frequent as the first case with respect to the rates of the first two choices ('*always*' and '*very often*') and those of the last three adverbs of frequency ('*sometimes*', '*rarely*' and '*no*') in each gender category. Nevertheless, this process seems correlated with females 70(43.13%) more than males 56(35.09%) and this certifies once again women's shift towards the implementation of non-standard communicative forms and non-conservative scriptural styles in their online interactions.

Secondly, findings of '*script-switching from Latin to Arabic or vice versa within the same sentence*' (i.e. intra-sentential script-switching) indicate that such process is moderately salient among our participants. Being distributed along the first three frequencies, 50(31.33%) of males and 61(37.59%) of females declared that they switch between the two scripts, while only 25 participants from each gender category whose answers varied between '*rarely*' and '*no*'. For the most part, this phenomenon does not occur randomly but it is instead governed by particular factors and communicative needs to be fulfilled. Interestingly, both males and females' rates have decreased when asked about '*intra-word script switching*' in which 40(25.06%) males and 51(31.43%) females have answered by '*Yes*' varied between '*always*', '*very often*' and '*sometimes*'. The rest of them who are subdivided in 35(21.93%) males and 35(21.56%) females provided negative responses varied between '*rarely*' and '*no*'. This indicates that such process is not much salient when compared to intra-sentential and inter-sentential script switching; standing on the fact that it is generally used to represent specific sounds that do not exist in either script. Yet, many interlocutors can easily interpret the intended sounds in given phonetic environments within Latinised and/or Arabised words to which they have been accustomed to the most.

Thirdly, the participants were also asked about the degree of using conventional symbols like numbers to symbolize specified sounds that lack their equivalent counterparts, precisely in Romanised Arabic. In view of the fact that this hybrid variety is still preserved, the large majority of the participants, who are in turn subdivided in 64(40.10%) males and 60(36.97%) females, confirmed with 'Yes' with varying frequencies namely 'always', 'very often' and 'sometimes'. This means that the occurrence of such symbols in the Romanisation of Arabic is not greatly affected by the gender of the user as much as it is influenced by unpredictable linguistic constraints that have reasonably resulted from the hybridisation of Arabic to become therefore norms among Algerian Facebook users.

In view of the above states of affairs, it can be proclaimed that the continuing materialisation of non-standard hybrid e-varieties such as the Romanised Arabic in virtual text-based communicative channels on Facebook has challenged those essentialist views that recognise females' linguistic styles as deviant from the normativeness of males.

3.3.4.2. Morpho-syntactic Processes

In brief, the chief goal of this subsection is to discuss statistical records concerning the disclosure of some unique morpho-syntactic traits (diverse kinds of shortenings, neologisms, language alternation processes, punctuation and non-conventional spellings) in hybrid text-based social networking communication on Facebook. Hence, table 3.8, which covers 07 yes/no questions, is intended to weigh up the degrees of their occurrence in such fashionable interactional contexts.

Table 3.8 Morpho-syntactic and Language Alternation Processes in Facebook Text-based Interactions.

When you interact on Facebook, 2. Do you..... ↓	Yes... ↓								No ↓	
	Always		Very often		Sometimes		Rarely		Males	Fem
	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem		
..use reduced forms of words?	24	31	21	19	21	25	05	06	04	05
	15.04%	19.10%	13.16%	11.71%	13.16%	15.40%	3.13%	3.70%	2.52%	3.08%
...create new words that have never been used before?	10	17	06	10	23	21	21	19	15	19
	6.26%	10.47%	3.77%	6.16%	14.41%	12.95%	13.16%	11.71%	9.4%	11.71%
...use acronyms and abbreviation instead of writing full sentences?	15	36	30	17	27	22	02	06	01	05
	9.4%	22.18%	18.8%	10.47%	16.93%	13.56%	1.25%	3.71%	0.62%	3.08%
...switch back and forth from one language variety to another?	11	22	19	15	38	32	03	12	04	05
	6.90%	13.55%	11.90%	9.24%	23.83%	19.73%	1.88%	7.39%	2.50%	3.08%
...borrow foreign words from other language varieties?	21	24	18	24	21	18	09	13	06	07
	13.16%	14.79%	11.28%	14.79%	13.16%	11.09%	5.65%	8.01%	3.76%	4.31%
..spell foreign words as they are pronounced, i.e. without giving attention to their formal structures?	14	22	13	19	25	26	14	08	09	11
	8.78%	13.55%	8.14%	11.70%	15.68%	16.02%	8.77%	4.94%	5.65%	6.77%
..pay attention to the correct usage of punctuation marks and capitalization?	11	15	08	10	17	11	19	18	20	32
	6.90%	9.24%	5.01%	6.16%	10.66%	6.77%	11.90%	11.009%	12.54%	19.73%

Table 3.8 goes over the main grammar-related aspects that characterise the non-standard hybrid written discourse of many Algerian Facebook users, basically the younger educated folks. To begin with, when the participants were questioned whether they ‘*use reduced forms of words*’ in their interactions on Facebook or not, the large majority of them, in which 66(41.36%) males and 75(46.22%) females, have answered with ‘*Yes*’ with altering rates from ‘*always*’ to ‘*sometimes*’. Yet, the participants’ rates have considerably diminished when questioned if they ‘*create words that have never been used before*’ (aka neologisms). In this respect, only 39(24.44%) males and 48(29.58%) females whose answers were positive ‘*Yes*’ with varying recurrences from ‘*always*’ to ‘*sometimes*’; whilst the rest of them, 36(22.56%) and 38(23.41%) respectively, whose responses altered between ‘*rarely*’ and

'never'. As for the '*use of acronyms and abbreviations instead of writing full sentences*', it is clearly perceptible that such two word formation processes are prevalent among Algerian Facebook users as 72(45.12%) males and 75(46.22%) females have held positive answers 'Yes' with changing frequencies from '*always*' to '*sometimes*'.

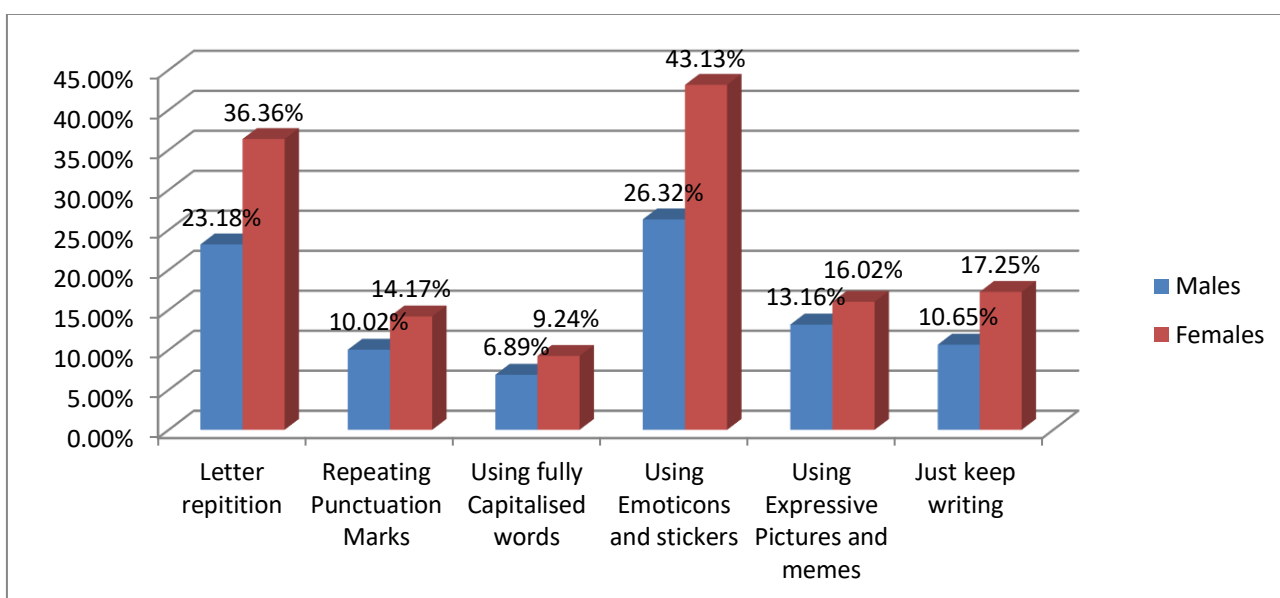
Aligning with what has been reported beforehand, it can be inferred that the use of shortenings and reduced word forms in text-based informal Facebook interactions echoes the characteristic capability of the human intellect to adapt language behaviour and produce unique lexical items that suit best the online textual communicative context and to hopefully overcome its constraints. In fact, those rehearsals are most of the time utilized in such contexts to serve discrete functions within discourse; especially for our female participants who seem indisposed to use standard language forms which are no longer dominating written domains on their own.

Furthermore, in view of the fact that language alternation processes, namely code switching/mixing and borrowing are, for the most part, rule-governed contact-induced linguistic outcomes that are in essence stimulated by given socio-cultural, pragmatic, psychological and linguistic factors, we managed to find out about the rates of their recurrences in text-based interactions on Facebook. In short, there are 68(42.61%) males and 69(42.52%) females who asserted that they '*switch back and forth from one language variety to another*' when they communicate via Facebook, whereas 60(37.6%) males and 66(40.67%) females declared that they '*borrow foreign words from other language varieties*' in their Facebook interactions as the large majority of both genders confirmed positively 'Yes' with altering frequencies from '*always*' to '*sometimes*'. The highest rates of both processes are quite reliable standing on the fact that every practice of code-switching starts off life as a borrowing process (Berrabah, 2014). Interestingly, the totalities give the feeling of being strapping evidence that code alternation processes have developed into outstanding interactional mechanisms in the discourse of our participants regardless of the trivial differences between males and females.

Thirdly, we have speculated, on the one hand, about the extent to which our respondents tend to '*spell foreign words as they are pronounced, i.e. without giving attention to their formal structures*' or not. In light of this, the mass of 52(32.58%) males and 67(41.29%) females avowed they did so 'Yes' with varying occurrences ranging from '*always*' to '*sometimes*'; whereas, only 23(14.41%) males and 19(11.70%) females whose answers altered between '*rarely*' and '*no*'. On the other hand, once the respondents were questioned if they '*pay attention to the correct usage of punctuation marks and capitalization*', 36(22.56%)

males and 36(22.18%) females affirmed they do ‘Yes’ with altering rates distributed along ‘always’, ‘very often’ and ‘sometimes’; whereas, 39(24.44%) male and 50(30.81%) female participants whose responses altered amid ‘rarely’ and ‘no’. Surprisingly, we can notice that females’ rates have surpassed those of their male counterparts in both cases; as this is likely to signify that women seem more unconscious than men towards the use of the norms of standard writings and their willingness to rather adopt innovative non-standard linguistic strategies that serve their intents as efficient as possible at the expense of formal word or sentence structures.

Last but not least, the participants were enquired about the main strategies which they employ to transmit relevant non-verbal displays like happiness, anger, sadness, etc in their text-based interactions on Facebook. Graph 3.1 beneath highlights the rates of the most common techniques used by our respondents to accomplish those communicative functions.



Graph 3.1 The Transmission of non-Verbal Cues in Text-based Facebook Interactions

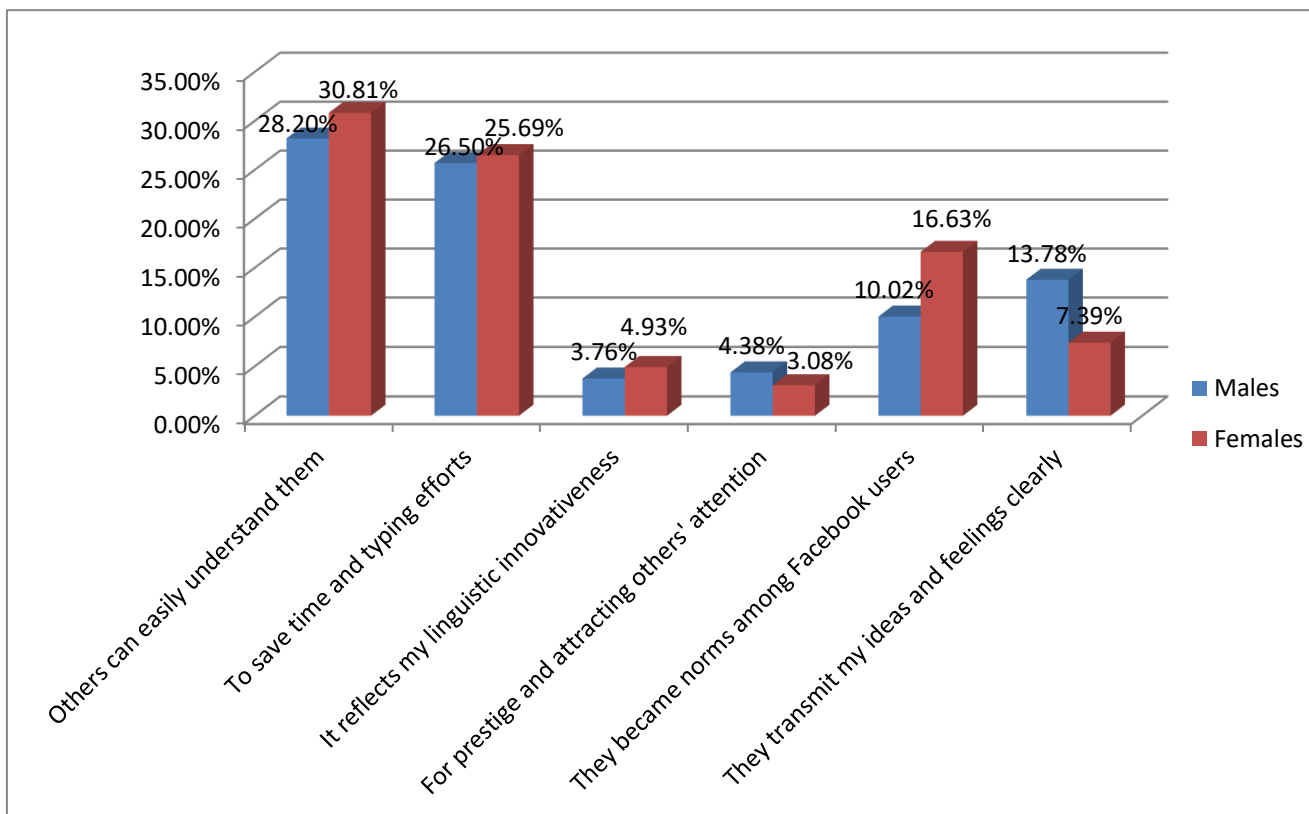
Graph 3.1 brings together an assortment of communicative devices exercised for the sake of negotiating given paralinguistic meanings in text-based Facebook interactions. We can notice that females’ rates have considerably exceeded those of their male counterparts in each choice which is likely to point out that women are more expressive of their feelings and attitudes more than men do. Nevertheless, it is also quite obvious that some of those devices are not used so frequently by our participants when compared to other ones. For example, ‘emoticons and stickers’ are the most favoured devices according to our participants (42 males and 70 females) due to their relevant attractive designs and their easiness to convey a

specific meaning with just ‘one click’. In the second place, 37 males and 53 females prefer ‘*letter repetition*’ to transmit a limited set of paralinguistic displays when compared to emoticons and stickers. ‘*Memes and expressive pictures*’ were more common among teenage Algerian Facebook users few years ago before the ubiquity of more advanced ready-made affordances for a better representation of non-verbal cues in textual online contexts. Yet, their usage has a little bit decreased standing on the fact that they are hardly accessible on Facebook given that they are not original products of this networking site like emoticons and stickers.

As for the other remaining linguistic strategies, the third choice ‘*just keep writing*’, which is favoured by 17 males and 28 females, gives the impression of being an unsuitable way to express non-verbal displays because it would consume much time and typing efforts the same as it would also be ineffective to arrive at mutual understanding among interlocutors. In the fourth place, it seems unpractical to use ‘*punctuation marks*’ as a means to convey non-verbal cues since only 16 males and 23 females adhere to it in their textual interactions on Facebook. This of course has to do with the limited set of punctuation marks which are seldom combined together in a creative manner to convey a certain feeling, attitude or a facial expression, even when other symbols are attached to them. Last but not least, the strategy of ‘*using fully capitalised words*’, mainly in Latin-based varieties, is notably rare among our participants (preferred by 11 males 15 females only) because of the gradual shift towards the use of Arabic letters instead of Latin ones when communicating in Arabic varieties.

3.3.5. Males’ and Females’ Attitudes towards the Linguistic Features of Facebook Communication

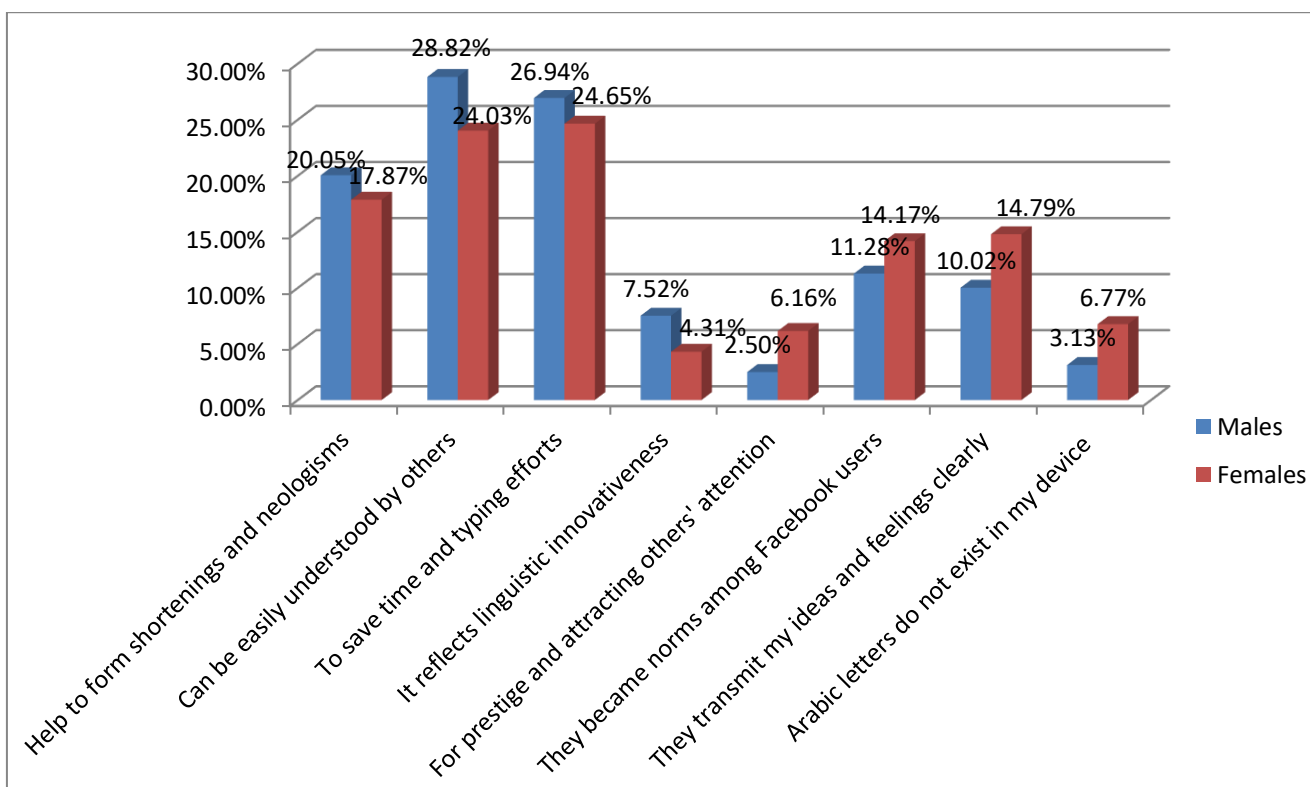
With reference to the preceding one, this subsection is intended to probe our participants’ attitudes and motivations of adopting given informal scriptural, morpho-syntactic, and orthographic processes that are likely to crop up in their text-based Facebook interactions as discussed beforehand. In doing so, the participants were equipped with a number of reasons behind the execution of those aforesaid linguistic practices when communicating textually on Facebook. Accordingly, the statistical data displayed in the upcoming illustrative graphs (from 3.2 to 3.6) are meant to analyse the foremost rationales behind the adoption of five main structural linguistic features that are most common among Algerian Facebook users in their casual text-based communicative practices.



Graph 3.2 Males and Females' Attitudes towards non-Conventional spellings

Graph 3.2 highlights the participants' perceptions regarding the non-conventional spelling of foreign words and expressions i.e. with no respect to their formal forms. It is worth noting that this question has not been answered by 08 males and 06 females because they tend to avoid it in their interactions. As clearly shown in the graph above, the large majority of the participants (45 males and 50 females) believe that those informal spellings *can be easily understood by others*; while the sum of 41 males and 43 females proclaim that they do so in order to *save time and reduce typing efforts*. In view of these highest rates, it can be stated that the meanings of such items are generally inferred from the contexts in which they occur and the extent to which interlocutors have been acquainted with these linguistic practices although Facebook text-based interactions are more asynchronous than synchronous. This idea is partially confirmed when 16 males and 27 females stress that non-conventional spellings have *become norms among Algerian Facebook users* i.e. habits. Yet, these practices seem far away from *expressing one's linguistic innovativeness, achieving prestige and attracting others' attention* for both gender groups as elucidated in the graph. This can be explained by the postulation that the recurrences of misspellings are likely to deteriorate formal languages through time as this latter are more prestigious than its informal counterparts. As far as their functions are concerned, a undersized portion of our participants

(22 males and 12 females) aver that non-conventional spellings ‘*transmit ideas and feelings clearly*’; indicating therefore the non-relevancy of such practices, mainly for females, in expressing their intentions and achieving a successful interaction as much as their formal counterparts can do.



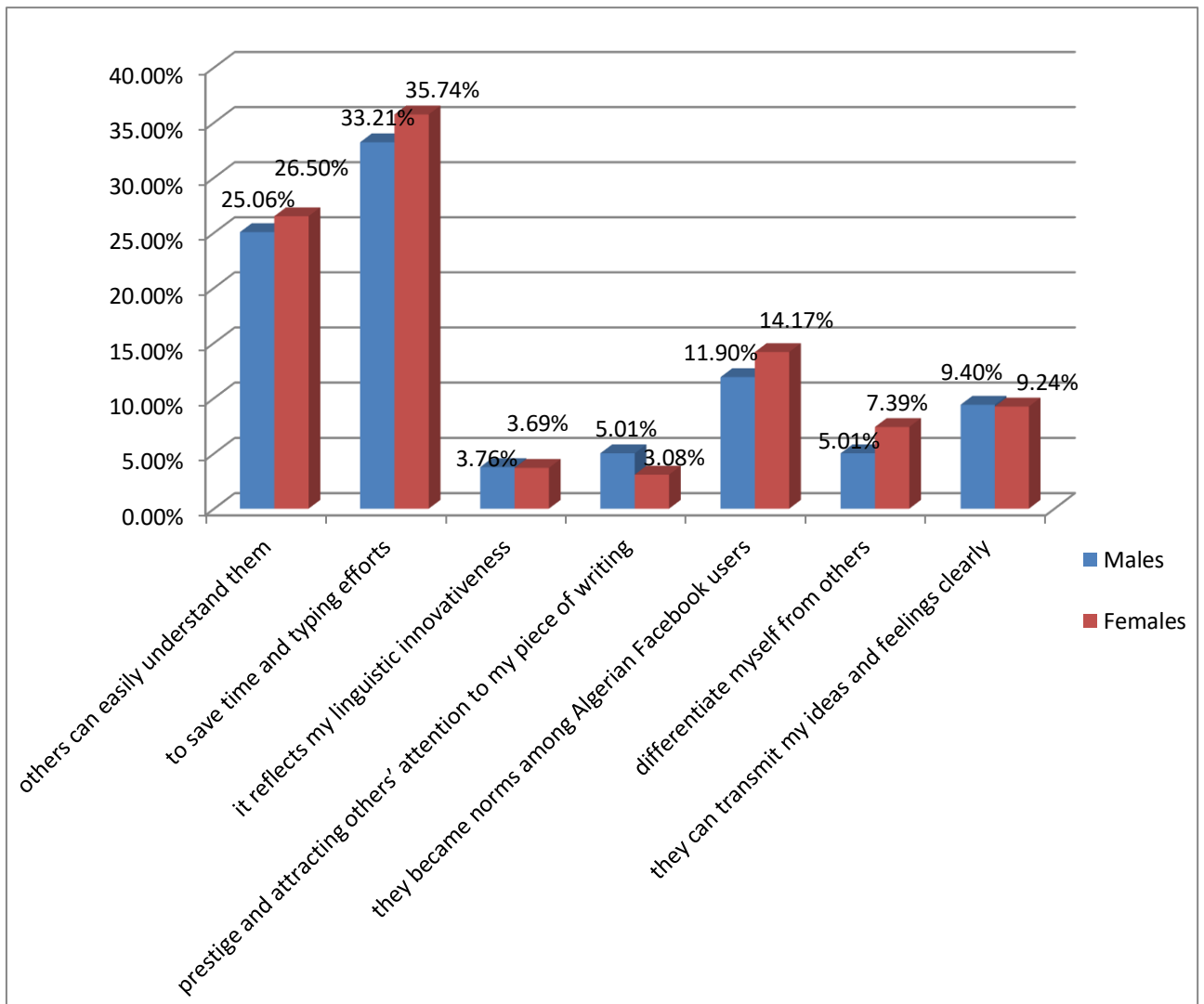
Graph 3.3 Males and Females' Attitudes towards the Scriptural Romanisation of Arabic

As its name entails, graph 3.3 recaps the participants' motives for the use of Latin scripts to write Arabic, i.e. the RA, when interacting textually on Facebook. In this phase of the research, our participants were asked to spell out the reason(s) behind the scriptural Romanisation of Arabic if they really do so in their Facebook interactions. As far as the first three highest rates, in which males' surpassed those of females, are concerned, 64 males/39 females, 43 males/40 females and 32 males/29 females declared that they use the RA because ‘*others can easily understand it*’, ‘*to save time and typing efforts*’ and ‘*it is helpful in forming shortenings and creating new words*’ respectively.

In this respect, it can be deduced that this deviant script-based process has firstly emerged as an urgent means to compensate the absence of Arabic letters in language settings at the very beginning of communication technologies. Hence, the Arabs, as in the case of Algerian speakers, got eventually acquainted with combining Latin letters together relying both on letter for letter homophones and other non-conventional symbols like numbers to

represent Arabic after a considerable amount of time before the integration of Arabic letters within those technologies. More importantly, this long-lasting process has become a skill, if not a competence, for many younger educated Algerian Facebook users since it equips them with various linguistic facilities; especially for the formation of shortenings and reduced items in an idiosyncratic way so that to gain time and speed up the pace of the interaction. This premise is moderately supported by some of our participants (18 males and 23 females) who believe that RA '*became a norm among Algerian Facebook users*' and it '*transmit ideas and feelings clearly and easily*' as confirmed by 16 males and 24 females. In a similar manner to non-conventional spellings, the RA is apparently far away from being *prestigious* since it is a hybrid e-variety that is neither standardised nor officialised even though it is used in informal and even formal written domains in the virtual context.

Astoundingly enough, a small amount of our participants (12 males and 07 females) asserted that the scriptural Romanisation of Arabic '*reflects their linguistic innovativeness*' although those lower rates were unpredicted if we take into account the various innovative practices that can be enacted when communicating in the RA. However, these findings can be explained by the idea that the RA does not completely correspond to the authentic national identity of the Algerians since Arabic meanings are represented in Latin scripts instead of the Arabic ones despite the availability of this latter in most of Facebook users' devices, mainly smartphones. This fact is fairly supported by our participants (only 5 males and 11 females) who declared that '*Arabic letters do not exist in my device*'.

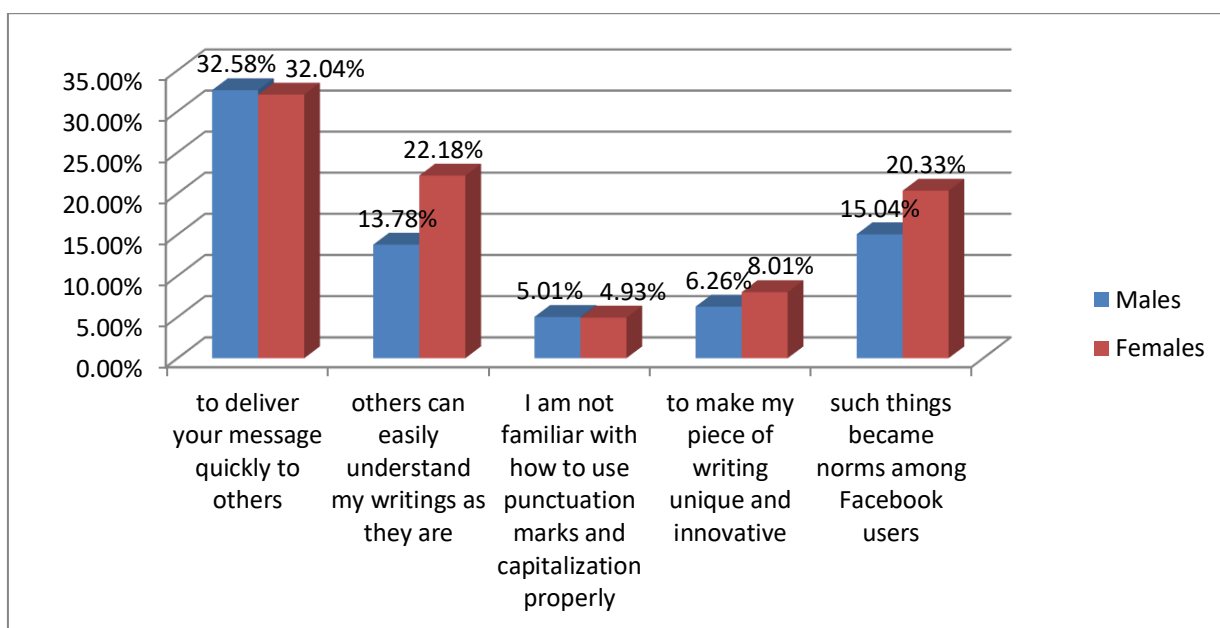


Graph 3.4 Males and Females' Attitudes towards the Use of Abbreviations, Acronyms and Reduced Word Forms.

Graph 3.4 displays the participants' beliefs towards the integration and formation of abbreviations, acronyms and reduced word structures in their text-based interactions on Facebook. As clearly demonstrated in the graph, these processes, which are of a morphological nature than syntactic, are generally executed so that 'to save time and typing efforts' and because 'others can easily understand them' as confirmed by the bulk of the participants (31.25% males and 35.75% females, 25.06% males and 26.50% females respectively). These higher rates imply that online text-based communication represents a challenge for its users, especially in synchronous modes, to achieve a mutually intelligible communicative practice that is as timesaving as its face-to-face counterpart can do. To attain this, users tend to avoid writing full word forms and even longer units like sentences so that to create much dynamism and interactivity with other interlocutors regardless the degree of formality of the virtual context. In view of this, these shortenings have turned out to be

'normative linguistic mechanisms' characterising the casual textual discourse of the younger generation on Facebook as asserted by 11.90% of males and 14.17% of females.

On the basis of the graph's statistics, also, we can detect that those shortening-based practices might fail in the transfer of clear meanings from the addresser to the addressee or vice-versa as confirmed by a small amount of the participants (9.40% males and 9.24% females). The problem of misunderstanding becomes more prominent when bizarre shortenings are suddenly employed by an interlocutor while the other(s) are not familiar with them at all; requesting therefore for further clarifications. With equal footing to males (3.76%), however, 3.69% females declared that these shortened forms *'reflect linguistic innovativeness'*; while 5.01% males and 3.08% females use those reduced expressions *'for prestige and attracting others' attention'*. In view of these lowest percentages of both gender categories, it can be presumed that it is quite reasonable to consider shortenings as less innovative and prestigious since they have become uncontrolled behaviours that are relatively threatening the standards of formal well organised pieces of writing.

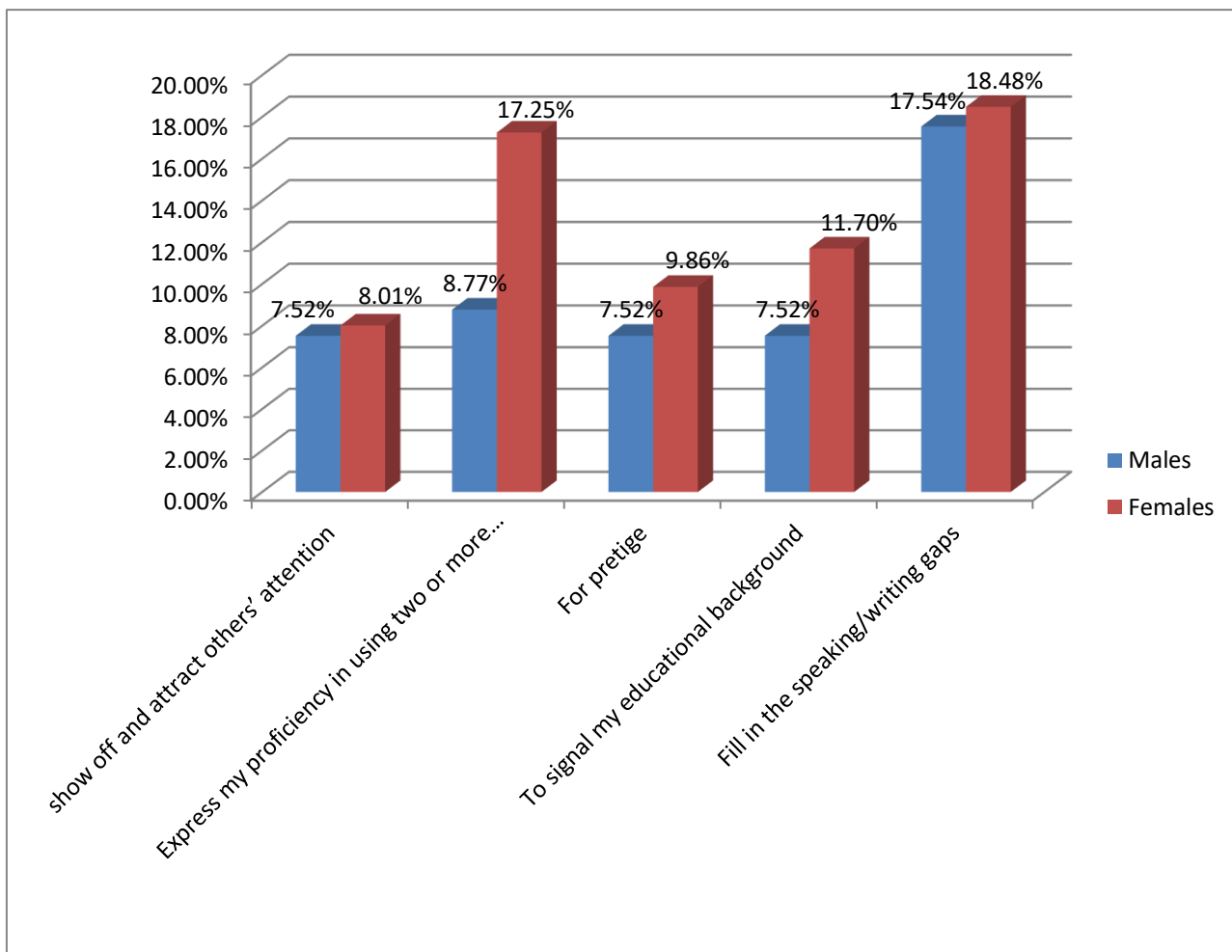


Graph 3.5 Males and Females' Attitudes towards Breaking the Norms of Punctuation and Capitalisation.

As its name indicates, graph 3.5 depicts conflicting opinions of the participants about the omission and/or the non-normative usage of punctuation marks and capitalisation in their text-based casual interactions on Facebook. The bulk of both gender groups (32.58% males and 32.04% females) proclaimed that they break the norms of punctuation in order to *'deliver their messages quickly to others'*; that is to say, to speed up the pace of their textual interactions despite the sufficient time and space to punctuate them without any

constraints as found in other text messaging forums like SMS. According to some of our participants (15.04% males and 20.33% females), the full exclusion, partial omission or even the unusual uses of punctuation marks have blatantly '*become norms among Facebook users*', mainly amid the younger generation who are impulsively more exposed to go beyond the grammatical standards of formal writings at the expense of the contents to be communicated. That is to say, the way messages are written does not matter as long as their contents are perceived by the addressees in turn taking textual communicative contexts. In view of this, a small amount of the participants, which comprises 6.26% males and 8.01% females, have unpredictably stated that the anomalous usage of punctuation '*makes their pieces of writing unique and innovative*'. This supports the postulation that non-punctuated textual Facebook interactions gives the impression of being more meaning-oriented than structure-based discourse since the same meaning can be expressed via diverse structures, be it innovative, traditional, standard, or informal.

Interestingly enough, the bulk of our participants declared that they are relatively familiar with the proper usage of punctuation marks and capitalisation with respect to their educational background as university students. This indicates that the ungrammatical and/or unconventional usage or the partial/full omission of punctuation marks has developed into a spontaneous psycholinguistic behaviour that is radically stimulated by the nature of the online casual interactional context in which interlocutors are predisposed to simply write what they speak or think of at the moment their hands start typing their messages, except where given domain factors require respectful grammatical writing.



Graph 3.6 *Males and Females' Attitudes towards the shift from One Code to Another in Facebook Interactions*

It is worth noting that written code switching is more conscious and planned than its oral counterpart since online users are equipped with the sufficient time to think of their discourse and to adjust it whenever they feel so, especially in asynchronous text-based communicative spaces on Facebook. In spontaneous naturally-occurring synchronous textual interactions, however, this hypothesis is somehow debatable standing on the fact that users tend to write what they speak immediately as if their interactions were a 'written spoken discourse'.

To begin with, graph 3.6 exhibits the participants' held views towards the shift back and forth from one code to another, i.e. code switching/mixing, in their text-based interactions on Facebook. It is plainly perceptible that females' rates have surpassed those of males at varying degrees which supports previous studies which inferred that this process is significantly performed by women more than men (Sadiqi, 2003). On equal degrees, the large majority of both gender group averred that they shift back and forth from one variety to

another in order to *'fill in the speaking/writing gaps'* as a means to reimburse the lack of specific items in the source language and, hence, to clear up exact meanings. In view of that, language mixing/switching processes are thus considered as impulsive functional communicative devices that negotiate given meanings in interactions. In addition to this, language alternation processes have become normative purposeful language behaviours in most Algerians' daily interactions in various contexts, especially the widespread French/Arabic CS and the intra-group English/French/Arabic one which is being used by our EFL Algerian participants to a great extent in their Facebook interactions (Boudjema and Mouhadjer, 2021).

Moreover, a bulky number of females, representing 17.25% out of the whole, declared that they alternate from one code to another to *'express proficiency in using two or more language varieties'*, while only 8.77% of their male counterparts do so for the same reason. In this respect, it can be inferred that females tend to signal their linguistic proficiency in using other varieties especially foreign ones in view of the fact that this gender group is statistically more concerned with learning foreign languages in Algeria than their male counterparts. This taken for granted piece of evidence is fairly supported by 11.70 % of females who claimed that they code switch/mix in order to *'signal their educational background'*; whilst just 7.52% of males have chosen this option. Furthermore, alternating between codes within interactions seem infrequently meant to negotiate *'prestige', 'showing off, and attracting others attentions'* for males in view of the graph results. Conversely, our female participants seem inclined to accomplish those individual intents which can in turn indicate that language alternation processes represent fruitful linguistic devices for educated women to boost their self-confidence and social status.

As a matter of fact, the phenomenon of code switching/mixing, mainly the oral one, has been given different explanations by different scholars in different contexts, while its online written counterpart has not received much theoretical as well as practical frameworks. Nevertheless, written code switching remains also a rule-governed systematic process that occurs at different structural levels within textual discourse, in view of the fact that those bilinguals who are able to shift back and forth in speaking are able to do so in writing. This contact-induced process is also attainable in the sense that it is performed by almost every social group in Algeria which is executed at varying levels of proficiency and with altering motivations and/or functions to be accomplished through it. Therefore, the interpretations made so far require a more in-depth context-based analysis of genuine written data for the

sake of testing the validity of theories and/or models of oral code switching in the written one with respect to the gender of the users as we recommend for further research.

3.3.6. Language Use and Choice on Facebook: Males' and Females' Preferences and Attitudes

The last subsection of the questionnaire is intended to measure our participants' preferences and attitudes in using and/or choosing a given language variety (ies) over the other(s) with reference to particular domain factors and communicative intents to be fulfilled on Facebook's dissimilar types of textual interactions. It also seeks to recapitulate their viewpoints on a seven-item Likert scale questions related to some held assumptions regarding the linguistic styles of males and females on Facebook. Therefore, tables 3.8, 3.9, and 3.10 are devoted to assist envisioning our respondents' abilities to utilize and/or mix the co-existing language varieties interchangeably as well as their opinions regarding common beliefs of men's and women's linguistic styles and communicative strategies as it will be illustrated in table 3.11 later on in this subsection.

Table 3.9 Language use and/or choice according to interlocutors.

	MSA		ADA		Tamazight		French		English		Others	
	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem
To communicate privately with your intimate friends.	24	19	42	41	02	03	06	20	21	31	00	Spanish 02 (1.23%)
	15.04 %	11.70 %	26.32 %	25.26 %	1.25%	1.84 %	3.76 %	12.32 %	13.16 %	19.10 %	00%	Italian 01 (0.61%)
To communicate privately with a higher social status person that you know.	32	22	12	17	00	03	20	20	29	32	00	00
	20.05 %	13.55 %	7.52%	10.47 %	00%	1.84 %	12.53 %	12.32 %	18.17 %	19.72 %	00%	00%
To communicate with an anonymous online user on Facebook.	16	12	33	28	01	02	09	19	22	24	00	00
	10.02 %	7.39%	20.68 %	17.25 %	0.62%	1.23 %	5.64%	11.7%	13.78 %	14.79 %	00%	00%

Table 3.9 highlights our participants' language-based choices according to three types of interlocutors whom they are likely to communicate with on Facebook. First of all, the large majority of males (42) and females (41) declared that they use ADA to communicate 'privately with their intimate friends'; while 24 and 19 of them respectively use MSA. Yet, it

is quite perceptible that females tend to use foreign languages, mainly French, English and even Spanish to a lower degree, to communicate with their intimate friends more than their male counterparts who seem more inclined to use Arabic varieties, mainly the vernacular one to negotiate their gender group solidarity. Yet, the change of the interlocutor has been accompanied by a change in the varieties used in which 32 of males and 22 of females tend to use the prestigious MSA; whereas 29 and 32 of them respectively utilize English, the language of enlightenment and modernization, in order to ‘to communicate privately with a known higher social status person’. With equal footing to males, 20 females have stated that they use French to interact textually with that kind of social agents on Facebook. Thirdly, once asked about the variety (ies) which they use most ‘to communicate with an anonymous Facebook user’, the sum of 61 participants consisting in 33 males and 28 females declared that they prefer using ADA for the most part, English (22 males and 24 females) while French is favoured by 06 males and 19 females. The results point out that females are more status-conscious as there is a growing tendency among them to employ more prestigious varieties, mainly the foreign ones, at varying degrees so that to express themselves explicitly more than their male counterparts typically do.

Table 3.10 Language use and/or choice according to the formality of the written status updates and comments.

	MSA		ADA		Tamazight		French		English		Others	
	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem
To write a formal status update on your Facebook profile.	28	24	15	07	00	01	14	24	47	46	00	00
	17.54 %	14.79 %	9.4%	4.31%	00%	0.61 %	8.77%	14.79 %	29.45 %	28.34 %	00%	00%
To write an informal status update on your Facebook profile.	16	20	35	26	01	03	07	14	31	33	00	00
	10.02%	12.32%	21.93%	16.02 %	0.62%	1.84 %	4.38%	8.62 %	19.42 %	20.33 %	00%	00%
To comment on a formal status update.	27	28	21	23	00	03	14	17	32	35	00	00
	16.92 %	17.25 %	13.16%	14.17 %	00%	1.84 %	8.77%	10.47 %	20.05 %	21.56 %	00%	00%
To comment on a less formal status update.	17	19	36	36	01	03	05	11	22	22	00	00
	10.65%	11.70%	22.56%	22.18 %	0.62%	1.84 %	3.13%	6.77 %	13.78 %	13.55 %	00%	00%

As its heading designates, table 3.10 reveals the rates of the most preferred varieties that could be used to conduct formal/informal pieces of writing either as status updates or comments on Facebook. As far as *formal status updates* are concerned, the large majority of the participants (47 males and 46 females) declared that they use English while 28 and 24 of them respectively use the formal Arabic variety MSA. French seems more suitable for females more than males in such contexts; whilst the ADA is favoured by 15 males and just 07 females. As for *writing comments to formal status updates*, we can notice that English and MSA are the most desired formal languages as confirmed by 32 males/35 females and 27 males/28 females respectively. Furthermore, when they were enquired about the varieties they use most to write '*less formal status updates*' in their Facebook profiles, we can spot in the table above that the large majority of the participants (35 males and 26 females) declared that they use ADA, while the sum of 31 males and 33 females claimed that they use English. In a similar vein, 36 males and 36 females stated that they use ADA '*to comment on a less formal status update*'; while the total of 22 of each gender category tend to use English.

Moreover, it is also fairly visible that the ADA is exploited more than French although the former contains countless French loanwords in its lexical repertoire. Yet, females seem predisposed to use French more than males in formal and informal interaction. It can be deduced in this respect that the complexity of Algerian sociolinguistic landscape is still salient in the online social networking communication on Facebook as many Algerian users of this networking site are liable to use vernacular varieties interchangeably with their formal counterparts and even switching between them within the same textual interaction regardless the formality of the context in which it takes place. That is to say, the wider adoption of such communication technologies has led to the loss of the online context which bears little influence on selecting the appropriate variety that corresponds to the topic of the interaction and even to the nature of the Facebook communities (i.e. groups and pages) that tackle diverse community-based matters such as politics, sports, religion, education, health, humour, etc. This is perhaps due to the willingness of our informants to negotiate manifold issues in view of their abilities to code switch or mix different varieties within the same online textual communicative context.

Table 3.11 Language use and/or choice to achieve self-expression, assertiveness and to convey social support on Facebook.

	MSA		ADA		Tamazight		French		English		Others	
	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem
To express your ideas and feelings on Facebook, either in posts, comments or chats.	24	25	25	23	01	00	07	11	34	43	00	Germ
	15.04%	15.40%	15.66%	14.17%	0.62%	00%	4.38%	6.77%	21.30%	26.5%	00%	0.61%
To produce a more assertive piece of writing on Facebook, either in posts, comments or chats.	30	31	11	09	00	02	07	17	38	37	00	00
	18.80%	19.10%	6.89%	5.54%	00%	1.23%	4.38%	10.47%	23.81%	22.80%	00%	00%
To convey social support towards a particular disaster like death, illness, car accident, etc.	49	35	26	23	02	00	03	10	19	23	00	00
	30.70%	21.56%	16.29%	14.17%	1.25%	00%	1.88%	6.16%	11.90%	14.17%	00%	00%

In addition to the previous tables, the findings displayed in table 3.10 above expose the participants' most preferred language varieties that can be brought into play to negotiate specific communicative intents in social networking text-based Facebook interactions. Once we asked about the variety (ies) that best '*expresses their ideas and feelings in textual interactions*', the large majority of the participants, precisely 34 males and 43 females, proclaimed that they draw on the English language in view of their educational level as EFL university students. This is not pretty surprising for the reason that this language has seized a prestigious status at the worldwide level as being an intercontinental lingua franca that has emerged as a result of the technological advancements made in the domain of online social networking communication and other technical fields. Moreover, we can detect in the same table that the ADA and MSA are similarly employed by males and females to serve different functions that are in turn determined by many factors; while French is used by females more than males (07/11 respectively) but to a lower degree. In fact, the ADA and MSA varieties embody significant socio-cultural values for the identity of Algerian Facebook users regardless the diglossic relationship between the two since users can easily shift back and forth from the 'low' variety to the 'high' one or vice-versa to fulfil particular functions.

Amazingly enough, the biggest sum of each gender group (38 males and 37 females) averred that they regularly use *English* in order to ‘*produce a more assertive piece of writing on Facebook*’; while the sum of 30 males and 31 females declared that they draw on the ‘high’ Arabic variety, the *MSA*, more than its ‘low’ counterpart as stated by only 11 males and 09 females. Their views are quite logical since formal languages are likely to deliver assertive messages more efficiently than vernacular linguistic styles as in the case of English which represents the language of powerful world nations like the USA, UK, etc and the eminent American movie industry ‘Hollywood’ that has unquestionably had an outstanding impact on the way most individuals of the current younger generation think and behave, especially those who are very obsessed with watching those movies in their free time. As for *MSA*, its prestigious status is indisputable since it is mostly used in religious and political discourse in Algeria to influence the general public although the *ADA* is most often used interchangeably with it in such formal settings and even in other informal ones due to the character of the online context.

As far as ‘*the conveyance of social support towards a particular tragedy like death, illness, car accident, etc*’, the efficacy of the *MSA* variety in expressing such social support in textual interactions on Facebook is plainly much acknowledged by males more than females as declared by 49 and 35 of them respectively. Yet, these highest rates of both gender groups can be explained by the fact that this Arabic variety allows its users to express their sympathetic prayers more fluently than the *ADA* as they can shift back and forth between the two varieties to fulfil particular functions on the subject of social support; regardless the grammar mistakes than can be committed by some users of the *MSA*. In contrast to males, foreign languages namely English and French seem rather more preferred by females to communicate their social support on Facebook and which can be explicated in terms of women’s overt prestige consciousness.

At this juncture, we managed to weight up the degree to which certain text-based linguistic attributes and communicative styles are associated with a particular gender group in Facebook interactions. To attain this, table 3.11 is meant to display our participants’ opinions towards particular form-based features such as transliteration (i.e. the *RA*), grammaticality and code switching/mixing; whereas table 3.12 is intended to highlight their attitudes towards some of the held beliefs that characterise the linguistic behaviours of males and females in Facebook text-based interactions mainly politeness, sarcasm and aggression, social support and disagreement.

Table 3.12 The Participants' Views towards Males and Females' Linguistic Characteristics of their Textual Facebook Interactions.

Statements	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree	
	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem
Using Latin scripts to communicate in Arabic on Facebook is associated with males more than females.	09	11	21	32	31	25	12	17	02	03
	5.64%	6.77%	13.16%	19.72%	19.42%	15.4%	7.52%	10.47%	1.25%	1.84%
Females tend to respect grammar rules when they interact on Facebook more than males do.	09	07	20	28	19	17	18	24	09	10
	5.64%	4.31%	12.53%	17.25%	11.90%	10.47%	11.28%	14.79%	5.64%	6.16%
Females tend to use code-switching/mixing when they interact on Facebook more than males do.	05	04	07	16	21	19	30	35	12	11
	3.13%	2.46%	4.38%	9.86%	13.16%	11.7%	18.8%	21.56%	7.52%	6.77%

As far as the first statement in table 3.11 is concerned, the sum of 56 participants, 31 of whom were males and 25 females, were simply 'neutral' to the statement that 'Using Latin scripts to communicate in Arabic on Facebook is associated with males more than females' while 53 of the participants, 21 males and 32 females, have 'disagreed' with it. These results designate that the RA functions as a practical e-variety that fulfils the needs of both male and female interlocutors as its manifestation in textual interactions on Facebook is not barely determined by the gender of the user, but also with respect to other factors that intersect with gender such as age, level of education, linguistic proficiency, the participants involved in the interaction, the context, etc. due to the linguistic facilities that this variety can provide for its users in the virtual context.

Concerning the second statement, we can clearly perceive that the amount of 48 participants (20 males and 28 females) have 'disagreed' to the statement that 'Females tend to respect grammar rules when they interact on Facebook more than males do'. Yet, 18 males and 24 females have 'agreed' with it. In view of this, we can deduce that there is a growing tendency among females to use ill-formed linguistic units in their textual Facebook interactions. In fact, the immediate interactive character of the online textual context is evidently having a stunning effect on the linguistic behaviour of females since online text-based communication is constantly reinforcing the exhibition of non-standard grammatical forms as well as unusual spellings in written domains on Facebook. Therefore, we can say that males' and females' linguistic strategies are overlapping in online social networking communication as long as their physical presence is hindered since have eventually caused the break of morpho-syntactic rules and is fostering the spread of unique screen-based linguistic attributes.

As for the third statement, the total of 65 participants, 30 of whom are males and 35 females, have ‘agreed’ to the statement that ‘*Females tend to use code-switching/mixing when they interact on Facebook more than males do*’. The phenomenon of code switching/mixing has long been tackled from diverse perspectives and investigated according to various social factors and in various communicative settings. As far as gender identity is concerned, many studies have concluded that this language alternation process is rather adopted by females more than males to attain fulfil specific intents in offline settings (see Sadiqi, 2003, Babou, 2012). In text-based online interactions, however, written code witching/mixing remains a little bit controversial since it would be quite challenging for researchers to determine, or at least to guess, which gender code switches/mixes more than the other by means of opinions and even when anonymous and/or even fake-gendered Facebook users are involved in the study by coincidence. More importantly, if we deem gender as a complex negotiated social construct that intersects with other context-based factors within interactions; deciding whether code switching/mixing is performed by a particular gender group would be easier said than done. Therefore, conducting such kind of CMC research requires a systematic analytical process of contextual data collected from casual text-based interactions of authentic Facebook users who are simply familiar to the researcher himself as if this latter were an online participant observer and an active ‘Facebooker’ at the same time.

Table 3.13 The Participants’ Attitudes towards Males and Females’ Characteristics of their Textual Facebook Communication.

Statements	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree	
	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem	Males	Fem
Females’ written communication on Facebook is characterized by politeness more than that of males’.	04	08	10	14	20	15	31	34	09	17
	2.50%	4.93%	6.26%	8.62%	12.53%	9.24%	19.42%	20.95%	5.64%	10.47%
Males’ written communication on Facebook is characterized by aggression and sarcasm more than that of females.	06	03	18	15	18	22	25	31	07	15
	3.53%	1.84%	11.28%	9.24%	11.28%	13.55%	15.66%	19.10%	4.38%	9.24%
Females’ written communication on Facebook is characterized by social support and empathy more than that of males.	04	04	12	17	25	20	27	38	06	09
	2.50%	2.46%	7.52%	10.47%	15.66%	12.32%	16.92%	23.41%	3.53%	5.54%
Males’ written communication on Facebook is characterized by disagreement and control more than that of females.	09	05	11	15	24	32	22	22	09	13
	5.64%	3.08%	6.89%	9.24%	15.04%	19.72%	13.78%	13.55%	5.64%	8.01%

To begin with, the participants were enquired about the extent to which they may agree or disagree with the postulation that *'Females' written communication on Facebook is characterized by politeness more than that of males'*. As expected, the largest sum of them, which includes 31 males and 34 females, have 'agreed' with it; whilst 56 participants (25 males and 31 females) have also agreed with the statement that *'Males' written communication on Facebook is characterized by aggression and sarcasm more than that of females'*. Politeness has for long identified as a gender-specific attribute that correlates with femininity more than with masculinity in offline settings. Moreover, the participants' opinions might be indirectly influenced by their socio-cultural beliefs and the stereotypical assumptions concerning the ideal characters of men and women and their roles in an androcentric social order. Nevertheless, the remaining rates can unveil that politeness, aggression and sarcasm can be negotiated by both gender categories in different contexts and with respect to specific domain factors as elucidated by the social constructivist view of gender.

Furthermore, the bulk of 65 participants, divided in 27 males and 38 females, have 'agreed' to the supposition that *'Females' written communication on Facebook is characterized by social support and empathy more than that of males'*; whilst other 25 males and 20 females have just remained 'neutral' to it. As far the last statement that is displayed in table 3.12 above, the average number of 56 participants, 24 males and 32 females, were 'neutral' to the statement that *'Males' written communication on Facebook is characterized by disagreement and control more than that of females'*; whereas 22 participants of each gender category asserted that they 'agree' to the aforesaid proclamation. Apparently enough, these opinions validates to some extent the generally held language-based assumptions that essentialise men and women as if they were belonging to different cultural groups.

Females, on the one hand, are said to be emotionally more sensitive and socially more cooperative than males and, hence, they tend to behave linguistically more sympathetically using courteous and non-offensive communicative forms. Yet, this does not indicate that females use polite forms because of their subordinate social status as postulated by Holmes (2013) since the same features are likely to be exhibited by their male counterparts to the same degree depending on the context in which they take place. In a similar vein, control and disagreement are stereotypically defined as masculinity features, but females' linguistic behaviour is also exposed to negotiate those meanings in given context-based textual interactions on Facebook. Last but not least, the social networking communication that is being mediated and gradually replaced by ubiquitous text-based synchronous/asynchronous communication technologies, as in the case of Facebook, has made the negotiation of gender

identities more complex but quite dynamic; simply for the reason that both gender groups are inclined to employ creative, conventional or even ready-made communicative forms as well as to select the more practical language variety that can fulfil their needs best on Facebook as a textual communicative virtual space.

3.4. Conclusion

With reference to foremost points incorporated in the last chapter of this thesis, it is worth pointing out that the widespread tendencies of bringing into play the various textual social networking communicative modes on Facebook within the Algerian context has eventually lead to the emergence of purposeful linguistic as well as paralinguistic mechanisms that can fulfil specific functions within interactions. Nevertheless, due to the characteristics of the textual interactive online context, younger educated males and females are predisposed to exhibit similar normative unique features like transliteration, diverse shortenings, non-standard spellings, emoticons, code switching/mixing as a means to adapt to the virtual atmosphere which has turned out to be a loci for informal spoken forms to be idiosyncratically represented in the domain of writing. In view the aforesaid state of affairs, one can claim that gender-linked language differences are relatively being hindered while gender-overlapping features are becoming more salient. As far as gendered stereotypes and prejudice are concerned, this phenomenon is being reshaped creatively through Facebook's multimodal discourse as they still maintain important socio-cultural folk-beliefs of males and females' social roles and expectations.

General Conclusion

To go over the main theoretical aspects discussed thoroughly in this thesis, it is worth reminding first that the evolution of gender-linked language studies as a purely sociolinguistic subject matter was initiated out of early androcentric beliefs and essentialist views that conceptualise gender (identity) as a set of normative rigid socio-cultural behaviours that are already determined by a given speech community. In offline settings, early researchers have generated a variety of explanations and theoretical frameworks for the sake of justifying the disparities observed in the linguistic behaviour of men and women such as the ‘deficit’, ‘difference’, ‘the two-cultures’ and ‘dominance’ approaches. Others, however, have condemned the essentialist character of those theories as they adopt more constructivist or dynamic perspectives that have considered gender as something that is socially negotiated and locally performed within a given communicative context. More importantly, these views affirm that men’ and women’s preferential interactional strategies are likely to be employed interchangeably both gender groups to fulfil the requirements of the context in which interactions take place.

In view of the latter views, the research in between our hands has endeavoured to find out any gender-linked language differences and/ or even similarities in the linguistic behaviour of Algerian EFL students at Ibn Khaldoun University of Tiaret on Facebook. Prior to this objective, a number of non-standard unique text-based linguistic features have been thoroughly analysed and discussed from a purely linguistic point of view. In light of our online observations, through which screen data have been systematically gathered via the smart phone’s affordance ‘screenshot’, it have been inferred that many of our participants in our target Facebook community tend to make use of various formative morph-syntactic processes, nonconventional spellings, deficient punctuation, transliteration, language alternation processes besides the use of ready-made symbols and pictures that broadcast specific paralinguistic cues in their text-based casual interactions on Facebook. In fact, the regular materialization of these informal features in that online textual context have portrayed the great impact that communication technologies have had on vernacular varieties to be implemented in written domains such as the (Romanised) ADA, and even on formal languages (MSA, French and English) that are sometimes being used with non-conventional uses of grammar and orthography to a certain degree.

Furthermore, the qualitative analysis of relevant screenshots have demonstrated, on the one hand, that there is a respective unawareness among members of the target Facebook group concerning the representation of the feminine grammatical gender in their casual text-based interactions despite the sufficiency of time and the writing space on Facebook when compared to SMS for example. The phenomenon is in fact more prominent when ADA and even many of morphologically adapted French loanwords within this variety are considered; indicating therefore the persistence of an implicit sexist attitude towards the feminine grammatical gender that is for the most part ignored for psychological reasons since interlocutors have got acquainted to such practices in offline settings as if they were normative behaviours. On the other hand, the attractive character of Facebook's multimodal discourse have demonstrated its magnitude in transferring implicit as well as explicit stereotypical representations in a more creative but a sarcastic manner concerning the social roles of men and women and the expectations held towards them as binary categories within the social order.

In light of the questionnaire's main findings, the quantitative analysis of the first three sections revealed that the linguistic profile of Algerian EFL university students, mainly the younger ones, is fairly characterised by richness and complexity since various co-existing genetically related or unrelated language varieties tend to be employed in altering degrees on Facebook to accomplish different interactional aims. As observed on our target EFL Facebook community, we have explicitly inferred that English was not the only dominant language variety, but many group members were inclined to shift back and forth from one variety to another despite the formality of that online context. This is a quite fine verification of the melting pot Algerian verbal repertoire that is moderately being materialised in the virtual text-based context; except for Tamazight since, as far as our case study is concerned, is very limited in use and even as a mother tongue. Yet, we admit that its restricted use can also be attributed to our random sampling framework standing on the fact that a small number of Berber people live in Tiaret when compared to Berber-speaking cities in Algeria.

Secondly, the profound addiction of Facebook as an integral social networking site that affords conspicuous communicative services to its users in Algeria seem to have a little influence on the way men and women use its text-based innovative hybrid linguistic features as purely gender-preferential traits that are attributed to a given gender group. The reason is that the shift from the offline-spoken to the online-written context may have considerably affected the negotiation of power relations in language use and choice among males and females, if not hindered. Said in different words, the participants involved in textual mixed-

gender communicative contexts on Facebook were predisposed to use the same features idiosyncratically like transliteration (i.e. RA), shortenings, nonconventional spellings, language switching/mixing practices, emoticons, etc as means to save time and typing efforts and, more importantly, to accommodate their linguistic behaviour to the character of the online context which is becoming quite more interpersonal, casual and normative in the sense that people, mainly the younger ones, got acquainted to these practices on Facebook either as authors or readers. More importantly, the findings revealed that female participants tend to exploit non-standard forms and/or varieties at varying degrees on Facebook challenging therefore the essentialist conviction which avers that women utilise standard speech forms more than males do.

Concerning the communication of their non-verbal displays in textual Facebook interactions, it was alleged that females were more predisposed to convey their paralinguistic attitudes more their male counterparts do. Emoticons and letter repetition were the best means to negotiate their feelings, facial expressions and body language cues. Yet, these findings were not built on a solid basis simply for the reason that taking into accounts people's opinions and attitudes solely cannot generate valid, consistent and over generalised conclusions as far as the area of gender-linked language studies in the virtual text-based context is concerned. In this respect, we do acknowledge that one of the present study's limitations is the insufficient amount of the qualitative data that can support the questionnaire's main quantitative findings, in addition to the difficulty of recognising the real gender of many Facebook users who were not familiar to the researcher since they used weird names and avatars in their Facebook profiles instead of their real identities. Hence, gender identity deception is perhaps one of the chief factors that would negatively affect the collection of genuine gender-preferential and/or inclusive textual online linguistic features.

Last but not least, the study was also limited by the sampling frame since it targeted a specific social category (the CofP of Algerian EFL students in Tiaret University) and a one definite Facebook group that was examined in terms of the innovative linguistic practices of its members. Hence, the obtained results are by no means generalised to every Algerian Facebook user as the thesis title suggests. In this respect, we recommend for further gender-linked language CMC research that adopts more advanced technological software such as 'Facepager' to hopefully extract and deconstruct a great amount of naturally-occurring text-based linguistic data on Facebook and even in other online social networking communication applications such as Viber, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc; using more practical investigation tools

applied on a more diverse sampling framework within the Algerian context and its mosaic linguistic melting pot.

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Appendices

Appendix 01: The Questionnaire

Dear participant,

This questionnaire is a part of a doctoral thesis in sociolinguistics. It aims at dissecting linguistic differences in **text-based (i.e. written)** online communication on Facebook and probing your attitudes towards certain innovative scriptural as well as morphological processes characterizing Facebook communication in Algeria. Besides that, it assesses your attitudes towards language use and choice as Algerian Facebook users. Therefore, your contribution is of a great importance to the success of this study by answering the questions below either by:

- ❖ Ticking (✓) the right box that fits best your opinion.
- ❖ **Or:** Using the space provided for your own explanation.

1. Personal Information

1. **Gender:** Male Female
2. **Age:** less than 20 21-30 31-40 more than 40

2. Linguistic Profile

1. **Your mother tongue:** Standard Arabic Dialectal Arabic Tamazight French
English Others (if any):.....
2. **The languages and/or dialects that you speak and/or write most:** Standard Arabic
Dialectal Arabic Tamazight French English Others (if any):.....

3. Access to and Usage of Facebook

1. **How often do you use Facebook in your daily life?**
Always very often sometimes rarely never
2. **Which language (es) do you prefer most to log in your Facebook account?**
Arabic French English Spanish German
Others:.....
3. **What does motivate you most to use Facebook in your daily life?**
To maintain existing relationships and build new ones
For Leisure and entertainment
Educational purposes
Seeking knowledge
Searching for job opportunities locally and abroad
Openness to the other world cultures and communities
State briefly other motives(if any):.....

4. The Structural Features of Text-based Facebook Communication

4.1. Scriptural Processes

When you interact on Facebook, 1. Do you... ↓	Yes...				No ↓
	Always	Very often	Sometimes ↓	Rarely	
..use Latin scripts to write Arabic?					
..use Latin scripts to write Tamazight?					
..use Arabic scripts to spell foreign words?					
..switch from Latin scripts to the Arabic ones or vice versa within the same sentence?					
...use the two different scripts within the same word?					
..use any symbols like numbers to represent some Arabic sounds when using Latin scripts to write Arabic?					

4.2. Morph-syntactic Processes

When you interact on Facebook, 2. Do you..... ↓	Yes...				No ↓
	Always	Very often	Sometimes ↓	Rarely	
..use reduced forms of words?					
...create new words that have never been used before?					
...use acronyms and abbreviation instead of writing full sentences?					
...switch back and forth from one language variety to another?					
...borrow foreign words from other language varieties?					
...use emojis and stickers?					
..spell foreign words as they are pronounced, i.e. without giving attention to their formal structures?					
..pay attention to the correct usage of punctuation marks and capitalization?					

3. Which feature (es) do you use most in order to express a non-verbal cue like anger, happiness, surprise, etc when you interact on Facebook, either in posts, comments or private chats?

I exaggerate in the use of certain letters like 'hhhhh' I exaggerate in the use certain punctuation marks like '!!!!!!!' I use fully capitalized words like 'golt LA' I use emoticons and other symbols like ☺ I use those 'talking' pictures that contain significant comments I just keep writing more and more to clarify my intentions Others (if any):.....

5. Attitudes towards the Linguistic Features of Facebook Communication

Note 1: Please, do not answer in case you do not use a given feature when you interact on FB.

Note 2: You can choose more than one answer.

1. I use Latin scripts to write Arabic when I communicate on Facebook.....

- ..because they are helpful in forming shortenings and creating new words
- ..because others can easily understand them
- .. to save time and typing efforts
- ..because it reflects my linguistic innovativeness
- ..for prestige and attracting others' attention to my piece of writing
- ..because they became norms among other Facebook users
- ..to differentiate myself from others
- ..because they can transmit my ideas and feelings clearly
- ..Arabic letters do not exist in my device

Others (if any):.....

2. I write foreign words as they are pronounced without considering their conventional spellings.....

- ..because others can easily understand them
- ..to save time and typing efforts
- ..to reflect my linguistic innovativeness
- ..for prestige and attracting others' attention to my piece of writing
- ..because they became norms among Algerian Facebook users
- ..to differentiate myself from others
- ..because they transmit my ideas and feelings clearly

Other reasons (if any):.....

3. I make use abbreviations, acronyms, and reduced forms of words when I interact on Facebook..

- ..because others can easily understand them
- .. to save time and typing efforts
- ..because it reflects my linguistic innovativeness
- ..for prestige and attracting others' attention to my piece of writing
- ..because they became norms among Algerian Facebook users
- ..to differentiate myself from others
- ..because they can transmit my ideas and feelings clearly

Others (if any):.....

4. In case you intentionally break the norms of punctuation and capitalization, is it...

- ..to deliver your message quickly to others
- .. because others can easily understand my writings as they are
- ..because I am not familiar with how to use punctuation marks and capitalization properly
- ..to make my piece of writing unique and innovative
- .. because such things became norms among Facebook users

Others (if any):.....

5. I switch back and forth from one variety to another when I interact on Facebook just to/for...

- ..show off and attract others' attention
- ..express my proficiency in using two or more language varieties
- ..prestigious matters
- ..achieve higher recognition from others
- ..to signal my educational background
- ..fill in the speaking/writing gaps
- Others (if any):.....

6. Language Use and Choice on Facebook: Males' and Females' Preferences and Attitudes

1. Would you please identify which variety (ies) do you use most.... *(You can choose more than one answer).*



	Standard Arabic	Dialectal Arabic	Tamazight	French	English	Others (if any)
To communicate privately with your intimate friends.						
To communicate privately with a higher social status person that you know.						
To communicate with an anonymous online user on Facebook.						
To write a formal status update on your Facebook profile.						
To write an informal status update on your Facebook profile.						
To comment on a formal status update.						
To comment on a less formal status update.						
To express best your ideas and feelings on Facebook, either in posts, comments or chats.						
To produce a more assertive piece of writing on Facebook, either in posts, comments or chats.						
To convey social support and empathy towards a particular disaster like death, illness, car accident, etc.						

2. To what extent you may ‘agree’ or ‘disagree’ with the following statements:

Statements	Strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Using Latin scripts to communicate in Arabic on Facebook is associated with males more than females.					
Females tend to respect grammar rules when they interact on Facebook more than males do.					
Females tend to use code-switching/mixing when they interact on Facebook more than males do.					
Females’ written communication on Facebook is characterized by politeness more than that of males’.					
Males’ written communication on Facebook is characterized by aggression and sarcasm more than that of females.					
Females’ written communication on Facebook is characterized by social support and empathy more than that of males.					
Males’ written communication on Facebook is characterized by disagreement and control more than that of females.					

Thank you for your collaboration

Summary

Owing to the development of sophisticated online social networking communication technologies, it became compulsory for researchers to have a handle on the way social meanings and/or identities are constructed; especially when text-based virtual communication is concerned. In such interactive contexts, written language is the only medium of interaction that interlocutors can embark upon to express their thoughts and interests in a more innovative way. In view of this, the current thesis is intended to spot gender-linked language differences in using particular non-standard linguistic features that typify the casual written discourse of Algerian Facebook users, as it also aims at measuring the magnitude of language use and/or choice in constructing gendered identities vis-à-vis the co-existing language varieties in Algeria. The research findings have shown first that text-based casual discourse of our target participants on Facebook contained innovative occurrences of non-standard morpho-syntactic, scriptural, orthographic, phonetic, paralinguistic, multimodal and language alternation practices that were at play by both male and female Facebook users. Secondly, gender has had a little influence on language use and/or choice due to the nature of the virtual casual written context; whilst grammatical gender bias was relatively apparent. Thirdly, the results have also revealed that females are fairly liable to exploit informal text-based linguistic features on Facebook; confronting therefore the essentialist outlook of gender given that most of the results have corresponded to gender-preferential communicative features instead of exclusive ones.

Keywords: gender; text-based virtual interactions; social network communication; Algerian Facebook users; innovative linguistic features; language choice.

المخلص

نتيجة لتطوير تكنولوجيات تواصل اجتماعي جد متقدمة, اصبح من الضروري للباحثين فهم و تحليل منظومة بناء المعاني و/او الهويات الاجتماعية؛ خصوصا عندما يتعلق الامر بالتواصل الافتراضي المكتوب. في هكذا سياقات تفاعلية, تعتبر اللغة المكتوبة وسيلة التفاعل الوحيدة التي من خلالها يستطيع المتحدثون التعبير عن افكارهم و اهتماماتهم بطريقة ابداعية. علي ضوء هذا, تهدف هذه الأطروحة الى اكتشاف الفروق اللغوية بين الجنسين على مستوى استعمال بعض المظاهر اللغوية الغير معيارية التي اصبحت تميز الخطاب الكتابي العفوي لمستعملي الفايسبوك الجزائريين, كما تسعى هذه الدراسة الى تقييم اهمية الاستعمال و/او الاختيار اللغوي في بناء الهويات الجنسية و مناقشتها فيما يخص الاصناف اللغوية المتواجدة في الجزائر. اظهرت نتائج البحث اولا ان الخطاب الكتابي العفوي لمشاركينا المستهدفين على الفايسبوك احتوى على عدة ممارسات ابداعية غير معيارية منها الصرفية النحوية, الخطية, الاملائية, الصوتية, الشبه لسانية, التعدد الوسطي, اضافة الى عمليات التناوب اللغوي التي مارسها مستعملي الفايسبوك من كلا الجنسين. ثانيا, كان للنوع الجنسي تأثير قليل على الاستعمال و/او الاختيار اللغوي نظرا لطبيعة السياق الكتابي العفوي الافتراضي؛ بينما كان التحيز الجنسي النحوي ظاهري نسبيا. ثالثا, كشفت النتائج ايضا ان الاناث ميالون الى حد ما الى استغلال سمات لغوية كتابية غير رسمية على الفايسبوك؛ مما ادى نتيجة لذلك الى مجابهة النظرة الجوهرية للجنس نظرا لان معظم النتائج توافقت مع مصطلح السمات التواصلية المفضلة بين الجنسين عوضا عن الاستثنائية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النوع الجنسي؛ التفاعلات الافتراضية المكتوبة؛ شبكة التواصل الاجتماعي؛ مستعملي الفايسبوك الجزائريين؛ سمات لغوية ابداعية؛ الاختيار اللغوي.

Résumé:

En raison du développement de technologies sophistiquées de communication sur les réseaux sociaux en ligne, il est devenu nécessaire pour les chercheurs de comprendre la manière dont les significations et/ou les identités sociales sont construites ; surtout quand il s'agit de communication virtuelle basée sur du texte. Dans de tels contextes interactifs, la langue écrite est le seul moyen d'interaction que les interlocuteurs peuvent utiliser pour exprimer leurs pensées et leurs intérêts de manière plus innovante. Au vu de cela, la thèse actuelle vise à repérer les différences linguistiques liées au genre dans l'utilisation de caractéristiques linguistiques non standard particulières qui caractérisent le discours écrit informel des utilisateurs Algériens de Facebook, et il vise également à mesurer l'ampleur de l'utilisation et/ou du choix de la langue dans la construction des identités de genre par rapport aux variétés linguistiques co-existantes en Algérie. Les résultats de la recherche ont montré tout d'abord que le discours informel basé sur du texte de nos participants sur Facebook contenait des pratiques innovantes de morpho-syntaxiques, scripturales, orthographiques, phonétiques, paralinguistiques, multimodales et d'alternance linguistique non standard qui étaient utilisées par les utilisateurs de Facebook mâles et femelles. Deuxièmement, le genre a eu peu d'influence sur l'utilisation et/ou le choix de la langue en raison de la nature du contexte écrit virtuel informel ; tandis que le biais grammatical de genre était relativement évident. Troisièmement, les résultats ont également révélé que les femelles sont assez susceptibles d'exploiter les caractéristiques linguistiques informelles basées sur des textes sur Facebook ; confrontent en conséquence la vision essentialiste du genre étant donné que la plupart des résultats ont correspondu à des caractéristiques de communication préférentielles en fonction du genre plutôt qu'exclusives.

Mots-clés : genre ; interactions virtuelles basées sur du texte ; communication sur les réseaux sociaux ; les utilisateurs Algériens de Facebook ; caractéristiques linguistiques innovantes ; choix de la langue.