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## **The father tongue. Figures of narrators/characters in postcolonial diglossic context**

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### **Abstract :**

We propose to explore the theme of linguistic ideologies in a colonial and post-colonial context by analysing a selection of autobiographical narrative texts by authors of Algerian origin. Whether we think of Assia Djebar, Tassadit Imache, Maïssa Bey, Faïza Guène or Ahmed Djouder, their identity is shaped by the conflicting presence of the two languages of colonial history: French, the language of the coloniser, learned at French school, encouraged by the father figure as a guarantee of professional success and social advancement, competing with the language of origins, dialectal Arabic, Berber or other, which is often the only language mastered by the mother. This is why, alongside the notion of a mother tongue, it becomes legitimate to question the hypothesis of a father tongue. While the mother's tongue stems from biological elements and a natural and unstable acquisition, invests the oral code and changes over the course of a person's life, the so-called father tongue, the French language, encouraged by the father, or by a symbolic father figure embodied by the social and political colonial and postcolonial system which aims to assimilate the Otherness, is produced by an induced learning, it is stable and regulated, it adheres to the public and institutional space, it incarnates in administrative writings, it is the language of the integration, but also of identity and social exclusion.

In order to identify the elements that characterise the representation, or stereotyping, inscribed in the imaginary of those two competing languages, we examine the diglossic ideology produced in this context and thematised in the narrative writings that constitute our corpus from francophone contemporary authors of Algerian origins. We reveal the attitudes, prejudices and opinions that can lead to an interruption in the intergenerational transmission of the mother tongue and its substitution with the French language among speakers who are in

a situation of missed bilingualism but experience a particular metalinguistic consciousness which make their identity polyphonic.

**Keywords :** Linguistic and colonialism, francophone contemporary literature, linguistic ideologies, polyphony, metalinguistic awareness.

## 1. Introduction

The theme of linguistic ideologies in colonial and post-colonial contexts was first explored in Louis-Jean Calvet's work, which was first published in 1974 and has been the subject of numerous reprints (1978, 1979, 1988, 2002) and translations (Italian, German, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Galician, Korean, Japanese). At the time, Calvet's volume proposed to "decolonise minds" from this hierarchisation of languages established in formerly colonised countries, first by the institutions of the French language and then, after the decolonisations, by the Arabisation policies undertaken by the countries that gained independence (Van den Avenne, 2012). But above all, this text illuminates us today because it shows the relationship between the study of languages and the imperialist expansion of the great colonial powers: as Errington (2008) later pointed out, colonial ventures are often accompanied by works of linguistic description of local languages. The book *Linguistique et colonialisme* is still today the fundamental reference for an approach to social practices and the facts of language that enables us to think about language policies during and after colonisation, outside and within the borders of France, where we note, and regret, for example, that the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages does not consider the languages of immigrants\*. We will approach these questions by analysing a selection of autobiographical narrative texts by authors of Algerian origin. Whether we think of Assia Djebar, Maïssa Bey, Tassadit Imache, Faïza Guène or Ahmed Djouder, their identity is marked by the conflicting presence of the two languages of colonial history: French, the language of the coloniser, learnt at school, ruled and regulated by the institutions, encouraged by the father figure as a guarantee of professional success and social advancement, competes with the language of origin, Arabic dialects, Berber or other, which is often the only language mastered by the mother.

This is why, alongside the notion of a mother tongue, it is possible to question the hypothesis of a *father tongue*. While the mother's tongue stems from biological elements and a natural and unstable acquisition, invests the oral code and changes over the course of a person's life,

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\* The authentic version of the text, in French, is available at <https://rm.coe.int/168007c07e> [consulted on: 9/19/2023].

the so-called father tongue, the French language, encouraged by the father, or by a symbolic father figure embodied by the social and political colonial and postcolonial system which aims to assimilate the Otherness, is produced by an induced learning, it is stable and regulated, it adheres to the public and institutional space, it incarnates in administrative writings, it is the language of the integration, but also of identity and social exclusion.

In this context, the diglossic ideology become an issue thematised in the narrative writings that make up our corpus. In order to identify the elements that characterize the representation, or stereotyping, inscribed in the imaginary of those two competing languages: we will reveal the attitudes, prejudices and opinions that can lead to an interruption in the intergenerational transmission of the mother tongue and its substitution with the French language among speakers who then find themselves in a situation of *missed bilingualism*. The presence of an additional language, partially mastered, behind the dominant one, with its history, its silences, and its representations, enhances the resonance of experiences, imaginaries and points of view, producing a form of meta-sociolinguistic awareness (Pinto, El Euch, 2015), in which a polyphonic identity can arise. This *augmented* identity is then able to offer a representation of the colonial fracture (Mbembe, 2010). From a hermeneutical point of view, we position ourselves on the side of the "colonial fracture" (Blanchard et al., 2005; Boucheron, 2017): a concept that crystallised in the media, which emerged in public debate as a "pragmatic-lexical focus" (Boyer, 1987), demonstrating its problematic nature, and which is based on the confrontation of conflicting points of view around the ideological divide produced by colonial history, which continues to shape discursive practices in institutions and social structures.

## 2. The "colonial fracture"

The book by Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel and Sandrine Lemaire (Blanchard et al., 2005) is in line with the American trend of postcolonial studies, in the tradition of the subalternists (a group of Indian historians who, in the 1970s, sought to overturn the historiography of the decolonisation of India by showing in particular the role played by the lower castes) and in Edward Saïd's inaugural work, *Orientalism* (1978), which deconstructed the West's discourse on the Orient. Almost 20 years ago, this publication initiated a kind of French-style postcolonialism, aimed at refuting the idea that decolonisation constitutes an interruption and emphasising a long-term perspective, considering colonisation as a dialectical continuum that concerns both the metropolis and the colonised territories, both the past and the present.

From then on, the postcolonial question would go beyond the cleavage between "us" and "the others", would concern a history that is not circumscribed but global, would involve the two

territories concerned, that of the former colonial power and that of the former colony, and would make it possible to think about the contemporary tensions and hybridisations.

As Patrick Boucheron points out in the collective work he edited, *L'Histoire mondiale de la France*, published in 2017, the colonial event is no longer ended up in the limbo of history, but continues to inform the present. If we were to apply the postulates of postcolonial theory to France, using Boucheron's thesis, we would say that since colonisation there has been no French identity or French places of memory that can avoid the colonial fracture.

[...]il n'y a pas d'identité française ou de lieux français de mémoire qui n'englobent simultanément l'ailleurs et l'ici. En d'autres termes, l'ailleurs est constitutif de l'ici et vice versa. Il n'y a plus de 'dedans' qui serait coupé d'un 'dehors', un passé qui serait coupé du présent. Il y a un temps, celui de la rencontre avec l'Autre, qui se dédouble constamment et qui consiste, non dans la scission, mais dans la contraction, l'enroulement et la jonction. Voilà, en tout cas, une géographie et une carte du sujet qui permettraient de poser d'une autre manière les questions brûlantes de la banlieue, de la nation, de la citoyenneté, voire de l'immigration. (Mbembe 2006, p. 132)

### **3. From the « surconscience linguistique » to the metalinguistic awareness: the augmented identity**

On the basis of these considerations, it is possible to read the presence of the colonial fracture within the figures of narrators/characters in the French-speaking world, in the narrative writings we wish to examine.

[...]la spécificité de la littérature francophone [tient] en grande partie à la nécessité pour chaque écrivain de définir sa propre langue d'écriture dans un contexte plurilingue qui l'oblige à penser sa langue – ce que Lise Gauvin appelle 'la surconscience linguistique'.(Albert, 1999, p. 5)

In order to understand this phenomenon, which is at once linguistic and identity-related, personal and political, we will be examining the novels that make up our corpus as language biographies whose authors, who come from the colonial history, thematize the presence of the colonial fracture in a sort of language biography, associated with identity representation in a multilingual context (Franceschini, Miecznikowski, 2004). This means that our authors seem to have this ability to recount the constituent elements of their linguistic and cultural experience : « Le dénominateur commun des littératures dites émergentes, et notamment des

littératures francophones, est en effet de proposer, au cœur de leur problématique identitaire, une réflexion sur la langue [...] » (Gauvin, 2004, p. 255-256). The fact of being immersed, to varying degrees, in a linguistic context characterised by plurality, which takes the form of bilingualism, diglossia or polyglossia, increases the sensitivity of authors and helps to develop a particular reflexive capacity:

Surconscience, c'est à dire conscience aiguë de la langue comme objet de réflexion, d'interrogation, d'enquête mais aussi de transformation et de création, comme territoire imaginaire à la fois ouvert et contraint. (Gauvin, 2004, p. 255-256)

The colonial fracture is not only a condition of identity but also of language: Gauvin refers to this sensitivity with the definition of a "surconscience linguistique":

La surconscience linguistique de l'écrivain francophone est avant tout une conscience de la langue comme d'un vaste laboratoire de possibles, comme d'une chaîne infinie de variantes dont les seules limites sont un certain seuil de lisibilité, soit la compétence du lectorat, mais d'un lectorat à provoquer autant qu'à séduire. Dans ces textes ouverts au tremblement de la langue et au vertige polysémique se profile l'utopie d'une Babel apprivoisée. (Gauvin, 1997, p.10-11)

We know from several studies that metalinguistic awareness is naturally present in bilingual speakers and in plurilingual contexts. The definition of this concept has aroused the interest of several specialists in the language sciences, essentially linguists, both theoretical and applied, and psycholinguists.

In the history of modern thought, and in particular of logical positivism, the term *metalanguage* first appeared with the philosopher and logician Rudolf Carnap (1934) to mark the difference between an "object language", designed to describe reality, and a language whose function is to categorize this "object language": this metalanguage is a logical artefact, a sort of higher level of the first, more abstract language.

In this regard, Émile Benveniste offers the very evocative image of a kind of augmentation of the person in relation to his means of communication, since: « La faculté métalinguistique renvoie à la possibilité que nous avons de nous élever au-dessus de la langue » (Benveniste, 1974, p. 228-229).

Beyond the different approaches, a fundamental convergence of the main authors (Pinto, El Euch, 2015) on certain features of metalinguistic awareness seems to define it as a fundamentally reflexive activity, dealing with structural aspects of language, which are then focused at their own core, identified in their singularity and analyzed in terms of their internal

architecture; structural aspects which this reflexive process *objectifies* and thus transforms into "objects of knowledge" (Cazden, 1976; Tunmer, Pratt, Herriman, 1984).

This applies to all levels of language, from the smallest units such as phonemes, articles, prepositions, nouns, adjectives, etc., to the larger combinations in sentences and texts, both spoken and written.

Can this lead us to presuppose the existence of a metalinguistic awareness at a sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic level?

The writer, like the translator and the foreigner, is therefore this being capable of "travelling himself" (Kristeva, 2017), this monstrous identity that has an *augmented* experience of being-in-the-world while staying in his language: «Les exilés, eux, sont riches. Riches de leurs identités accumulées et contradictoires» (Huston, 2004, p. 18).

It is from this framework that we can question the texts in our corpus, which, like language biographies, are a tool for reading the postcolonial sociolinguistic context.

#### 4. The polyphonic subject

Language biographies tell us about the awareness of plurilingualism and the identity positioning of their author/character/speaker, who recomposes himself in a conflictual framework as a polyphonic subject. The writer speaks another language because he translates the strangeness that lies within our intimate lives:

De ces vases communicants, de l'entre-deux causal émerge une parole étrange, étrangère à elle-même, ni d'ici, ni de là, une monstrueuse intimité [...] je suis un monstre de carrefour. A la croisée de deux langues, et de deux durées au moins, je pétris un idiome qui cherche les évidences pour y creuser des allusions pathétiques et, sous l'apparence lisse de ces mots français polis comme la pierre des bénitiers, découvre les dorures noires des icônes orthodoxes. (Kristeva, 2006)

For Kristeva, the foreign language is a poetics, a kind of degree zero of literary writing, the ideal to be reached : « Cette "langue"-là est la véritable "étrangeté" - plus étrangère que tout idiome déjà constitué - que l'écrivain espère formuler » (Kristeva, 2014). In her introduction of *La Poétique de Dostoïevski*, Kristeva clarifies the points of contact between Bakhtin's intuitions and the psychoanalytical thesis:

Le discours de l'auteur [de roman polyphonique] est un discours à propos d'un autre discours, un mot avec le mot[...] Il n'y a pas de troisième personne unifiant la

confrontation des deux : les [discours] contraires sont réunis, mais non pas identifiés, ils ne culminent pas dans un “je” stable qui serait le “je” de l'auteur monologique. (Kristeva, 1970, p. 13)

The *other* is presented not only as a participant in interpersonal communication, as otherness, but also as another reality within consciousness, in other words the unconscious.

## 5. The father tongue

For our authors, the development of a "surconscience linguistique" takes the form of a regret, a rupture, the capability of recognising a hierarchy of languages: the French language transmitted by the father as a means of social ascension, what we will call the *father tongue*<sup>†</sup>, will dissolve the link with the mother tongue, in the double sense of the language of the mother and the language of the identity roots, and will participate to create a sort of *missed bilingualism*.

It is the « fillette arabe allant pour la première fois à l'école, un matin d'automne, main dans la main du père » (Djebar, 1985, 1995, p.11)<sup>‡</sup>, teacher at the French school whose image haunts a fundamental existential contradiction that is born and reabsorbed in the French language to nourish the writer's entire oeuvre. Djebar's literary work is powerful in this respect, because it crosses the terms of the opposition characterising the heteroglossia implied by the notion of Francophonie. Arabic, Berber and French emerge from a search for identity in which the different languages come into play, outside any hierarchy, in a mnemonic system that provides the definition of a polyphonic identity. Djebar's Francophonie is therefore « la tension salutaire –pour l'écriture en tout cas- d'une pensée diglossique, une seule langue faite de deux et même de trois et donc une négociation constante, une mouvance vigilante entre des façons d'apercevoir et de capter le monde » (Miller, 2005, p. 27).

While in this story we see the hand of the father figure leading his child to French school, offering the little Fatima-Zohra Imalayène born in Cherchell in 1936, the freedom of the French language, the image of Kateb Yacine's father emerges as he accompanies his son into the jaws of the wolf (Kateb 1997, p.181).

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<sup>†</sup> We note that the expression father tongue doesn't appear in any sort of academic research. We register only one occurrence of this expression in a novel from Arno Dubois in which he writes : « La Langue paternelle, c'est celle que vos ancêtres auraient pu vous transmettre, mais que vous ne parlez pas. C'est une langue souterraine qui s'exprime dans des plats servis à table, des musiques entendues à la radio, un accent familier que vous n'aurez jamais, et que vous adorez. C'est l'histoire de Gafidhi, personnage loufoque et perecquien, qui a choisi d'effacer toute trace des langues parlées par ses aïeux pour s'exprimer dans un français 'impeccable' » (Dubois, 2019).

<sup>‡</sup> Pages refer to the Albin Michel edition (1995).

Maïssa Bey was born in 1950 in Algeria. In her novels we discover the story of Samia Benameur from the little girl learning to read in her father's class, an "indigenous" teacher, to a French teacher with a passion for literature. In her autobiographical novel *L'Une et l'Autre. De la quête d'identité à la construction de soi*, she looks back at her origins, where "la colonisation [...] a forgé [sa] représentation du monde», and at the link between this enhanced identity experienced by the writer, who is both a foreigner and a translator: « Je suis autre, parce que qu'écrivant, portant la parole, je suis allé à la rencontre de l'autre, de toutes les autres. », and the French language as : «... Je considère que le français est aussi ma langue, j'écris dans la langue que m'a léguée mon père.» (Bey, p.23)

Compared to these images of colonial Algeria, where the gesture of the father, a teacher at the French school and a Muslim, is accompanied by a story, to which their children's novels bear witness, the large hand of Ali Azhar, the father of Tassadit Imache, is a link without words. Algerian, immigrant, father of French children, son-in-law of a French Resistance fighter, FLN activist, witness to the massacre on the night of 17 October 1961, and also a former soldier who fought against the Germans on the side of the French, this man is « trop usé par une vie de misères et d'humiliations [...] lui, qui n'avait jamais eu assez de mots français pour leur dire » (Imache, 1989, p.112).

In Imache's novel, *Une fille sans histoire* (1989), writing moves forward between memories against a double oblivion: on the one hand the father's silence, on the other the mother's attempt to erase the traces of a devaluing past. Lil's father is often absent, and when he is present he is mute, like his life in the country of the coloniser, like the colonisation that is absent from the history books in French schools : « Pour ses enfants, le mutisme d'Ali, sa perpétuelle absence, n'avaient qu'un sens : lignée illusoire, ils n'étaient pour lui que le hasardeux produit d'un exil forcé » (Imache, 1996, p.109).

Huguette, the mother, is determined to erase all traces of her children's Algerian origins, to attempt to misappropriate memory and to conceal the identity of her descendants:

Quand ils rentraient de l'église, lui était déjà parti. C'était pourtant leur père, pas de doute, mais sur cette filiation le mystère demeurait... alors ils disaient Il ou Lui. Ils (elles et ses frères) faisaient partie des Arabes, semblait-il, des 'ratons' comme sur les graffitis. Ils le lui devaient. Mais cela restait incompréhensible. Ils le sentaient seulement au soin exacerbé que la mère apportait à leur tenue, à la propreté acharnée de leurs cheveux et de leurs corps, à l'impassibilité à laquelle s'obligeait le visage d'Huguette quand le marchand marmonnait ou que l'employée de mairie changeait de ton. Son beau regard tendre devenait alors pierreux. Sa main leur écrasait les doigts, sa bouche prenait un pli. (Imache, 1996, p.82).



Alongside families and society, in the post-colonial era, French school is no longer synonymous with freedom, as Kateb Yacine, Assia Djebar or Maïssa Bey's fathers might have advocated. In postcolonial France, institutions feed the taboos and unspoken words of this page of history, which literature is committed to thwarting:

[...] tant de fois elle avait tremblé à l'idée qu'elle pût se fendre en deux morceaux avides d'en découdre. La France et l'Algérie. Un temps elle avait cru trouver refuge à l'École, de l'autre côté de la cité. Là où l'Histoire, quand elle est insoutenable, n'est pas écrite dans les manuels. Elle n'y avait pas appris pourquoi, lorsque la mère donnait le nom du père les lèvres se scellaient, les regards se troublaient, les mots sifflaient. Elle n'y avait rien entendu sur presque un siècle et demi de colonialisme. (Imache, 1996, p.123-124).

The representation of a hierarchy between languages is embodied in the figure of the father in Faïza Guène's novel *Un Homme, ça ne pleure pas* (2014).

Quand j'étais gamin, le Padre disait : « Toute ma vie, j'ai usé mes mains pour permettre à mes enfants de travailler avec leur tête ! La réussite scolaire était une chose très importante à ses yeux. A l'arrivée du bulletin de note, [...] il apposait au stylo bic une petite signature [...] puis il remplaçait le capuchon sur le stylo et l'accrochait avec les autres, à la poche de sa chemise à manches courtes, comme un médecin généraliste, bien qu'il ne sache ni lire ni écrire. (Guène, 2014, p.12-13)

Chénnoun, the father, an illiterate shoemaker and immigrant to Nice, had his children brought up in France and placed great importance on school results, as a guarantee of social success and a means of integration and social rehabilitation for the family.

Ce jour-là, le padre avait insisté pour que ma mère lui noue sa plus belle cravate rayée et il avait décidé de porter sa paire de lunettes [...] c'était un peu sa panoplie d'homme important et respectable. Il utilisait ces accessoires lorsqu'il se rendait dans une administration, aux réunions de l'école, dans une agence de voyages. (Guène, 2014, p.27)

This need to perform at a higher level is evident in the institutions where his illiteracy is particularly stigmatised. If mastery of the language is lacking, dress, symbolically reduced to the finery of the Western intellectual man, tie and glasses, is the means adopted by the father in this social tension dedicated to freeing himself from his subordinate condition. The father invests the public space and its official places, all of which are equally sources of anxiety because of the demands they place on the oral and written skills of a complex administrative language. Whether it's a government official, a schoolteacher or a travel agent, these embodiments of the French language of the administration, of power in a way, push the

immigrant with his illiteracy down to the rank of subaltern, and place him in a condition of linguistic and identity insecurity.

«Le Padre me sollicitait chaque fois qu'il fallait lire quelque chose ; les ordonnances du docteur Zerbib, un tract de la CGT, les articles de Bien vieillir, un mensuel gratuit, les courriers de la banque, et même les catalogues de promotion du supermarché. Et pour chacun de ces documents, si différent qu'ils soient, il tenait absolument à ce que je les lise "avec un accent de journaliste" ». (Guène, 2014, p.35)

The coloniser attracts the indigene, and the Frenchman continues to attract the immigrant nowadays, to better repel him: « c'est sa langue maternelle (du colon) qui permet les communications sociales ; même son costume, son accent, ses manières finissent par s'imposer à l'imitation du colonisé [...] » (Memmi, 1966, 1985). Here we can see the permanence of a power relationship that connects the colonised to the coloniser, in conflict and opposition, through a kind of attraction.

The mother, a housewife devoted to bringing up her children, insists on the difference between Mourad, her son, and Harry, her son's friend. By contrasting the two first names, the mother expresses her fears about the repercussions of illiteracy among immigrant families on their children's career paths: « Toi, tes parents, ils lisent bien le français, ils pourront t'aider pour réviser le bac, pour trouver un stage, un travail, un logement. Mourad, il a du pain sur la planche, lui. Il devra se démener deux fois plus que toi ! » (Guène, 2014, p.36).

When he graduated, Mourad has a silent reflection: « [...] j'ai enfin décroché le Capes. Certificat d'aptitude au professorat de l'enseignement du second degré. Je décortique le sigle pour en prendre toute la mesure. Bordel. C'est quand même pas rien » (Guène, 2014, p.33).

The child of illiterate Algerian immigrants, who has become a French language teacher, translates the acronym into its corresponding formula to savour the importance of success, but also to translate a term whose use can be, like many technolects linked to administration, incomprehensible (Goudailler, 2002).

In her latest novel, *La Discretion*, Guène gives voice to Yamina, a 70-year-old woman born in Algeria who immigrated to France in the 1980s:

Ramène-moi chez mon père, je ne supporte plus ce pays, son ciel gris et ses nuages lourds, je ne supporte plus la solitude, ni ses journées interminables, l'attente de ton retour je ne supporte plus que ma langue se meurt de rester figé dans ma bouche, je ne supporte plus ma salive inutile [...]. (Guène, 2020, p. 151)

This generation has hidden its identity, remained illiterate in French and has not passed on its mother tongue to its children, who were born in France and integrated into the French school system, on whom it has projected the dream of social success; this missed bilingualism being encouraged by the political rhetoric of integration through assimilation, as it is evident in the very explicit Benisti Report, presented to the National Assembly in 2005. Among the causes of socially problematic behaviour, the Benisti Report points to a lack of mastery of the French language<sup>§</sup>. This report admits that « le maintien combiné de la langue maternelle et de la langue dominante permet aux enfants d'obtenir des meilleurs résultats à l'école et stimule dans bien des cas leur développement cognitif et leur capacité d'étude » (Rapport Benisti, 2005, p. 40.), but advocates limiting its use: « Mais il faut en scinder l'utilisation en préservant le contact et les rapports parent enfant avec la langue maternelle, dès lors qu'elle n'est pas surreprésentée » (Ibidem.), since he suggests a link between mother tongue and criminality: « le fait d'avoir des parents d'origine étrangère susceptibles d'utiliser la langue du pays à la maison puisse constituer dans la chaîne des causes, l'un des premiers facteurs potentiellement générateur de déviance » (Ibid., p. 45). As a means of combating delinquency, the Report proposed to run «une campagne d'alphabétisation en direction prioritairement des mères » (Ibid., p. 58). We note that alongside a mother tongue that is poorly identified or little known, the vehicle for transmission of which is essentially the mother (« les parents parlent non pas la langue officielle de leur pays d'origine, mais plutôt un dialecte ethnique » (Ibid., p. 54), this text proposes the "dominant language", the national language, admitting no competitors in the public arena, ruled and regulated, to the point of being included in a number of laws controlling the integration of foreigners, in particular the CAI (Contrat d'accueil et d'intégration) proposed by the ANAEM (Agence Nationale de l'accueil des Etrangers et des Migrations). If administrative documents are not accessible to French people of immigrant origin, the offices of this same administration are hardly any more welcoming. Here, the boundary between the "native French" and the "French of origin" (Ibid. p.46) is established around the mastery, or otherwise, of the French language<sup>\*\*</sup>.

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<sup>§</sup> Rapport de la Commission prévention du groupe d'étude parlementaire sur la sécurité intérieure, présidée par Jacques Alain Bénisti, député du Val-de-Marne, sur la prévention de la délinquance. Rapport Définitif destiné au Ministre d'Etat, ministre de l'Intérieur et de l'aménagement du territoire, Nicolas Sarkozy. Rapport d'Octobre 2005. <https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/12/rapports/r3173.asp>. For a presentation of reactions to this Parliamentary Report within the linguist community, cf. Muni Toke, 2009.

<sup>\*\*</sup> "Français de souche" (FDS) is an expression commonly used to refer to individuals of native French nationality without immediate foreign ancestry. It is often contrasted with the controversial term "Français de papier" (Paper French) and "French of foreign origin". The definition of FDS varies and lacks any standard or scientific consensus, leading to controversy in its usage. The term was historically employed by the French far-right in the early 19th century and is occasionally revisited in discussions on integration, communitarianism, and multiculturalism in France to refer to individuals whose ancestors followed the principle of paternal lineage primacy (ius sanguinis) established by the Napoleonic Code in 1804. The term first appeared in the 19th century,

Yamina's daughter, Malika, is 30 years old and works as a civil registrar at Bobigny town hall. Despite the order forbidding her to do so, using the few words of her mother tongue that she knows, she approaches:

[...] ce vieil homme qui bégaie, ce chibani aux mains abimées, avec son pauvre bérét, tourmenté par des mots qui ne viennent pas, par une langue qui lui échappe malgré ses longues années à errer sur le territoire. [...] Elle ne peut se résoudre à le regarder se noyer dans son charabia [...] Elle sait bien qu'elle n'est pas censée parler arabe avec les usagers, mais ce matin encore, elle switche sur le verbe maternel pour permettre au vieillard en face d'elle de se faire comprendre. (Guène, 2020, p.177)

Elle a évoqué cette histoire à table et Yamina n'était pas contente du tout. Elle ne veut pas que Malika se fasse remarquer : Tu viens à peine d'être embauchée, la mairie c'est un bon travail benti, l'ordinateur, la chaise, le chauffage, les fiches de paie, tu as tout ! S'il te plait, reste discrète ! (Guène, 2020, p. 179)

We know the extent to which language is eminently political, and that the fact of cultivating a linguistic distinction and "capitalising" on it is a means of imposing some form of power (Bourdieu, 1982). We can see the extent to which the tensions between the two linguistic and identity poles of the colonial fracture are played out in this area of municipal administration, the balance of power between political regulation of the presence of languages and their individual appropriation.

The phenomenon of glottophobia (Blanchet, 2016) refers to a political system of a sociolinguistic undermining and overemphasis that permeates speakers' everyday lives, right down to educational practices. The resulting linguistic insecurity is embedded in a set of discriminatory practices: this is the "linguism", a term coined on the model of racism and indicating a form of language imperialism (Morilhat, 2008).

Literature that has emerged from colonial history generally expresses a form of resistance through the portrayal of a character/speaker whose polyphonic identity offers us a viewpoint on this fracture, both in terms of identity and language, between a 'native' identity and a vague, threatening otherness.

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with its origin attributed to the French literary critic Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve. Its usage became more prominent with associations to racist anthropologist Georges Vacher de Lapouge and nationalist writer Maurice Barrès. During the Algerian War, it specifically referred to "French of European origin," distinguishing them from those with North African roots. The term gained official recognition during that period in the context of the Algerian conflict. Over time, the far-right, particularly the Front National party, appropriated and emphasized the term in the 1990s, linking it to ethno-cultural identity and the notion of the "great replacement." For further information cf. the expression "français de souche" on French Wikipedia, [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ais\\_de\\_souche](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ais_de_souche). For a story of this french phenomena cf. Dupin, 2017.

In his novel, *Désintégration, enfants d'immigrés: les racines du malaise* (2006), Ahmed Djouder tells his own story and that of his social group, drawing up a list of the injustices suffered and depicting a daily life brimming with objects of memory from which a touching but dramatic portrait of the first generation of Algerian immigrants in France emerges. While the enunciator takes the part of the "we", but fails to adhere to it, in the space of tenderness and irony that quickly becomes bitterness and accusation, the "you" materialises.

Notre identité est flinguée. Vous ne pouvez pas imaginer à quel point [...] l'identité est fragile. Elle ressemble à un puzzle. Si vous avez toutes les pièces, avec un peu d'attention vous parvenez à reconstituer l'image qui vous définit. Si vous avez le même nombre de pièces mais provenant de puzzles différents, vous aurez beau essayer de les assembler, vous n'arriverez à rien, votre image ne ressemblera à rien. (Djouder, 2006, p.112).

The problematic relation to History is complicated by the question of the transmission of memory in a social context: ideological inheritance or rupture isolate the individual who is unable to express himself because his identity is cut off from his mother tongue.

Il n'y a pas de discours, il n'y a pas de revendication car il n'y a pas de mots. Notre monde c'est la désertion du langage. C'est la désertion de la connaissance. C'est la désertion du monde extérieur. Désertion, désert, deserere, 'se séparer de', 'abandonner'. Nous baissons les bras face au monde. Il ne nous comprend pas, il nous fait peur. (Djouder, 2006, p.79)

#### 4. Conclusion:

Why has the dominant language rejected the language of the origins of the indigenous first and of the French population of immigrant background after? By which means the father's language, which is both the language promoted by the father and the language of the host country, silenced the mother tongue? What advantages did this Muslim father, a French teacher in a colonial school, enjoy, and how much humiliation did it cost this other father, an immigrant worker in post-colonial France, to leave his children to switch into the French language? The answer lies in the troubling question that echoes through the generations: « Do you realise that integration, or rather *integrationism*, has meant that I'm not able to speak to my mother in her language? » (Yousfi, 2023).<sup>††</sup>

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<sup>††</sup> Louisa Yousfi made this appeal at a presentation the 19/5/2023 in Rome (Italy) of her book, *Rester barbare*, 2023.

In *Oussekiné*, the mini-series distributed by Disney Plus, about the story of Malik Oussekiné, who was chased and beaten to death by the Paris police, who mistook him for a thug, in 1986, at the age of 22, one scene catches our attention. Faiza Guène, which co-scripted *Oussekiné* serie, offers an impressive illustration of this balance, broken by the colonial fracture, by showing a family whose parents are immigrants of Algerian origin sitting around a table in their Parisian apartment in the 80's. The Oussekiné family are at dinner, childrens are making fun of the French pronunciation of the word *fromage*, which the mother pronounces with a very strong Arabic accent. She in turn questions her children about their knowledge of this word in Arabic, but they are unable to translate it. Little Malik, a good pupil at school, replies with a phrase that is no doubt circulating in his environment: « Arabic is useless anyway ». The parents look at each other in silence, the mother calling out to the father with her wounded gaze, the father at a loss for words to admonish his son.

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