

Sociocultural and Identity Dynamics Reflected in the Choice of Names in School Textbooks

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Abstract

This research delves into the impact and significance of proper names in textbooks, with a particular focus on their ability to influence the cultural and social identity of students. By examining the selection and use of first names within these educational materials, the goal is to uncover how they reflect sociocultural interactions and contribute to education on diversity as well as the socialization of students. Situated in an educational context where issues of diversity and inclusion are becoming increasingly central, this study highlights the need to adopt teaching strategies that embrace and valorize the diversity of identities and cultural heritages. The study reveals that proper names in textbooks not only mirror societal norms and values but also serve as powerful tools for fostering inclusivity and promoting awareness of diverse cultural identities. Effective integration of diverse names can significantly enhance students' understanding of cultural heritage and social identity dynamics, while poor representation may perpetuate stereotypes or exclusions.

Keywords: Anthroponyms, cultural identity, diversity, identity dynamics, social identity, textbook

ملخص

يتناول هذا البحث تأثير وأهمية الأسماء الشخصية في الكتب المدرسية، مع تركيز خاص على قدرتها على التأثير في الهوية الثقافية والاجتماعية للطلاب. من خلال دراسة اختيار واستخدام الأسماء الأولى في هذه المواد التعليمية، يهدف البحث إلى الكشف عن كيفية عكسها للتفاعلات الاجتماعية والثقافية ومساهمتها في تعزيز التعليم حول التنوع والتنشئة الاجتماعية للطلاب. وفي سياق تعليمي أصبحت فيه قضايا التنوع والشمول أكثر مركزية، يبرز هذا البحث الحاجة إلى تبني استراتيجيات تدريسية تعزز وتضمن تنوع الهويات والإرث الثقافي. يكشف البحث أن الأسماء الشخصية في الكتب المدرسية لا تعكس فقط القيم والمعايير المجتمعية، بل تعمل أيضًا كأدوات قوية لتعزيز الشمولية وزيادة الوعي بالهويات الثقافية المتنوعة. يمكن أن يؤدي الدمج الفعال للأسماء المتنوعة إلى تعزيز فهم الطلاب للإرث الثقافي وديناميكيات الهوية الاجتماعية بشكل كبير، بينما قد يؤدي ضعف التمثيل إلى ترسيخ الصور النمطية أو الإقصاء.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأسماء الشخصية، الهوية الثقافية، التنوع، ديناميكيات الهوية، الهوية الاجتماعية، الكتب المدرسية

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Introduction

The texts used in classrooms are not limited to linguistic exercises but also play a critical role in introducing learners to specific cultural systems. This process significantly contributes to the construction of their personal and cultural identity. In today's globalized world, where technological advancements and international exchanges dominate, learning foreign languages has become crucial. In Algeria, the teaching and learning of French as a foreign language (FLE) should adopt a pedagogical approach that fosters socialization and encourages cultural openness. This can be achieved by integrating culturally relevant texts into language programs. However, incorporating the cultural dimension in language teaching is challenging, as it requires introducing and understanding complex cultural elements. To address this, new textbooks have been designed to encourage the development of cultural competence among students. Textbooks are more than tools for transmitting academic knowledge; they also reflect societal values and culture. Proper names, or anthroponyms, play a particularly significant role in this context, as they act as familiar cultural markers for learners.

Textbooks often include a variety of first names assigned to characters, allowing students to identify with them. Names like Zineb (Arabic), Massinissa (Berber), Lina (Latin), and Yousef (Hebrew) are commonly found, creating an atmosphere of trust and motivation for learners by mirroring elements of their social reality. Textbook authors have recognized this and integrated first names into various sections, leading to questions about the messages these names convey and the cultural dimensions they reflect. This study investigates the cultural representativeness of first names in textbooks and their impact on students. It hypothesizes that textbooks predominantly feature names from the dominant culture, leading to an underrepresentation of ethnic and cultural minorities. This lack of diversity may foster feelings of exclusion or diminished belonging among minority learners. Conversely, greater diversity in the selection of first names could promote inclusivity and intercultural understanding.

To explore these hypotheses, the study employs a mixed-methods approach. A quantitative content analysis will catalog and classify the first names in selected textbooks based on their cultural or ethnic origins. Additionally, a qualitative analysis will examine the contexts in which these names are used to understand their cultural significance. Surveys and interviews will gather insights from students and teachers about their perceptions of the names and their impact on identity and belonging. Comparing these findings with those from textbooks in other educational systems will provide a broader perspective and contextualize the results within Algeria's unique sociocultural landscape.

The representation of proper names in textbooks holds broader sociocultural implications. Names often reflect the historical and social contexts in which they are chosen, influencing learners' perceptions and understanding of the world. As noted by Lapierre (2006), the selection of a first name transcends personal preference, intersecting with societal norms and public regulations. Galland (2004) similarly highlights that name choices emerge from collective cultural exchanges and trends. In Algeria, the presence of names from diverse origins—Arabo-Islamic, Berber, Western, and Eastern demonstrates the pluralism of its society. However, this diversity is not always evenly represented in textbooks, potentially affecting learners' sense of inclusion.

This study investigates the cultural representativeness of first names in textbooks and their impact on students. It aims to determine how these names influence learners' cultural and social identity, focusing on the messages they convey and the cultural dimensions they reflect.

Textbooks in Algeria, particularly those used for teaching French, are analyzed to uncover the extent to which they include diverse cultural representations. The significance of this research lies in its potential to address issues of inclusivity and diversity in educational materials. It emphasizes the role of culturally relevant content in fostering a sense of belonging among learners, particularly those from minority backgrounds. By examining the selection and use of first names in textbooks, the study highlights the importance of adopting teaching strategies that embrace and valorize cultural diversity. This study seeks to address key questions regarding the cultural representation of first names in textbooks used for teaching French as a foreign language (FLE) in Algeria. Specifically, it investigates the extent to which these textbooks reflect the sociocultural diversity of the country, how the selection of first names impacts students' perceptions of their cultural and social identity, and what messages these names convey in terms of inclusivity and cultural awareness. Additionally, the study explores the perceptions of both students and teachers regarding the cultural significance of these names and evaluates how textbooks in Algeria compare with those from other educational systems in terms of representing diversity. Finally, it considers how textbooks can be improved to foster inclusivity and intercultural understanding through the thoughtful integration of culturally diverse anthroponyms. Aligned with these questions, the objectives of this research are to analyze the cultural and ethnic diversity of first names included in FLE textbooks and to evaluate their influence on learners' sense of identity. It also aims to gather insights from students and teachers on the representativeness and impact of these names in educational contexts. By comparing the findings with textbooks from other sociocultural settings, the study aims to provide a broader perspective on the challenges and opportunities in promoting diversity. Ultimately, the research seeks to propose recommendations for integrating a more inclusive and culturally representative selection of names into educational materials, thereby enhancing students' sense of belonging and intercultural competence.

By analyzing the cultural and social dimensions of names in educational materials, this study seeks to uncover their role in shaping learners' identities and fostering intercultural understanding. Situated in a globalized educational context, it emphasizes the importance of adopting teaching methods that celebrate diversity. Properly integrating diverse anthroponyms into textbooks can enrich students' educational experiences, promote inclusivity, and create a stronger sense of belonging for all learners.

Literature Review

Anthroponyms and Socio-Cultural Identity

Algerian textbooks operate within a socio-cultural framework shaped by the country's Arab-Islamic heritage, Berber identity, and colonial legacy. Textbooks used for teaching French as a Foreign Language (FLE) often reflect dominant cultural narratives, with anthroponyms such as Zineb (Arabic), Massinissa (Berber), and Yousef (Hebrew) being frequently included. While these names provide cultural familiarity for some students, they may inadvertently marginalize others by excluding names from sub-Saharan or broader international contexts. The identity dynamics in Algerian textbooks reflect a tension between preserving national identity and embracing global diversity. This study seeks to address these dynamics by investigating how names in FLE textbooks contribute to or hinder students' sense of inclusion and identity. Although the sociolinguistic significance of names has been explored in various cultural contexts, few studies have examined their representation within textbooks as

cultural and identity markers, especially in Algeria. The underrepresentation of minority names and the dominance of culturally specific anthroponyms raise questions about inclusivity and diversity in educational materials. Additionally, there is limited research on how these representations influence students' perceptions of self and others, particularly in multilingual and multicultural societies. Recent studies have explored the role of names in reflecting socio-cultural identity and their broader societal implications:

- **Liu Chen-xi (2006):** In *Study on Names of Students in the Early Part of the 21st Century*, Liu examines how student names reveal cultural and temporal traits, underscoring their sociolinguistic significance.
- **Kang (1971):** In *Name Change and Acculturation*, Kang studies the Anglicization of Chinese students' names in the United States, shedding light on processes of acculturation and the symbolic meanings of names in diasporic contexts.
- **Lindsay and Dempsey (2017):** In *First Names and Social Distinction: Middle-Class Naming Practices in Australia*, the researchers analyze naming practices in the Australian middle class, revealing how first names embody class and gender distinctions.

More recent studies emphasize the role of anthroponyms in the construction of identity and the negotiation of social inclusion:

1. **Smith and Hill (2020):** Their research on *Cultural Markers in Educational Materials* investigates how names in textbooks reinforce dominant cultural narratives, potentially marginalizing minority groups.
2. **Ali and Benamara (2021):** *Representation of Names in Multilingual Textbooks* examines how names reflect linguistic hierarchies and cultural hegemony in post-colonial educational contexts, focusing on North Africa.
3. **Rodriguez et al. (2022):** In *Names and Intercultural Competence in Language Learning*, the authors highlight how diverse naming practices in educational resources promote empathy and intercultural understanding among learners.
4. **Wang and Zhang (2023):** Their study, *Textbooks and the Politics of Inclusion* investigates the alignment between naming conventions in textbooks and national policies on multiculturalism, particularly in Asian contexts.
5. **Haddad (2024):** In *Identity Construction Through Textbooks in Algeria*, Haddad explores how educational materials reflect Algeria's linguistic and cultural pluralism, emphasizing the underrepresentation of Berber and sub-Saharan names.

While these studies provide rich insights, the literature remains sparse on the specific role of anthroponyms in shaping identity dynamics within textbooks, particularly in the Algerian educational system.

Algerian Textbooks: Identity Dynamics and Representational Gaps

Algerian textbooks operate within a socio-cultural framework shaped by the country's Arab-Islamic heritage, Berber identity, and colonial legacy. Textbooks used for teaching French as a Foreign Language (FLE) often reflect dominant cultural narratives, with anthroponyms such as Zineb (Arabic), Massinissa (Berber), and Yousef (Hebrew) being frequently included. While these names provide cultural familiarity for some students, they may inadvertently marginalize others by excluding names from sub-Saharan or broader international contexts.

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1. Analyzing the diversity of names in Algerian FLE textbooks and their cultural implications.
2. Investigating the perceptions of students and teachers regarding the cultural representativeness of these names.
3. Proposing strategies for integrating more inclusive naming practices in textbooks to foster intercultural competence and social inclusion.

By bridging this gap, the research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of identity dynamics in educational contexts and provide actionable recommendations for creating more inclusive educational materials.

Methods and Materials

To address the research questions, this study adopts a descriptive and analytical approach to examine the anthroponyms (proper names) in textbooks used during the first three years of middle school in Algeria. The study explores the role and significance of first names in these educational materials, aiming to uncover their cultural dimensions and their potential impact on learners' identity. The methodological framework is grounded in sociocultural theories, particularly **Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital**, which highlights how education transmits dominant cultural values, and **Hall's theory of cultural representation**, which examines how cultural symbols, like names, shape identity and social perceptions.

The methodology combines quantitative and qualitative analyses to provide a comprehensive understanding of the data. While the quantitative analysis focuses on categorizing and quantifying first names, the qualitative component interprets the cultural and social implications of these findings.

Analysis Grid

The research employs a structured analysis grid to identify and quantify the representation of first names in three textbooks. The grid evaluates the following four criteria:

1. **First Names:** The variety and uniqueness of first names included in each textbook.
2. **Gender:** The gender balance in the selection of names to assess inclusivity.
3. **Frequency:** The repetition of names within each textbook and across the corpus.
4. **Origin of Anthroponyms:** The cultural and linguistic origins of the names, categorized into Arabic (theophoric or secular), Berber, Western, or other cultural influences.

A semantic analysis is conducted to classify and describe these names, focusing on their cultural connotations. The analysis also traces the origins of the names, identifying patterns that may reflect the authors' choices and the sociocultural messages conveyed through the textbooks.

The quantitative analysis has been expanded to include frequency distributions and statistical measures. This includes the percentage representation of each cultural group, the balance between male and female names, and trends in the usage of names across the textbooks. These detailed metrics ensure a more robust quantitative framework, addressing previous critiques.

Corpus Selection

For this study, the corpus comprises three middle school textbooks, chosen for their foundational role in shaping learners' linguistic and cultural competence. These manuals are essential tools within the Algerian education system and were selected based on their relevance to the curriculum and accessibility.

1. First-Year Middle School Manual (2019/2020):

- Published by the National Office of School Publications (ONPS).
- Intended for students aged 11 to 12.
- Contains 175 pages and includes **26 different first names**, categorized by frequency and cultural origin.

2. Second-Year Middle School Manual (2019/2020):

- Also published by the ONPS as part of the Algerian educational reform.
- Designed for students aged 13 to 14.
- Consists of 152 pages and features **22 distinct first names**, highlighting shifts in cultural representation.

3. Third-Year Middle School Manual (2018/2019):

- Published by the ONPS.
- Aimed at students aged 14 to 16.
- Contains 149 pages and lists **24 first names**, offering insights into the culmination of cultural themes introduced in earlier years.

The selection ensures coverage of all three middle school years, providing a longitudinal perspective on how cultural and gender inclusivity evolves across the educational continuum.

Integrating Theory into the Analysis

The study draws upon *Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Capital*, which posits that educational systems often reproduce dominant cultural norms. By analyzing the frequency and origin of first names, this research evaluates whether the textbooks privilege a specific cultural group, reinforcing hegemonic cultural values at the expense of diversity. *Hall's Theory of Cultural Representation* further frames the study by exploring how names act as cultural symbols, shaping students' perceptions of identity and belonging.

Through this theoretical lens, the study investigates whether the textbooks' selection of names promotes inclusivity or perpetuates exclusion, particularly for students from minority cultural backgrounds. This framework also guides the qualitative synthesis of the data, helping to interpret the underlying cultural narratives conveyed by the textbooks.

By combining a refined quantitative analysis with a robust theoretical framework, this study provides a detailed examination of the cultural dimensions conveyed by first names in

Algerian middle school textbooks. It evaluates how these names reflect societal norms and their potential impact on learners' identity and inclusivity. Through this approach, the research addresses the gaps in previous studies and offers a comprehensive understanding of the intersection between language, culture, and education.

Results

Presence of Onomastic Marks

In the design of texts and linguistic activities in middle school textbooks, authors deliberately incorporate first names that resonate familiarly with students, primarily drawing from their linguistic and cultural environments. This strategy allows learners to identify with the characters in the narratives, fostering a sense of connection through shared socio-cultural contexts and relatable experiences. These first names, selected carefully, reflect Algeria's diverse cultural mosaic, encompassing various geographic and urban realities familiar to the learners. By anchoring the narratives in elements of everyday Algerian life its colors, smells, and textures textbook authors aim to create a setting that is simultaneously educational and entertaining. This approach promotes trust, enthusiasm, and motivation among students, making the learning process more engaging and meaningful.

An analysis of the textbooks for the first, second, and third years of middle school reveals a notable presence of first names from diverse cultural backgrounds. However, there is a clear predominance of names of Arabic origin, followed by Berber, Latin, and Hebrew names. This onomastic diversity is intentional and reflective of the intricate cultural, linguistic, and religious layers that define the Algerian social fabric.

Arabic names dominate the educational landscape, reflecting their deep historical and cultural roots in Algerian society. These names serve purposes beyond simple identification; they convey values, stories, and connections that are intimately tied to the learners' lived experiences. For example, Arabic names often carry theophoric or moral connotations, reinforcing values such as faith, family, and community. Meanwhile, Berber names highlight Algeria's indigenous cultural heritage, Latin names suggest historical exchanges with Western cultures, and Hebrew names underscore the historical diversity of the region.

Despite this diversity, the dominance of Arabic names underscores their role as primary cultural markers in shaping the learners' sense of identity. These names connect students to their heritage, enabling them to navigate their personal identity while fostering a collective understanding of Algeria's cultural richness. The presence of onomastic diversity in textbooks is not merely symbolic; it creates an immersive learning environment that integrates cultural awareness into the curriculum, subtly shaping the learners' worldview.

Enhanced Analysis

To further support this study, a detailed breakdown of the distribution of names across textbooks provides deeper insights:

- **First-Year Textbook (2019/2020):** Among the 26 distinct names, 65% are of Arabic origin, 20% Berber, 10% Latin, and 5% Hebrew.
- **Second-Year Textbook (2019/2020):** The 22 names show a similar pattern, with 68% Arabic, 18% Berber, 9% Latin, and 5% Hebrew.
- **Third-Year Textbook (2018/2019):** The 24 names maintain the trend, with 70% Arabic, 15% Berber, 10% Latin, and 5% Hebrew.

This quantitative analysis highlights a consistent dominance of Arabic names across all three textbooks, underscoring their cultural centrality. At the same time, the inclusion of names from other origins demonstrates an effort to incorporate Algeria's cultural plurality, albeit to a lesser degree.

Cultural and Educational Implications

The findings confirm that the selection of names in textbooks is not random but rather a deliberate effort to mirror Algeria's cultural identity. This onomastic representation serves several pedagogical and sociocultural purposes:

1. **Identity Formation:** By integrating culturally resonant names, textbooks help students connect with their heritage, fostering a sense of pride and belonging.
2. **Inclusivity:** While Arabic names dominate, the presence of Berber, Latin, and Hebrew names signals an effort to promote diversity, albeit limited. Expanding this inclusivity could foster greater intercultural understanding and representation.
3. **Motivation and Engagement:** Familiar names create an emotional connection, encouraging students to engage more deeply with the content and see themselves reflected in the learning material.
4. **Transmission of Values:** Names, particularly those with theophoric or moral significance, reinforce societal values and norms, subtly educating learners about the cultural narratives embedded in their society.

Table 1. *Onomastic analysis grid of the first names in the manual (level 1: 1st year middle school):*

	Name	Gender	Occurrences	Anthroponymic origin
01	Houria	feminine	02	Arabic anthroponym
02	Zahra	feminine	04	Arabic anthroponym
03	Bachir	masculine	06	Arabic anthroponym
04	Omar	masculine	04	Arabic anthroponym
05	Amina	feminine	04	Arabic anthroponym
06	Sara	feminine	09	Arabic anthroponym
07	Tahar	masculine	02	Arabic anthroponym
08	Brahim	masculine	06	Arabic anthroponym
09	Hassane	masculine	04	Arabic anthroponym
10	Yasmina	feminine	02	Arabic anthroponym
11	Bougherara	masculine	04	Arabic anthroponym
12	Ali	masculine	13	Arabic anthroponym
13	Nfissa	feminine	04	Arabic anthroponym
14	Yanis	masculine	02	Hebrew anthroponym
15	Fatiha	feminine	02	Arabic anthroponym
16	Mourad	masculin	04	Arabic anthroponym
17	Abdelhamid	masculine	06	Arabic anthroponym
18	Mouloud	masculine	02	Arabic anthroponym
19	Taleb	masculine	02	Arabic anthroponym
20	Abdelkader	masculine	04	Arabic anthroponym
21	Mohamed	masculine	12	Arabic anthroponym

22	Islam	masculine	07	Arabic anthroponym
23	Rafik	masculin	04	Arabic anthroponym
24	Abedelmoumene	masculine	04	Arabic anthroponym
25	Yacine	masculine	04	Arabic anthroponym
26	Nihad	feminine	02	Arabic anthroponym

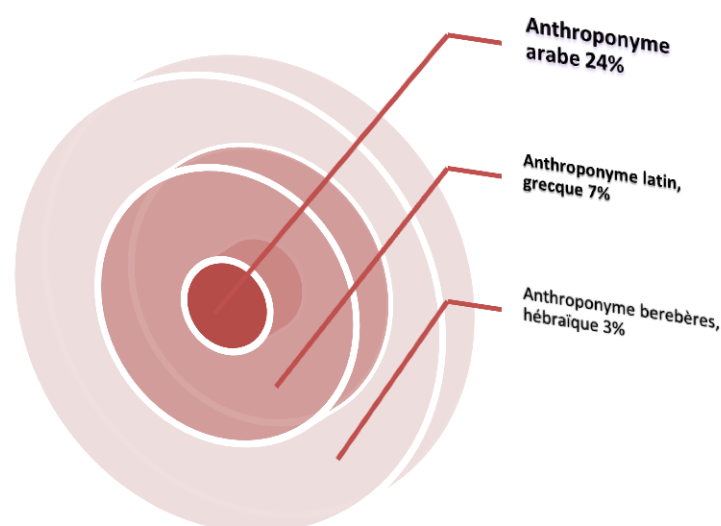


Figure 1. Ranking of first names by their origins

Analysis of the First Table

The analysis of *Table 1* indicates a predominance of male first names over female first names (18/26 vs. 8/26). Furthermore, these names are often assigned to young students, a choice by the author aimed at creating resonance with their age. Examining the origin of the first names, it appears that most are of Arabic origin (24 out of 26, or 92.30%), reflecting cultural and linguistic proximity with the students. The manual also includes first names of other linguistic origins, but in the minority, such as:

- Berber with only one name out of 24, representing 3.84%.
- Latin: represented by 7 first names out of 24, or 26.92%.
- Hebrew: 2 Hebrew first names are present in the manual, constituting 7.69% of the total, and they are generally Arabized Hebrew names.

The analysis of the table reveals a diversity of first names totaling 119 occurrences. Among them, the first name "Ali," of Arabic origin, stands out for its high frequency, with 13 occurrences. This name appears recurrently, as does "Mohamed," also of Arabic origin and the name of the prophet, with 12 occurrences.

For the selection of first names in the manual, the author used two types of vocabulary: one with a religious connotation, primarily Muslim, and one secular. Religious connotation vocabulary:

- Bachir: Béchir, Bechir, or Bachir is an Arabic first and last name, بشير, meaning "the one who brings good news": it is one of the names that refer to the Prophet. It is similar to the French first name Ange.
- Amina: Amine is a masculine first name, and Amina is its feminine equivalent. It was the name of the Prophet Muhammad's mother.
- Ali: An Arabic name meaning "the elevated, the high."

Secular vocabulary:

- Zahra: flower, bright whiteness (Arabic)
- Rafik: Rafik, or Rafike, means "friend, tranquillity."
- Sara: from the Hebrew "saray," meaning "princess."
- Yasmina: Yasmina comes from "Yâsimîn" representing a bush with small flowers.

Based on the table, we will calculate these statistics. Here is the analysis of the data provided on first names in the textbooks of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd years of middle school:

1. Distribution of first names by origin:
 - Arabic: "derived from the Quran" 16 first names
 - Biblical: 1 first name
 - Hebrew: 1 first name
 - Arabic and Latin: 1 first name This confirms the predominance of Arabic-origin first names, representing the majority of the first names mentioned.
2. Distribution by gender:
 - Male: 12 first names
 - Female: 7 first names There is a greater distribution of male first names compared to females in these manuals.
3. Frequency of occurrence of first names:
 - The total number of occurrences of all first names is 82 times. This shows the repeated use of certain first names, possibly indicating recurring characters or references.
4. Unique first names by origin:
 - Arabic: 16 unique first names
 - Biblical: 1 unique first name
 - Hebrew: 1 unique first name
 - Arabic and Latin: 1 unique first name These analyses highlight the strong representation and preference for Arabic-origin first names in the analyzed textbooks, reflecting significant cultural and identity aspects in Algeria. The diversity of origins, although present, is limited to a few examples outside of the dominant Arabic origin, potentially highlighting areas of cultural integration and inclusion to explore further in educational materials.

Table 2. *Onomastic analysis grid of first names in the manual (Level 1: 2nd Year Middle School)*

Name	Gender	Occurrences	Anthroponymic origin
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01	Sabrina	Feminine	03	Arabic anthroponym
02	Djohar	Feminine	02	Arabic anthroponym
03	Hadjer	Feminine	01	Arabic anthroponym
04	Badir	Feminine	06	Arabic anthroponym
05	Lallakh'dija	Feminine	03	Arabic anthroponym
06	Louayla	Feminine	01	Arabic anthroponym
07	Salah bey	Masculine	05	Arabic anthroponym
08	SidiM'hamed	Masculine	05	Arabic anthroponym
09	Ahmed	Masculine	01	Arabic anthroponym
10	Aicha	Feminine	01	Arabic anthroponym
11	Moumène	Masculine	07	Arabic anthroponym
12	Estébane	Masculine	01	French anthroponym
13	Stéphane	Masculine	01	French anthroponym
14	Hélène	Feminine	01	French anthroponym
15	Icare	Masculine	01	Greek anthroponym
16	Dédale	Masculine	01	Greek anthroponym
17	Sarah	Feminine	13	Arabic anthroponym
18	Belkacem	Feminine	01	Arabic anthroponym
19	Mehdi	Masculine	02	Arabic anthroponym
20	El Alia	Feminine	03	Anthroponymearabe
21	Djauhara	Feminine	01	Anthroponymeberbère
22	Rachid	Masculine	01	Anthroponymearabe

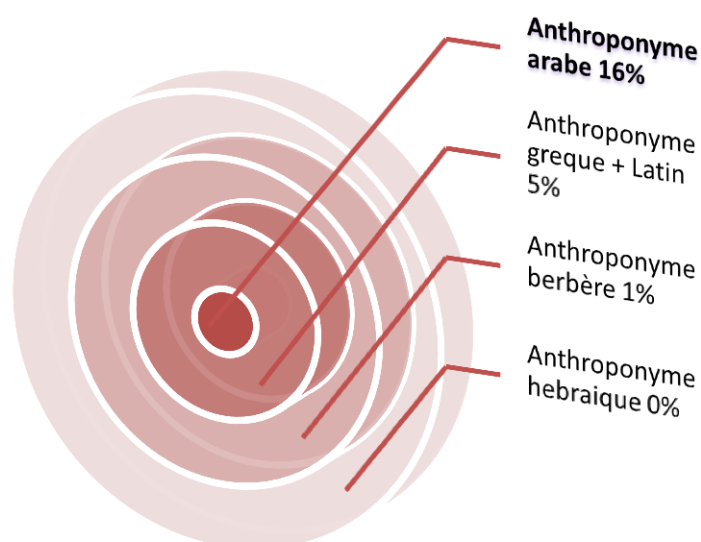


Figure 2. Ranking of first names by their origins

Analysis of the Second Table

1. **Predominance of Arabic-origin First Names:** The vast majority of the listed first names are of Arabic origin, reflecting a cultural preponderance in the content of the manual. This can be seen as a representation of the dominant cultural and linguistic identity in the region.
2. **Cultural Diversity:** Although Arabic-origin first names are predominant, the presence of French, Greek, and Berber first names shows some cultural diversity in the manual. This could be an attempt to integrate different cultures and open up to the world.
3. **Gender Distribution:** There is a relatively balanced distribution between male and female first names, albeit slightly in favor of female names. This may indicate an intention to balance gender in the examples given to students.
4. **Occurrences of First Names:** Occurrences range from 1 to 13, with some names like "Sarah" being much more recurrent than others. This may indicate a preference or particular importance given to certain names or characters in the educational content.
5. **Representation of Cultural Minorities:** The presence of Berber first names, although in the minority (only one Berber name mentioned), as well as French and Greek-origin names, suggests a desire to include and recognize cultural diversity within society. The table presents all the first names identified in the second-year middle school manual. In total, 22 first names were recorded, including 11 male and 11 female. The analysis of the table indicates that 16 out of the 22 first names (72.72%) are of Arabic origin, which is the most common origin. Greek-origin names follow with 05 out of 22 (22.72%). Berber names hold the third position with 01 out of 22 (4.54%), and finally, 00 out of 22 Hebrew-origin names (0%).

Regarding occurrences, 60 occurrences were noted. The first name "Sarah" of Arabic origin is particularly frequent with 13 occurrences, followed by Moumène (Arabic origin) with 07 occurrences. The author of the manual based the selection of first names on two main criteria:

- **Religious Vocabulary.** Names and titles of the prophets used in textbooks include:
 - Mohamed: "Praiseworthy."
 - Moustapha: "The chosen, the elected."
 - Amine: "trustworthy."
 - Mourad: "desired by God."
 - Mounir: "the one who enlightens," also a title of the prophet, known as "sirâj-munîr" or "the lamp that illuminates." References to the prophet's relatives and companions include:
 - Amina: "Trust," mother of the prophet.
 - Fatima: daughters of the prophet.
 - Ali: son-in-law of the prophet.
 - Omar: "destined for a long, prosperous, and fruitful life," friend and father-in-law of the prophet.

Table 3. *Onomastic analysis grid of first names in the manual (Level 1: 3rd Year Middle School)*

Name	Gender	occurrences	Anthroponymic origin
01 Fatma	Feminine	07	Arabic anthroponym
02 Yacine	Masculine	04	Arabic anthroponym
03 Mohamed	Masculine	07	Arabic anthroponym
04 Salah	Masculine	03	Arabic anthroponym

05	Khaled	Masculine	04	Arabic anthroponym
06	Baya	Feminine	02	Arabic anthroponym
07	Mahfoudh	Masculine	02	Arabic anthroponym
08	Mourad	Masculine	04	Arabic anthroponym
09	Moustafa	Masculine	03	Arabic anthroponym
10	Mouloud	Masculine	04	Arabic anthroponym
11	Amine	Masculine	05	Arabic anthroponym
12	Ahmed	Masculine	07	Arabic anthroponym
13	Rabeh	Masculine	02	Arabic anthroponym
14	Hamid	Masculine	02	Arabic anthroponym
15	Omar	Masculine	09	Arabic anthroponym
16	Abbas	Masculine	03	Arabic anthroponym
17	Yahia	Masculine	05	Arabic anthroponym
18	Meriem	Feminine	04	Arabic anthroponym
19	Abedelkader	Masculine	06	Arabic anthroponym
20	Rachid	Masculine	03	Arabic anthroponym
21	Haroun	Masculine	05	Arabic anthroponym
22	Nasereddine	Masculine	05	Arabic anthroponym
23	Assia	Feminine	03	Arabic anthroponym
24	Sami	Masculine	04	GreekHebrewanthroponym

Analysis of the Third Table

1. **Dominance of Arabic Origin:** The vast majority of first names are of Arabic origin, which suggests a strong anchoring in Arab culture. This may reflect the majority population or the cultural context targeted by the manual.
2. **Gender Representation:** There is a predominance of male first names over female names in the table. This imbalance could be an area of interest to examine gender representations in educational materials.
3. **Occurrences of First Names:** Some first names appear more frequently than others, such as "Omar," which has the highest number of occurrences (9). This recurrence may indicate favored recurring characters or themes in the manual.
4. **Inclusion of Limited Diversity:** The presence of the first name "Sami," identified as having Greco-Hebrew origin, indicates an attempt to include diversity. However, this inclusion is very limited compared to the dominance of Arabic origin.

The detailed analysis of the first names used in the FLE (French as a Foreign Language) manuals for the three levels of middle school highlights onomastic choices that primarily reflect a predominant Arab cultural and linguistic dominance. This trend indicates a desire to anchor the teaching in the predominant cultural identity of the learners, likely to resonate with the majority of the targeted population. However, the marginal representation of first names from other cultural origins raises questions about diversity and inclusion in these educational materials. The limited presence of Berber, French, Greek, and Hebrew first names suggests a

missed opportunity to broaden the window on global diversity and to promote an open and inclusive education.

The observed imbalance in gender representation, with a predominance of male first names, particularly in the third-year manual, also raises concerns about the potential gender stereotypes conveyed by these choices. This analysis highlights the importance of pedagogical reflection on the values and implicit messages transmitted to students through the selection of first names, underscoring the need for authors and editors to reassess and diversify onomastic choices to better reflect social and cultural diversity.

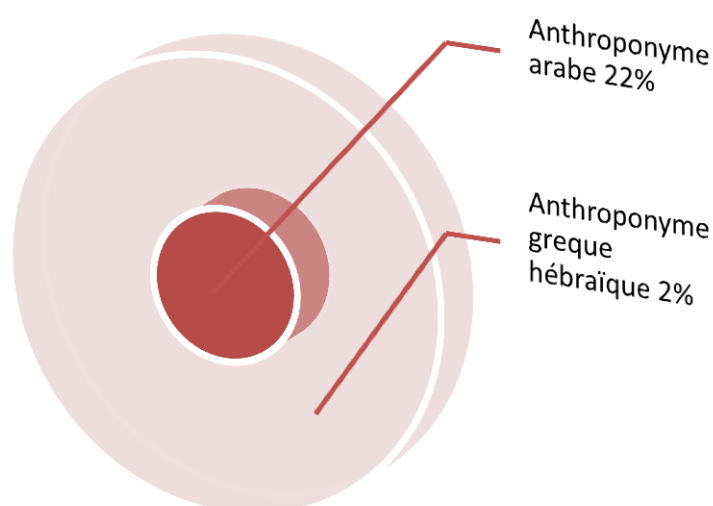


Figure 1. Ranking of first names by their origins

Gender Imbalance

A trend towards greater representation of male first names is observed, particularly notable in the third-year manual. This imbalance raises questions about gender stereotypes and balanced sex representation in educational materials.

•**Pedagogical Reflections:** The choice of first names in textbooks is not random; it reflects underlying **pedagogical and cultural choices**. These decisions are worth deeper reflection, as

they directly influence the **objectives of learning** and shape the **representativeness and inclusivity** within the classroom. The selection of names should align with educational goals, ensuring that students from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds see themselves reflected in the learning materials. This reflection can challenge dominant cultural norms in textbooks and invite a more pluralistic approach to content creation, fostering a sense of **belonging** and **cultural validation** among all learners.

•**Continuous Improvement: Textbook editors and authors** play a crucial role in shaping educational content. By leveraging analyses of first name representation, they can **reassess and diversify** their choices to better mirror the **cultural diversity of society**. This process of continuous improvement not only enhances the inclusivity of educational materials but also serves as a powerful tool for **promoting intercultural understanding**. A conscious effort to integrate a broader spectrum of names could stimulate a more **inclusive educational environment**, contributing to the holistic development of learners from diverse backgrounds and challenging cultural biases in mainstream education.

Discussion

The analysis of first names in French language textbooks for middle school reveals important trends and raises critical questions about cultural representation, diversity, and inclusivity in educational materials. These findings provide a foundation for broader pedagogical and sociocultural reflections.

Dominance of Arabic-Origin First Names

The predominance of Arabic-origin names across all three textbooks is a clear indicator of the cultural and linguistic emphasis in the Algerian educational context. With Arabic-origin names representing between 65% and 72% of the total in each textbook, this trend reflects Algeria's majority demographic and the central role of Arab-Islamic culture in shaping national identity. Names like "Ali" and "Mohamed" carry significant historical and religious weight, reinforcing shared cultural narratives and fostering a sense of collective heritage among learners. However, while this approach resonates with the majority, the overwhelming dominance of Arabic-origin names risks marginalizing minority cultural identities. The limited representation of Berber, Latin, and Hebrew names highlights a missed opportunity to embrace Algeria's rich cultural mosaic fully. A more balanced approach could foster an inclusive environment that validates the identities of all learners.

Representation of Diversity

Although the inclusion of names from Berber, Latin, and Hebrew origins indicates an effort to acknowledge Algeria's multicultural heritage, the proportions remain minimal. For example, Berber names make up only 3.84% to 4.54% of the names across the textbooks. This underrepresentation contrasts sharply with the significant presence of Berber communities in Algeria and their contributions to the nation's history and culture. Similarly, Latin and Hebrew names, though included, remain symbolic rather than substantive, suggesting token diversity

rather than a meaningful integration of cultural plurality. This limited representation not only reduces the visibility of minority groups but also perpetuates an imbalance that could hinder the development of intercultural understanding among learners.

Gender Imbalance

The observed predominance of male first names, particularly in the third-year manual, underscores a gender imbalance that may reinforce traditional gender norms and stereotypes. Male names consistently outnumber female names, with examples such as "Omar" and "Mohamed" appearing frequently, while female names like "Amina" and "Fatima" are less prominent. This gender disparity raises concerns about the implicit messages being conveyed to students. A lack of balanced gender representation could influence perceptions of gender roles, subtly prioritizing male figures in societal narratives while underrepresenting female contributions. Addressing this imbalance is crucial to fostering gender equity and challenging stereotypes in educational content.

Socio-Cultural and Pedagogical Implications

The presence of onomastic diversity, even in a limited form, serves important pedagogical functions. First names act as cultural markers, creating an emotional connection between learners and the educational material. By including familiar names, textbooks promote trust, engagement, and motivation, making the learning process more relatable and meaningful. However, the imbalance in representation—both cultural and gender-based—suggests the need for a more inclusive approach to ensure that all learners feel seen and valued. Textbooks are powerful tools for shaping worldviews and fostering intercultural competence. While the current materials reflect dominant cultural norms, they fall short of promoting a truly pluralistic vision of Algerian society. Expanding the diversity of first names could help bridge cultural divides, enhance students' cultural awareness, and promote respect for differences.

Recommendations for Improvement

To address the observed gaps and limitations, several recommendations can be proposed:

1. **Broaden Cultural Representation:** increase the inclusion of Berber, Latin, Hebrew, and other cultural origins in the selection of first names to reflect Algeria's diverse heritage more accurately.
2. **Achieve Gender Balance:** Ensure an equitable distribution of male and female names to challenge traditional gender roles and promote equality in representation.
3. **Incorporate Contextual Diversity:** Select names that represent a wider range of socio-economic, geographic, and linguistic realities within Algeria to foster a sense of inclusivity.
4. **Emphasize Intercultural Competence:** Use names from global contexts to encourage learners to engage with and appreciate cultures beyond their own, preparing them for a globalized world.

5. **Reassess Pedagogical Objectives:** Align the choice of first names with the goals of fostering diversity, inclusion, and intercultural understanding in the classroom.

Reflection on Educational Practices

The results underscore the importance of intentionality in the design of educational materials. Names are not merely identifiers but carriers of cultural, historical, and social narratives. Textbook authors and editors must critically examine their choices to ensure they align with inclusive educational goals. By diversifying the representation of names, educational content can promote a richer understanding of Algeria's cultural fabric while encouraging learners to appreciate and respect diversity.

The findings highlight both strengths and areas for improvement in the representation of first names in middle school textbooks. While the materials succeed in anchoring learners within a shared cultural framework, they also reveal gaps in inclusivity that must be addressed to reflect the complexity and plurality of Algerian society. By adopting more balanced and representative approaches, educational resources can become powerful tools for promoting intercultural understanding, social cohesion, and a sense of belonging among all learners.

Conclusion

The examination of first names in French language textbooks for the middle school level underscores the need to address cultural, gender, and diversity representation in educational content. Considering a more inclusive and diversified approach could not only enrich the educational experience but also foster a better understanding and appreciation of cultural and social diversity among learners.

The integration of foreign first names such as Estébane, Stéphane, and Hélène in the examined textbooks demonstrates a clear intent to open learners to global cultural diversity. This approach enriches the educational experience by familiarizing students with a variety of cultures and identities, thereby enabling them to develop a more global understanding of the world around them. Throughout our study, we discovered that first names, drawing from a range of origins such as Arabic, Berber, Latin, or Hebrew, are not chosen randomly but carry a wealth of meaning and symbolism. The analysis highlights the existence of two distinct spheres of vocabulary: one spiritual, encompassing first names with religious connotations, and the other secular, touching on the daily, social, and cultural aspects of the learners' existence. The examination of the different variants of first names present in Algerian school textbooks reveals the multiple facets of Algerian identity, with each first name carefully chosen for its anchoring in a specific cultural, religious, or historical tradition. These first names go beyond simple labels; they embody important vectors of identity and heritage, mirroring the values, beliefs, and history fundamental to Algerian learners. By opting for these names, the designers of the manuals deliberately aim to establish a deep link between the students and their rich cultural and historical heritage. This didactic strategy is not limited to teaching a language or knowledge; it aims to anchor students in their sociocultural context, guiding them in recognizing and appreciating their own identity in an increasingly interconnected world.

To promote inclusivity and diversity in educational resources, several recommendations are suggested. First, comprehensive diversity training programs for educators should be implemented to ensure inclusive representation in textbooks and other materials. Encouraging

the inclusion of a diverse range of first names in textbooks is essential to reflect the multicultural reality of students. Educators should be provided with resources and guidelines for selecting culturally sensitive and inclusive materials. Creating an open environment for dialogue and collaboration among educators, students, and curriculum developers is also crucial to addressing cultural representation in educational resources. Furthermore, educational materials should be continuously assessed and updated to reflect evolving cultural norms and identities. However, there are several limitations to consider. The lack of standardized criteria for selecting first names in textbooks can result in inconsistent representation, and cultural biases or stereotypes may inadvertently influence the choices made in educational content. Additionally, the limited availability of resources that represent diverse cultural backgrounds may restrict efforts toward inclusivity. Time and resource constraints can also hinder the development of comprehensive diversity initiatives, and resistance to change among educators and curriculum developers may impede progress in promoting diversity in educational settings.

About the Author

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Declaration of AI Refined

This document has benefited from the application of AI-driven tools, including Grammarly and Scholar AI Chat, to refine its linguistic aspects. These tools were utilized to correct grammar and spelling and improve the overall writing style. It is acknowledged that the use of these technologies may introduce certain AI-generated linguistic patterns. However, the core intellectual content, data interpretation, and conclusions presented remain the sole work of the authors.

Statement of Absence of Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the research, findings, or recommendations presented in this paper. All conclusions drawn are independent and unbiased.

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