

Language and Cultural Blending in Families Resulting from Mixed Marriages in France: Case Study

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Abstract

Migration is considered one of the most critical factors affecting language, as its elements are transferred from one society to another. Mixed marriage resulting from migration is the most essential and prominent source of cultural mixing. The latter mainly emerges in the language component. It is known that language evolves and is not entirely static; it is influenced by cultural contact. Therefore, every year, new words are added to the linguistic repertoire of particular societies. This study aims to highlight the characteristics of linguistic blending within families formed through mixed marriages in France. It does so by conducting field research with families formed by the union of spouses from two different countries residing in France, where one spouse carries Algerian culture and the other a different one. It became clear that language is one of the most critical aspects affected by the change due to cultural mixing among the father's language, the mother's language, and French, the language of the host country. For example, if the family is composed of an Algerian man and a wife from a different culture, blending will begin with their native languages and French. It is as if these families develop a unique hybrid language that reflects the mixing of cultures and serves as a marker of their distinct cultural identity within French society. The field research has shown that, for them, this difference is a positive, not a negative, aspect, as it indicates that they are carriers of diverse cultural elements.

Keywords: Cultural blending, linguistic identity, linguistic mixing, mixed marriage, migration

ملخص

تُعتبر الهجرة من أهم العوامل التي تؤثر على اللغة وتنقل عناصرها من مجتمع لآخر، والزواج المختلط الناتج عن الهجرة هو أهم وأبرز مُحَدَث للامتزاج الثقافي، هذا الأخير يبرز بشكل أساسي في عنصر اللغة، فمن المعروف أن اللغة تتطور وليست ثابتة كلياً فهي تتأثر بفعل الاحتكاك الثقافي، ولذلك نجد أنه في كل سنة تُضاف إلى الرصيد اللغوي لبعض المجتمعات كلمات جديدة. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إبراز خاصية الامتزاج اللغوي في الأسرة الناشئة عن زواج مختلط في فرنسا من خلال القيام ببحث ميداني مع أسر تكونت باتحاد زوجين من بلدين مختلفين في فرنسا، حيث يكون أحدهما حاملاً للثقافة الجزائرية في حين يكون الآخر حاملاً لثقافة مغايرة، وقد اتضح جلياً أن اللغة تشكل أحد أهم الجوانب التي يمسه التغيير بفعل الامتزاج الثقافي بين: لغة الأب، لغة الأم، واللغة الفرنسية التي هي لغة بلد الإقامة. فإذا كانت الأسرة مثلاً مكونة من جزائري وزوجة من ثقافة مغايرة سيكون إذاً الامتزاج أولاً في لغتهم الأم إضافة إلى اللغة الفرنسية، وكأن هذه الأسر تصبح لها لغتها الخاصة الممزوجة بامتزاج الثقافات لتشكل بذلك مؤشراً دالاً على هويتهم الثقافية المختلفة في المجتمع الفرنسي، وقد أظهر البحث الميداني أن هذا الاختلاف بالنسبة لهم هو أمر إيجابي وليس سلبياً لأنه يدل على أنهم حاملون لعناصر ثقافية مختلفة.

كلمات مفتاحية: زواج مختلط، امتزاج ثقافي، هجرة، هوية لغوية، امتزاج لغوي.

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Introduction

Transformation in cultural systems is apparent, reflecting the mutable nature of human cultural phenomena. This evolution occurs over time due to several factors, the most significant of which is migration, which influences society's systems and landmarks in various ways. Migration is considered one of the most critical factors in cultural dissemination.

It is impossible to discuss migration and cultural dissemination without addressing mixed marriages, a marital pattern that has become particularly popular in France as a primary destination for Algerian immigrants, whether to obtain residency, facilitate integration, or for other reasons. The family structure resulting from mixed marriages differs from other families due to the blending of the cultural elements of spouses with different identities.

In mixed marriages, cultural identity is among the aspects most affected by cultural differences, as field research has shown. It has been found that families emerging from mixed marriages have a distinct lifestyle compared to other families. Language, one of the most significant features of identity, capable of evolution and affected by cultural blending, raises the following question: Can we say that families arising from mixed marriages have a language created by blending elements from two or three languages to represent this social group?

This study aims to address interconnected topics: mixed marriages arising from migration, which directly affect the language of immigrants in the host country and its residents. Their linguistic repertoire is enriched with foreign words that are gradually adopted until they become part of their vocabulary. This influence may also extend to the articulation of sounds when pronouncing words in a native language.

This study extended from the end of 2013 to the end of 2014. It was part of a broader study of mixed marriage, but in this research paper, we highlight the acculturation process that can occur in relation to language and identity. We chose to use questionnaires in interviews as a research tool. To analyze the results, we attempted to process the data using the descriptive-analytical method. The study sample was not selected; we used a snowball sampling method. It consisted of 10 families formed through mixed marriages residing in France, each with one spouse of Algerian cultural background. At the same time, the other comes from a different culture, including: (Swiss, Moroccan, or French). We will display a sample of two families: the husband is of Algerian origin and therefore has an Algerian cultural background, while the wife is of Moroccan origin. There are also three families in which the wife has Algerian culture and the husband has French culture.

Additionally, we have one family in which the wife has Algerian culture and the husband has Moroccan culture, and another family in which the husband has Algerian culture. The wife is Swiss, and both reside in France. Moreover, we have three families in which the husband

belongs to an Algerian culture and the wife to a French culture. The results obtained apply only to the studied sample and cannot be generalized to similar cases.

Cultural Blending

The exploration of mixed marriages and linguistic evolution inherently necessitates a discussion of cultural blending. Anthropologists identify cultural change primarily through the lens of acculturation, perceiving it as a mechanism that achieves equilibrium within societal systems. Cultural blending serves a functional dimension, satisfying the specific needs and desires of individuals.

This encompasses behaviors, material means -whether technological or traditional- customs, and all other human creations that express particular ways of thinking and living. Culture exists not merely as a tradition but as a functional entity, vital for fulfilling the distinct needs of individuals and society at large. When a culture fails to meet these needs, a deficiency or incapacity emerges, precipitating change as a social imperative. This change first affects the culture, subsequently influencing the broader society. In the context of families formed from mixed marriages, a form of imbalance often exists between the partners due to their diverse cultural backgrounds. To naturally re-establish equilibrium, cultural blending emerges as an essential and inevitable response, restoring balance and stability within the family unit.

Cultural contact invariably leads to cultural transformation. The duration of contact between two societies and the variety of interaction opportunities significantly affect the extent of cultural borrowing and blending between different cultural elements. Cultural diffusion involves several processes:

- The transfer of cultural elements from one region to another, such as language.
- The acceptance and adoption of these elements by a particular society.
- The harmonization between newly introduced cultural elements and those already existing within the adopting society (Al-Khashab, 1970, p. 73).
- Cultural blending is motivated by the intrinsic human need to fulfill specific societal or personal desires. Patrim Sucorin argues that cultural change is inherently bidirectional; as society 'A' imparts cultural elements to society 'B', there is concurrently a reciprocal transfer from society 'B' to society 'A' (Rashwan, 2003, pp. 32-34). In the milieu of mixed marriages, this blending permeates all facets -values, traditions, language, and daily practices- thereby cultivating a unique lifestyle for these families, distinct from others.

Identity and Cultural Blending

From birth, society imposes an identity on an individual, starting with their name and surname, and components rooted in the history, origin, and experiences of that society, which

they absorb through interactions with their environment, such as language and customs. However, in a family with spouses from different cultural backgrounds residing within French society, a child inherits several markers of an identity distinct from the French culture to which they will eventually belong. This necessitates a nuanced understanding and management of their dual cultural affiliation, beginning with language. Malowski and Sebastian highlight that intercultural contact not only enriches civilizations and cultures but also generates profound questions. This occurs because it places individuals amidst a set of contradictions and pressures.

They find themselves living in two different cultures, potentially in conflict, and are confronted with choices that require reevaluating their foundational beliefs and references. This reevaluation compels them to reconsider their status and position within society, urging them to develop new perspectives on their identity and sense of belonging to their community. Within the familial context, life typically adheres to the culture of the country of origin. Similarly, neighboring immigrant families often maintain the cultural practices of their native countries, as immigrants from the same nation tend to congregate. Outside of these familial and community circles, individuals encounter a different set of cultural norms, values, and languages, prompting them to adopt other standards and orientations as their reference points.

Simultaneously, they must adeptly navigate the complexities of belonging to two disparate cultures. According to the Larousse dictionary, acculturation involves an inevitable or non-inevitable adaptation to a new set of material cultures, beliefs, and behaviors. For Jorge Rodríguez Ruivo, individuals living within a context of cultural duality could potentially embody the seeds of a future European identity. The identity formation process for individuals emerging from mixed marriages is intricate due to their existence within a system of differing and potentially contradictory standards and values. Hence, they are uniquely positioned as creators of a novel and distinct cultural form, a direct outcome of extensive artistic and linguistic blending (Aissaoui & De Sousa, 2008, pp. 17-27).

The Triad of Language, Identity, and Culture

The term "identity" derives from the Arabic word "هو" (he or it), which encapsulates the concepts of recognition and differentiation of entities. Identity is a term that holds substantial weight in both legal and cultural contexts. According to the intermediate dictionary, identity is the inherent reality of an entity or individual that distinguishes it from others. In a legal framework, it is typically represented by an identification card that validates an individual's nationality, date of birth, and residence (Daif, 2004, p. 990).

Within the cultural domain, language acts as a fundamental component of culture and a pivotal determinant of identity. The discourse surrounding identity and language pervades the

thoughts of intellectuals, scholars, and leaders globally, driving their collective endeavors to underscore the cultural and linguistic identities within their communities. This effort aims to prevent fragmentation and dissolution of identities, facilitated through various channels of social and political socialization, including family units, media outlets, educational institutions, and other pedagogical frameworks. Language, at its essence, symbolizes a society's cultural ethos, serving as a vibrant expression of its heritage. The intersection of identity, culture, and language becomes a critical focal point in the social sciences, underscoring language's integral role in identity.

Language transcends its utilitarian function as a mere medium of communication; it embodies individual and collective identities, reflecting the uniqueness, intellectual depth, creativity, and emotional expressions of its speakers (Mounis, 2016, p. 265).

The harmonization of linguistic forms with cultural practices permits an analytical view of culture and language as two interconnected facets of the same cultural identity, each mirroring and influencing the other through specific cognitive and perceptual processes. Broadly, identity encompasses the characteristics that distinguish individuals, groups, or nations. On an individual level, it highlights distinctiveness and differentiation, whereas on a collective scale, it represents the commonalities among a group and their distinctiveness from other groups (Spire, n.d., p. 132). Linguistic evolution extends beyond the mere addition of new entries in dictionaries; it also involves the "evolution of semantic forms of words".

The metaphorical perceptions individuals develop about their world play a crucial role, shaped by the cultural elements assimilated throughout their lives. Scholars such as Lakoff and Johnson argue that a detailed exploration of metaphors can illuminate our perceptions, thought processes, and behaviors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1996, p. 21). Highlighting the profound influence of linguistic integration, Salah Guemriche, in his "Dictionary of French Words of Arabic Origin" (*Dictionnaire des mots français d'origine arabe*), notes that French vocabulary includes twice as many words of Arabic origin as Gallic, ranging from 'algebra' and 'alcohol' to 'jupe' (skirt) and 'échec et mat' (checkmate) (Guemriche, 2007).

Furthermore, a 2005 dictionary by Claude Charaiveau documents words and phrases of Moroccan Arabic origin, encompassing dialects from Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. It translates them into French, illustrating the dynamic nature of language through acculturation and dissemination (Cheraifi, 2005). Such linguistic evolution reaffirms that no language remains static but continually refines and adapts. Language serves as the global address of identity, navigating the complex multilingual landscape that characterizes our world. The history of languages, an integral part of international history, reflects and manages this

linguistic diversity, which is not confined to specific regions or characteristic of developing nations but is a ubiquitous phenomenon (Mounis, 2016, pp. 262-263).

In families where cultural blending is prevalent, individuals often exhibit a natural amalgamation of diverse cultural elements in their behavior and language. In such settings, Arabic-origin phrases usually integrate seamlessly into French sentences to articulate specific situations. Although similar linguistic blends occur in Maghreb countries where French is a secondary language to Arabic, the spontaneous linguistic blending in mixed families may result in one language predominating over the other. This fusion crystallizes to form a distinct linguistic category that, while sharing traits with broader society, expresses unique characteristics. The emergent blended language not only symbolizes identity but has also gained recognition and acceptance within the third generation of Maghreb immigrants in France, becoming a widely used and respected element of French society.

Haut du formulaire

The Function of Identity

The multifaceted components of identity are embodied in the individual, the group affiliations, and the encompassing cultural framework. This tripartite structure benefits the individual, who both influences and is influenced by the group through intricate cultural interactions. A fundamental aspect of identity lies in defining an individual's belonging to a specific group. The cultural perspective on interpreting identity formation emphasizes the roles of socialization, cultural practices, and educational experiences. Such an approach necessitates a deep exploration into how cultural specificity extends into and shapes an individual's personality.

For children raised in culturally blended families, it is essential that they naturally assimilate diverse cultural elements, including those from broader French society. Consequently, these children's identities are spontaneously forged from a blend of artistic elements that collectively define their affiliation with the cultures they are immersed in, thereby mitigating potential cultural imbalances.

Learning and using the language of a specific group significantly bolsters an individual's sense of belonging to that group, thereby becoming a critical component of their identity. From this standpoint, it is clear that language is not merely a communicative tool but a fundamental element of identity that facilitates a sense of belonging. The choice of one language over another becomes a deliberate expression of the social linguistic identity that the individual wishes to project.

Migration as a Factor in Language Transfer

Migration stands out as a positive socio-cultural force, facilitating the dissemination of language, technology, and culture at large. It profoundly influences individuals, who in turn precipitate changes within the social system (Hegazy, 1975, p. 235). Generally, migration facilitates the transfer of language, culture, religion, and technology, thereby enabling mutual influence between the host country and the country of origin. Contemporary globalization is founded upon cultural openness, which can only be realized through linguistic openness (K. Manaa, 2020, pp 148-158).

Furthermore, migration is one of the most critical factors driving cultural and social change, as it first alters the individual, the primary social actor (Hegazy, 1975, p. 235). The immigrant finds themselves in a new society to which they wish to belong, and the primary channels of communication that facilitate this belonging are linguistic. Therefore, learning French is not only essential for communication but also a means of integration into the new community. Linguistic diversity is one of the factors resulting from cultural mixing, and some countries have therefore adopted policies based on the principle of recognizing linguistic rights to achieve social harmony (T. D. H. Khadidja, 2021, pp. 165-178).

However, this will bring about feelings of guilt and betrayal towards the mother tongue, which can never be completely abandoned. Over time, a way will be found to maintain its presence through speeches, for instance, using humor in the vocabulary. Pioneers in this matter, like Jamel Debbouze, Gad Elmaleh, and Dieudonné M'bala M'bala, the comedians who strongly introduced Maghrebi Arabic phrases into French discourse through jokes.

Mixed Marriage

Mixed marriage is a marriage established by the union of a man and a woman, each belonging to different countries, religions, or cultures (Ciprut, 2001, p. 23). The French civil status (*l'état civil*) defines mixed marriage as: "any union between a foreigner, regardless of origin, and a French person", emphasizing the cultural mixing of two different countries for those about to marry (Beat & Régnard, 2008, p. 1). In 2006, the number of mixed marriages in which one spouse was Algerian and the other French was 988, the most significant number in France (Beat & Régnard, 2008, pp. 3-4). Mixed marriage falls under the category of exogamous marriage, where the reality of immigration in French society leads us to think that mixed marriage can take several forms. It may be a marriage between two individuals, one of French origin and the other of another origin, or between a French individual and a person of foreign origin born and raised in France.

Thus, to progress clearly in our study, it is essential to note that the mixed marriage of interest to us involves spouses residing in France, one of whom has Algerian origin and the other from a different origin. Therefore, mixed marriage is like any other marriage, but it is

distinguished by features related to cultural mixing. Below, we will present the most essential characteristics of mixed marriage:

Language Between Spouses in Mixed Marriage

Each language symbolizes a specific culture, and learning a language is not sufficient to understand everything said or to become well-acquainted with its culture, as phrases have meanings understood only by those who carry the culture of the society, because symbols are abstract and meanings are latent. Language often poses a problem in mixed marriages, and as an adaptive response, both try to find a language they both understand and agree on. The field study showed that language is one of the barriers encountered by families resulting from mixed marriage, especially in marriages where one carries Algerian culture and the other French or Swiss culture, as in one of the families. Either one speaks the language of the other, or they both talk about the language of the society in which they live, but they must learn those abstract symbols and the meanings carried by linguistic phrases to feel a sense of belonging and reduce their feeling of alienation. Thus, a mixed language gradually developed in the family through the repeated use of specific mixed vocabulary alongside French, becoming a necessary and inevitable adaptive response that restored balance to the family.

Over time, their unique, coded language becomes their own, distinguishing them from others as they find satisfaction in this uniqueness and individuality because it represents their identity. In their statements, they consider it a way also to add fun to the family ambiance, as exemplified by the following phrase: (Je vais chez KHALTI).

Children in Mixed Marriages and the Language Issue

The birth of a child in a family formed by a mixed marriage acts as a catalyst, making the family distinct and highlighting its differences. This uniqueness prompts a series of questions within the family concerning socialization and religion, but the primary questions revolve around language. The difference between the spouses leads to a third difference, represented by the child. This child is born into a cultural environment that shapes the foundational values that guide their thinking, behavior, and language. In the case of a family from a mixed marriage, the child must learn the culture and language of both the father and the mother, which might differ or even contradict each other. Moreover, the child finds themselves in a challenging position, as they must choose which culture and language to adopt as a reference, in addition to the host country's language and culture.

Naturally, both parents will communicate with the child in their native languages, along with French, which the child will acquire from the surrounding society. Thus, the child finds itself using the exact phrases to communicate with both parents; it speaks to the mother in her

dialect and words, and similarly to the father, while it is required to speak French outside the home. It's important to note that French is more prevalent, as observed in the field, and a crucial question in this dilemma is when the cultural blending will manifest in the child's speech. According to field research, linguistic blending first appears within the family.

As the child's cognitive processes develop through the formation of representations, this blending sometimes serves as an intuitive and an intentional means to satisfy both parents. Still, it particularly emerges outside the family during adolescence as a way to assert identity and define uniqueness.

Musical Blending in Mixed Marriages

It is commonly observed in Switzerland, France, and other European nations that immigrants, particularly those from Africa, tend to speak loudly and frequently use hand gestures. This is not just a matter of speech volume or style but also extends to the musical expressions and tones of these communities. Foreign musical tones are not merely dismissed as noise; instead, they can manifest as physical discomfort, feelings of discordance, and a sense of destabilization even within one's native culture (Lecourt, 1998, p. 181). The unfamiliarity of foreign tunes often challenges our sense of uniqueness, as Marie-Andrée Ciprut notes in the context of mixed marriages, highlighting that while one should not expect their partner to necessarily love their musical heritage, acceptance and appreciation of its value are crucial. Music, much like language, is a potent symbol and expression of a specific culture, embodying heritage and identity.

Through music, one can discern the culture it represents, with language serving as a more precise determinant of identity than tune alone, as music often acts as an ambassador for a particular language. However, not all Arabic music reflects the identity of a specific group, as musical styles are as varied as dialects. Field research has shown that French music has blended French and Moroccan styles, extending this hybridity to language as well. For instance, one participant noted that French music facilitated their learning of French. Modern French music often incorporates words from Maghreb, with artists like Khaled from Algeria with his song "Aicha," Faudel, and others of French origin with Algerian roots, such as Zaho, Band 113, L'Algérino, as well as artists of pure French origin like Patrick Bruel and Calogero with the song "Ya Rayah," blending French and Arabic in their music.

Linguistic Blending in Families from Mixed Marriages

Participants in mixed marriages report that cultural differences initially presented challenges but were eventually embraced, enhancing their relationships. While some struggled with French, they gradually mastered it, recognizing that cultural blending is an inevitable and

enriching aspect of mixed marriages. Each spouse contributes to this dynamic by helping the other understand and engage with their respective languages and cultures.

This cultural integration is particularly pronounced in their homes, influencing their thoughts, lifestyles, daily behaviors, and cultural practices. It is vividly reflected in their language, which becomes a mix of Arabic and French. This blending of dialects fosters a "coded language" unique to each family, creating a lively and joyful atmosphere ("une ambiance") and distinguishing their family's cultural identity from others through the amalgamation of diverse cultural elements, with language as a pivotal component.

Linguistic Identity of Individuals in Families from Mixed Marriages

In environments of cultural blending, language is among the most significantly affected cultural aspects due to the intermingling of cultures. Young people, particularly immigrants or descendants of immigrant families, actively mix French and Arabic to create a distinctive language that symbolizes their identity. Commonly used words include "chiche" (dare you), "chah" (deserved), "bled" (country), "hchouma" (shame), "nif" (honor), "souk" (market), and "inshallah" (God willing). Here is a list of some Algerian-origin words used in France, along with their meanings:

Table 1. *Some Algerian-origin words used in France and their meanings*

Vocabulary	Meaning
Chiche	Dare you to do what you say
Chah	You deserve what happened to you
Bled	The country
Hchouma	Shame
Nif	Self-esteem
Souk	Market
Inshallah	If God wills it

Arabic identity, especially in language, defines these communities, with distinctions drawn along dialect and geographic lines. For individuals who navigate multiple cultures, their identity is closely tied to the languages they speak. This leads to the philosophical consideration of whether language or thought comes first, with most thinkers agreeing that they proceed in parallel.

As such, children raised in these blended cultural environments often find themselves thinking and communicating in a mix of both languages, reflecting unique cultural and linguistic expressions that are not found in other cultures. The linguistic ideology of today is not the same as it was in the seventh or fourteenth centuries, due to the numerous cultural

intermixtures that influence a child's upbringing and are prominently present in the educational and surrounding spaces. Changes in historical and social trajectories are bound to change any language, where some words may become outdated, some may change in meaning, and new terms and expressions may emerge from nowhere (Guehria, 2009, p. 200).

This explains the fate of language for individuals belonging to a family where cultural blending is present. They find themselves creating phrases that mix French and Arabic, eventually forming their unique language that expresses their essence, their thoughts, and their distinctive identity. This uniqueness fosters a sense of balance and psychological comfort among them. Field research shows that this unique language adds a pleasant atmosphere to family gatherings and other social settings. The evidence for this is the spread of some of these phrases and words within French society, such as "kifkif," "chahe," and "mahboul".

Conclusion

Therefore, language transcends its basic communicative function, emerging as a profound manifestation of identity. Language and identity are intricately linked, each shaping and reinforcing the other to foster a sense of balance through processes of belonging and integration. Language, as a conduit for thought, additionally serves as an instrument for asserting one's individuality and distinctiveness within society. Humans, inherently influenced by and impactful upon their societal contexts, leverage language as a pivotal medium through which they both enact and reflect changes, adjusting its meanings and expanding its lexicon.

This phenomenon is prominently observed in families from mixed marriages, who introduce modifications to the French language by weaving together elements from multiple linguistic backgrounds, thereby facilitating its gradual evolution. Often, this fusion of languages occurs spontaneously, driven by an intuitive development of cognitive processes that meld Algerian and other cultural logics, shaped by diverse social experiences.

Occasionally, this blending is intentional, in which the amalgamation of languages serves as a bold declaration of personal uniqueness, effectively stating, "I am an amalgam of both Algerian and French cultures, which renders me unique and distinctive." This sentiment is powerfully echoed by researchers who affirm, "We take pride in our cultural hybridity (On est fières d'être métisse)".

About the Author

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AI Statement

This document has been enhanced through the use of Grammarly which was employed to refine its linguistic style and correct grammar and spelling. While the incorporation of these technologies may introduce some AI-generated linguistic patterns, it is important to note that the core intellectual content, data interpretation, and conclusions presented are entirely the work of the author.

Statement of Absence of Conflict of Interest

The author declares 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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