

# Reconsidering Development

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Volume 4  
Issue 1 *Language*

Article 5

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2015

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### Recommended Citation

Belmihoub, K. (2015). English for Peace in Algeria. *Reconsidering Development*, 4 (1). Retrieved from <http://pubs.lib.umn.edu/reconsidering/vol4/iss1/5>

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# English for Peace in Algeria

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**Abstract:** English has the power to help bring socioeconomic prosperity and sociolinguistic peace to Algeria's increasingly free market and complex multilingual situation. A hermeneutic approach toward the study of texts and part of a questionnaire are used to theorize about potential roles English could play in Algeria's sociolinguistic context. It is found that an increasing number of social, cultural, and academic programs by the United States and the British Council could contribute to the spread of English in a peace-fostering manner. Algerians' bottom-up initiatives, including those of teachers and social media users also have the potential to contribute to deethenicized worldly English that could be used to access more information and training opportunities. It is hoped that the spread of English, a language many Algerians seem to favor, could promote sociolinguistic peace and contribute to socioeconomic development.

**Keywords:** Algeria, English, mutual understanding, sociolinguistic peace

**Suggested Citation:** Belmihoub, K. (2015). English for peace in Algeria. *Reconsidering Development*, 4(1), 35-50.

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I gratefully acknowledge the feedback and support of Professor Melinda Reichelt. I also thank Professors Mohamed Benrabah and Ruth Hottell for their feedback. Further, I appreciate Alisa Herbst's valuable suggestions and encouragement, and the anonymous reviewers' helpful comments.

## Introduction

In 1993 in Algeria, fourth graders in and around the capital city Algiers had, for the first time, the option of choosing English, the other option being French, to fulfill their foreign language requirement (Benrabah, 2007b, p. 76). The government argued that English was an international language, a language that allowed access to science and technology and, thus, it needed to be offered as early as fourth grade (Benrabah, 2007c, p.194). Opponents of the government's move to promote English argued that the move was just another step toward the complete Arabization of Algeria, reinforcing ties with English-speaking Middle Eastern countries, eradicating French and alienating Algerians (Benrabah, 2007c, p.194). Contrary to the government's intent, the majority of pupils chose French (as cited in Benrabah, 2007a, p. 233). I suggest that parents of these pupils may have felt that their children would find it easier to acquire French, which has been in use in Algeria since 1830. Their choice could also be explained by the fact that most jobs require proficiency in Arabic and/or French; rarely was English required at the time. This might also explain why the English option did not become a national requirement.

Since 1995, Algeria has known many new developments that raise questions about possible new roles that English might play in Algeria's already complex linguistic landscape. These developments include the end of a civil war that killed between 150,000 to 200,000 people by the end of the 1990s, when, according to Benrabah (2007a), the socialist-era central planning economy had weakened. Other developments include the significant exile of Francophone intellectuals (Benrabah 2005), the rise of oil prices that improved the economy on the macroeconomic level (Benrabah 2007c), and a shift from a socialist economy that supported Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) to a market economy that requires the learning of foreign languages (Benrabah 2007a; Benrabah 2007c, p. 198). In addition, Algeria has also resurfaced on the international scene and acquired closer ties with many countries including the European Union and the United States. For example, since the 09/11 attacks in New York and Washington DC, Algeria and the US have cooperated in the fight against terrorism, while attempting to diversify economic cooperation beyond the hydrocarbons sector (AllAfrica, 2015). Since English and globalization are closely intertwined, Algeria's opening to the world is thus interesting for scholars who examine contexts where the presence of English increases.

In light of these new developments, one wonders what role(s), if any, the English language can play in Algeria's complex linguistic landscape in order to potentially reinforce the relative peace of the country, help improve the economy at the micro-level, and facilitate the efforts to attract Arab and Western investors to diversify economic cooperation. The following three questions will serve as a guide to help explore these possible functions of English that could contribute to the development of Algeria.

## Research Questions

In her attempt to establish a framework for research in the discipline of peace sociolinguistics, Friedrich (2007a) calls for an investigation of the potential of achieving linguistic peace with and through language, particularly English (p. 73). In her book *The English Language Teacher in Global Civil Society*, Birch (2009) also emphasizes the role that worldly English can play in promoting human rights, peaceful conflict resolution, and peace in general. In this research, the following questions are explored:

1. Does deethnicized English, which I also interchangeably refer to as worldly English, have that potential in Algeria? If it does, how? If it does not, why doesn't it?
2. In light of recent mutual interest in diversifying economic cooperation beyond hydrocarbons between the US and Algeria, and recent efforts to promote tourism and attract Western and Arab investors to address Algeria's microeconomic concerns, how can the promotion of English in Algeria help or hinder these efforts?
3. How might the growing academic/cultural programs offered by the U.S. Embassy and the British Council in Algeria create effective tools for advancing the learning/teaching of English and, thus, economic cooperation, mutual understanding and peace?

The goal of this paper is to look at the potential of a deethnicized English language to promote long-term peace in Algeria, including political, economic and social stabilities. A deethnicized English is an "open" variety, a variety that is, according to Benrabah (2009), not associated with Britain's colonial past or any of the cultures of the communities whose native language is English (e.g. the UK, the US, Australia); thus, anyone, including Algerians, can appropriate this variety as if it were their own (p. 257).

Specifically, this paper explores the potential of the English language to foster positive peace in Algeria, using Friedrich's attempt to establish a framework for peace sociolinguistics. An explanation of the concept of positive peace and Friedrich's framework on peace sociolinguistics will be provided below. Then, in order to help assess this potential, a brief discussion of attitudes toward and roles of each language will be provided, focusing on English. I will also analyze various programs offered by the U.S. Embassy and the British Council in Algeria in order to investigate their potential to foster peace, as Friedrich (2007b) would put it, with and through English (p. 73). It is worth noting at this point that my own personal experience in Algeria, my own general knowledge of the situation in the country, previous literature on the topic, and a hermeneutic approach towards texts such as those on academic and exchange programs are used to theorize about the potential role English might play in the development of Algeria. My goal is not to generalize any of my claims, but to suggest ways of building on what appears to be a quickly growing presence of English in a complex multilingual environment. For example, while I do not claim that the exchange programs are definitely effective, I do suggest that they could be. Further work in the future might explore more profoundly the impact of the programs.

### **Peace Sociolinguistics: A Definition**

I will refer to Friedrich's framework of peace sociolinguistics in order to establish the potential positive role of English in Algeria's development. Friedrich (2007a) defines peace sociolinguistics as "a discipline engaged in investigating the place of peace through language in society, with the main charge of looking into peace (within and among languages), violence, education, activism, and the sociopolitical impact of language use on comprehensive peace and vice versa" (p. 76). Friedrich indicates that the first role of peace sociolinguistics as a discipline is to look at the potential of achieving linguistic peace through language. Linguistic peace includes, for example, respect for linguistic choices, whether a person or group of people choose to be monolingual or multilingual (Friedrich and De Matos, 2009, p. 229). To do this, I will

investigate the potential of achieving linguistic peace in Algeria through English. Attitudes towards each language (Algerian Arabic, Berber, Classical Arabic, French and English) and the roles of these languages will be presented in order to assess the potential of English in playing a positive role in this context. Further, I will look at activities of the British Council and the U.S. Embassy in Algeria. As noted earlier, I will investigate their programs in order to see how they apply to the promotion of English and peace. Most of these programs have various goals advancing the interests of the UK, the United States and Algeria. Participation criteria and objectives will be scrutinized in order to see if these programs contribute to English and peace promotion. The program descriptions and goals on the governments' websites will be read and key passages identified. Using a hermeneutic approach, I suggest how the programs might contribute to peace and mutual understanding.

### **Positive Peace, Negative Peace, and Worldly English**

I will first discuss the current status of language and human linguistic rights in Algeria. I will look at a few important rights proclaimed in various articles of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) 1996 Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights in Barcelona, Spain, and indicate the status of these rights in Algeria. Both group and individual rights will be discussed.

Next, I will consider attitudes people seem to have toward various languages in order to gauge the potential for meeting language and linguistic human rights, fostering peace with and through English. To address the negative attitudes toward any language(s), I will introduce the concept of negative peace and a few peace-promoting pedagogical considerations such as critical pedagogy and global citizenship for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) professionals. Negative peace means the cessation of war through diplomacy and negotiation. Another concept that I would like to introduce is positive peace. Positive peace builds on already-existing positive attitudes toward various languages, pursuing language and linguistic human rights, promoting linguistic ecology and additive multilingualism, and using English to empower future generations (Friedrich 2007b). Friedrich (2007b) uses the term 'linguistic ecology' to refer to the relationship between many languages and language varieties. The perspective that this concept of positive peace provides is an integral element of a framework for the analysis of the spread of English in Algeria. The insight it provides allows policy makers, researchers, and educators to make peace-fostering decisions based on a bottom-up approach that aims at addressing linguistic inequalities.

I will explore the following elements put forth by Friedrich (2007a) in her framework for peace sociolinguistics:

1. To achieve linguistic diversity and peace in a world where there has to be at least one dominant language, scholars should propose "linguistic education" and "linguistic activism" as alternatives to the English-is-evil discourse (p. 73).
2. Research whether a language is likely to promote positive and negative peace or not.

In addition to the concepts introduced by Friedrich (2007b), Birch (2009) also presents ideas relevant to studying the peaceful spread of English. In her book, *The English Language Teacher in a Global Civil Society*, Birch uses the phrase "Worldly English," a phrase borrowed from

Pennycook, to refer to a deethnicized form of English (2009, p. 17). English as such is a language variety that could arise from contact among civil societies locally and globally when working together to eradicate poverty, improve education and literacy, protect human rights, protect the environment, and support other causes of civil societies. This paper also looks at the roles that could be played by Algeria's civil society and the global civil society in shaping the use and functions of English in Algeria and the world, giving rise to Worldly English.

Various practical steps will be put forward for English teachers in Algeria in order to promote the principles, outlined in the Earth Charter and some of which I will present later, transitioning to, using Birch's words, a "preferred future" and contributing to a "cultura franca" of peace (Birch, 2009). The Earth Charter is a set of principles that can foster sustainable development, principles that could be used as an English class reading to improve language skills. This can solidify Algeria's civil society, connecting it with a larger global civil society and contributing to it. This cooperation has potential to yield many benefits to Algeria and the world, including various resources, such as human capital, for the promotion of peace, fostering social and political stabilities and sustainable development.

### **The Status of Linguistic Rights in Algeria**

Algeria has made some progress in regards to human linguistic rights, but there is still a great deal of work to be done in order to ensure the protection of such rights. In article 3 of UNESCO's Declaration of Linguistic Rights, several personal and group rights are outlined. One of them states that individuals have "the right to maintain and develop one's own culture". Groups have "the right to an equitable presence of their language and culture in the media, [and] ...to receive attention in their own language from government bodies and in socioeconomic relations" (as cited in Friedrich, 2007b, pp. 68-69). In articles 13 and 26, the declaration defends the right to be multilingual. In article 13, it is stated that "everyone has the right to be a polyglot" (as cited in Friedrich, 2007b, p. 73). Article 26 points out that "all language communities are entitled to an education which will enable their members to acquire a full command of their own language...as well as the most extensive possible command of any other language they may wish to know" (as cited in Friedrich, 2007b, p. 73).

The aforementioned rights, among others, are important to linguistic ecology and peace in any country and Algeria is no exception. In order to avoid violence such as the so-called Dark Spring of 2001, Kabyle and other Tamazight, also known as Berber, varieties should be valued in government and business settings. In 2001, Kabyles rioted until the government officially recognized Tamazight as a national language and agreed to extend its teaching to more schools. It is essential to protect the above rights because linguistic minorities could rebel violently against central authorities, the cost of which outweighs the cost of promoting multilingualism.

There is work to be done to make sure that Algerians (and Algeria I should mention is only one case among many) have enough resources and opportunities to maintain and develop their language/culture and have access to adequate resources for the learning of foreign languages they wish to know. Due to Berber activism since the 1960s, Algerians have had opportunities to maintain and develop their culture, including the creation of the High Commission for Amazighity, two departments of Tamazight language and linguistics in Bejaia and Tizi-Ouzou (two Berber-speaking provinces), and cultural centers that organize events on Berber language

and culture. The latest achievement of Berber activists is the proclamation of Tamazight as a national language in 2002 following the Dark Spring riots in 2001. In fact, in April 2002, article 3 of the Constitution was amended, adding Berber as the second national (but not official) language, MSA being the first. Despite its resilience in the face of Arabization, Algerian Arabic is largely neglected by authorities and, for historic and political reasons, most of its own native speakers consider it inferior to MSA, as Table 1 below demonstrates. Algerian Arabic is still used for daily communication, and many of its users seem more comfortable speaking in it than MSA. In fact, MSA is used orally only in domains such as the religious sphere, the media, and some government communication. In social media, many comments by Algerians show that many perceive MSA as the “real” and correct Arabic. In the Arab world’s diglossic sociolinguistic context, dialectal Arabic is considered the lower form and MSA is the high form. Although some progress has been made regarding article 3, there is still a great deal of work to be done. For example, although a Berber TV station is available, newspapers are largely in Arabic and French. Recently, according to the website of the Algerian Ministry of Communication (2015), an agreement was reached between the government and Tamazight promoters to enhance the presence of this language in the media. The maintenance and development of Berber and Algerian Arabic and these local languages’ prominence in the media need faster and urgent but responsible progress.

To investigate the extent of negative attitudes toward Algerian Arabic, a questionnaire was distributed to 101 first- and second-year engineering students in a large urban Algerian university. The engineering students at the National Institute of Electronics and Electricity reject the recognition of Derja as an official language, thereby reflecting a negative attitude toward their native tongue. In fact, 41.9% and 26.9% of respondents strongly disagree and disagree, respectively, to grant an official political status to their mother tongue, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Responses to “*I think Derja should be recognized as a national and official language in addition to Modern Standard Arabic and Tamazight.*”

Result	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly Disagree	39	41.9
Disagree	25	26.9
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	17	18.3
Agree	7	7.5
Strongly Agree	5	5.4
Total	93	100.0

Articles 13 and 26 proclaim the right of individuals to learn languages they may wish to know. Competence in French and even English could be much stronger had positive attitudes toward multilingualism found by Benrabah (2007a) been reflected in official language policy. To create an atmosphere where articles 13 and 26 are respected, it is important not to disparage French, a de facto official language, as colonial, while presenting English as if it were the only language of science and technology. The result of a discourse of competition between the two Western languages is negative language attitudes illustrated by a comment in the above-mentioned questionnaire, saying “I like English, I hope it would be the second language after Arabic in Algeria insted [sic] of Franche [sic].” Although this quote does not represent all Algerians, it

does reflect an existing attitude among some. Also, the Minister of Higher Education declared in 2005 that 80% of freshmen fail their final exams because of “*linguistic incompetence*” (Benrabah, 2007a). That is, Arabization seems to step on articles 13 and 26, leaving the majority of Algerians with little opportunities to become multilingual and successful in universities. Increasingly positive attitudes toward English, however, whether their nature is to displace French or access more knowledge, could be used to instill the values of linguistic ecology and language rights while teaching English. Additionally, Benrabah (2013) predicts that English is on its way to replace French in Algeria. In the next section on positive peace, I will elaborate on how to capitalize on positive language attitudes toward English and teach language rights through this language.

One major recent potential game-changing event might affect language attitudes and roles. Given the recent Arab Spring climate, the Algerian government, according to *La Tribune* (Wenger, 2011, September 30), passed a law partially privatizing TV and radio, which is an important step toward achieving language and human linguistic rights. It is beyond the scope of this paper to determine how successful this partial privatization of the media would unfold, but I argue it is a step in the right direction. A media landscape that allows for different languages such as the existence of Tamazight and French stations is welcoming. Private TV and radio in languages other than MSA, which has a strong presence in the media domain, could give voice to citizens who could otherwise not participate in public life. Programs that include people from Tamazight-speaking towns and address various aspects of Berber life contribute to linguistic peace, avoiding the alienation of a segment of the population. It is a significant implication of the media privatization step to allow more citizens to participate in discussions of national interest.

### **Positive Peace: Building on Positive Attitudes toward MSA, Algerian Arabic, English, French and Tamazight in Algeria**

There are already many positive attitudes toward the various languages that are in competition in Algeria (Benrabah 2013; Belmihoub 2013). The concept of positive peace helps us to understand how to build on these attitudes. Positive peace refers to the promotion of just social institutions (as cited in Friedrich, 2007b, p. 5). In reference to positive peace, Friedrich cites Gay, who in turn uses De Saussure, to argue that unfair structures of linguistic power should be dealt with by fostering linguistic emancipation by pursuing linguistic ecology, linguistic empowerment and linguistic peace education (as cited in Friedrich, 2007b, p. 7). I will suggest some ways to build on already-existing positive attitudes.

#### **Building on Algerians’ Positive Attitudes**

Positive attitudes should be reinforced, encouraging additive multilingualism and linguistic ecology. Benrabah (2007b) maintains that a questionnaire that was administered to Algerian high school students on their language attitudes showed that the majority favor additive multilingualism. The questionnaire was conducted in three cities: Oran (1 million inhabitants), Saïda (200,000) and Ghazaouet (40,000). Exactly 1051 students responded to the questionnaire, but it is not clear how many high schools they come from. Multilingualism appears to be something that can be fostered through the teaching of English. English teachers could use materials that foster Algerians’ positive attitudes toward various languages, including Tamazight, the language to which the majority of Algerians are hostile (p. 244). A



less realistic solution for the present time, but one worth mentioning is that of policy makers incorporating linguistic ecology into the curriculum. According to Crystal, peace linguistics that promotes linguistic diversity should be taught just like any other ecosystem is taught (as cited in Friedrich, 2007b, p. 51). It would be ideal for peace fostering if Algerian policy makers foster additive multilingualism and linguistic diversity, which has traditionally been out of the question because reestablishing Algeria's Arab identity through the language and cultural policy of Arabization was a priority following independence from France (Benrabah, 2013). It is not necessary to replace or eliminate French to learn English, for instance. More teacher preparation programs and workshops could introduce these ideas to language teachers. In a post-Arabization Algeria, English classrooms would value multilingualism and critical thinking by getting students to question traditionally-held beliefs. When I looked at the Ministry's curriculum for teaching English in high schools, critical thinking and problem solving are discussed, but it is up to teachers to locally implement the authorities' instructions, albeit the teachers do need smaller classrooms. The teachers might also need personal assistants or coaches to help students with matters that are not necessarily academic. But the fact that there are no quick fixes to overcome the consequences of Arabization in education does not mean nothing can be done. Every civilian could do what they can to instill the kind of attitudes that solidify social and political stabilities in students' minds. To start with, sociolinguists' work on Algeria could be popularized by journalists, writing on issues such as the status of dialectal Arabic as a language in and of itself. Associations could promote linguistic ecology through presentations informing the public about the importance of respecting various language varieties.

### **Negative Peace: Addressing Negative Attitudes Toward MSA, Algerian Arabic, English, French and Tamazight in Algeria**

In this section, I present theoretical considerations to help teachers, policy makers, curriculum designers, and researchers ensure a responsible peace-promoting prominent presence of English. First, I discuss how education and policy-making, for example, are two aspects that can contribute to such change. Crystal argued in 2002 that these two aspects, among others, are important when dealing with negative views of languages (as cited in Friedrich, 2007b, p. 90-91). In addition, addressing negative attitudes toward the languages that are most relevant to Algeria's sociolinguistic profile is no easy task, but the power of activism by the local civil society, including English teachers, can initiate bottom-up positive change in attitudes. Before discussing these aspects, an account of attitudes Algerians seem to have toward the above languages will be provided.

#### **Addressing Algerians' Negative Language Attitudes.**

A concept that helps us to understand how to deal with some of the above-mentioned negative attitudes is negative peace. The concepts of negative and positive peace were introduced by Galtung in 1994. In 2001, De Matos applied the concept of negative peace to language, arguing that diplomatic language fosters peace. For example, some of the strategies that De Matos (2001) discusses include "avoiding the use of pompous language"; "being particularly careful when communicating national values"; "developing the ability to see both (or more) sides of an issue"; and "avoiding destructive uses of language" (as cited in Friedrich, 2007, p. 6). De Matos does not refer to a specific language, but I argue that his ideas should be accounted for in any discussion of English in the Algerian context. Because of the fast spread of English in the

world, and Algeria is no exception, it is important to keep in mind De Matos's suggestions to make sure that Algerians benefit from the phenomenon of the spread of English. Because this language spread entails more students sitting in classrooms to learn English, I argue that it is important for educators, researchers, policy makers, and curriculum designers to consider some of the theoretical ideas presented in this paper. Therefore, by considering these ideas while working with an increasing number of students who want to learn English, the impact of such ideas becomes larger.

Other elements for the framework could help get the most out of the phenomenon of the spread of English for Algeria. Birch (2009) puts forth a few suggestions for English teachers in order to help develop appropriate pedagogical goals (2009, p. 162). Students will be exposed to respectful communication, avoiding teasing, bullying, and yelling. Students will understand that everyone is entitled to their opinion, discarding the use of words such as "shut up." Students can say "I pass" to avoid expressing an opinion they may not wish to share. Students will learn to listen and think before talking/interrupting. Students will learn anger-management strategies (counting to ten/leaving the room for a few moments) and be able to not take certain reactions personally (Birch, 2009, p. 163). The use of I-statements is another strategy that can be promoted when teaching English, thereby contributing to the efforts of appeasing linguistic conflicts among languages in Algeria. These communication strategies and others will enrich worldly English and transition to a "preferred future" (p. 180) and "cultura franca" (p. 45) of peace, in Birch's own words.

The above-mentioned tools could be used by EFL teachers, who could capitalize on the increasing demand for English to empower learners in the classroom. Freire's (2000) concept of "banking" in education applies to the Algerian context and his pedagogical solution would empower learners. Algeria's educational system still heavily relies on rote learning, where the teacher is the source of knowledge and the students learn by heart and repeat the knowledge in exams, just like an ATM which receives money (the teacher asking students to learn by heart), stores it (the student learns by heart) and gives it back during exams. This system does not educate students to challenge the status quo (Freire 2000). A better system would encourage students to pose problems and try to solve them, which is the pedagogy advocated by Freire (2000). Currently in Algeria, even though the English curriculum in high school calls for project-based learning and problem solving, teachers seem to struggle to apply this teaching approach partly due to large class sizes. Despite large class size and other issues teachers may face in Algeria, I suggest that teachers could still explore different approaches to teaching. The recent international conference in Oran in Algeria on the teaching of English, reported on by the Algeria Press Service (2015) could be something more English teachers go to in order to discuss how to make the best of their context, including how to implement the problem-solving approach. Friedrich (2007b) agrees with Freire when he argues that any system should rely on the students' environment, instead of, for instance, using materials that talk about rain even though the latter is not something students often experience in their environment (p. 51). In a democratic classroom, students are challenged and empowered to solve problems peacefully.

In his book *Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in English Teaching*, Canagarajah (1999) argues that code-switching should not be repressed in the classroom by those who would possibly portray it as "unintelligent." The code-switching Algerians engage in should be viewed positively, as a strategy students engage in to negotiate values and content (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 185-186). When code-switching is viewed positively and used by the teacher to help implement a critical

pedagogy, students become better equipped to resist possible propagandas reflected in the curriculum and/or in the real world. A critical pedagogy that encourages students when they use various language varieties is useful. When a student uses dialectal Arabic or Berber in an MSA class, while resorting to French from time to time, this is an instance of using what is comfortable in a given situation. When I personally code-switch between Berber, dialectal Arabic, and/or French, it is because I am attempting to use what I feel is comfortable and effective for the situation. For instance, I used French in my English class when I needed clarification. Since Arabic and Berber are too distant from English and I was not comfortable enough in English, I used French, another foreign language. Teachers, I suggest, could encourage what feels comfortable and effective to students, while teaching them the target language variety or content.

English teaching in Algeria should reflect a critical pedagogy of English as a global language (EGL). Guilherme (2007) defines critical pedagogy as follows, “a critical pedagogy of foreign languages/cultures includes a Human Rights and Citizenship Education framework, adopts a multiple and interdisciplinary perspective and is based upon critical reflection and critical dialogue mainly about the power relations between and within different cultures” (p. 88). The use of English as such by both teachers and learners can offer opportunities for individuals to become active and responsible cosmopolitan citizens. According to Guilherme (2007), this pedagogy would encourage intercultural understanding and critical thinking about aspects of local and world cultures. It will facilitate the dissemination and the critical acquisition of linguistic and cultural knowledge through English. Critical pedagogy for EGL deserves to be investigated in order to educate responsible cosmopolitan citizens who play a positive role in a world where English is a powerful linguistic tool, a tool manipulated by affluent powerful individuals every day.

Of course, as Friedrich also adds, most experts will agree that inequalities among various groups need to be addressed somehow (as cited in Friedrich, 2007, p. 6-7). The Berbers have resorted to violent protests in order to extract linguistic and cultural rights from the government, but is that the only way to gain linguistic human rights or are there other forms of action?

Leaving aside top-down political action, when a government introduces change, I believe that some of the most important ways through which these attitudes can be dealt with is education and the media. Although MSA dominates these important sectors, bottom-up activism through civil society should help change negative attitudes and monolingualism. If inequalities persist and worsen, we may witness civil disobedience, if not violent protests or even a revolution, to change things. Civil society can contribute to changing negative attitudes one at a time until linguistic peace is achieved. Advocating for dialectal Arabic, Berber, and multilingualism in the media is one way to show respect to different forms of linguistic expression. The fast-growing number of private English language schools could incorporate linguistic peace education into the curriculum. The civil associative movement in Algeria could engage in more sociolinguistic activism, bringing together Friedrich (2007b) and Birch's (2009) work.

### **Future Roles Deethnicised English Could Play in Algeria**

While Algerian Arabic, MSA, and French already play undisputable roles in one way or another in Algeria's linguistic scenery, English, as I argue in this paper, should play a role in

creating bonds between Algeria's civil society and the world's civil society. It should play a role in the process of knowledge democratization, acquiring knowledge that is not accessible in other languages. It should play a role in fostering linguistic peace and, thus, contribute to social and political stabilities. It should play a role in increasing access to economic opportunities in order to improve the socioeconomic condition of Algerians, helping foster economic and political stabilities. It should play a role in introducing a critical pedagogy that helps educate cosmopolitan citizens who successfully identify with various communities, embracing the best of the local and the global. It should play a role in promoting mutual understanding and friendship between Algeria and the rest of the world.

English cannot play such roles if it is used to promote a single agenda. English in Algeria should not be used to portray an identity that is at odds with Algeria's history of linguistic and cultural diversity, an identity that ignores the fact that 99% of Algerians are ethnically Berber (CIA World Factbook, n.d.). Worldly English, I argue, could be a free linguistic market where the civil society shapes the language in a bottom-up manner. And if the majority are Muslims and their values are reflected, so be it. But it should not be a top-down oppressive process where the values of a few are imposed on the majority. It should be a bottom-up call for the kind of peace-promoting English that reflects the values of Algeria's local civil society and the global civil society, the kind of English that can be used as a tool to promote cosmopolitan citizenship.

In order for English to play such roles as the ones described above, it needs to be sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the local civil society, promoting Worldly English. The latter would not only be deethnicized and stripped of its colonial past, or worldly and open to the world, but it would be shaped by the people and used for the interest of the people without exclusion. Some might disregard such a framework for English in Algeria by arguing that English carries imperialist and colonial elements with it, but Kateb Yacine, an Algerian writer, is against such a view of colonial languages. He said about his French writings that he writes in French "to tell the French I am not French"; he famously added that French is a spoil of war (Kimmelman, 2010, para. 23). English has the potential to become anyone's language, including an Algerian one.

The global civil society can enrich Algeria's local civil society, Algeria's educators, health care workers, businessmen, writers, administrators, parents, students, and so on. And Algerians can in turn contribute the knowledge they gathered throughout the centuries to the global civil society. The global civil society, according to Birch (2009), is made of organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Oxfam, Doctors without Borders, Greenpeace, and so on. There are events such as the World Social Forum that can bring civilians from around the world to communicate on issues they all care about. Trying to communicate in such a multicultural environment can help foster a civil cosmopolitan identity symbolized by Civil English. Users of such a language variety adhere to the Earth Charter's philosophy illustrated in its preamble:

We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Toward this end, it is imperative that we, the people of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generation" (as cited in Birch, 2009, Appendix).

A critical use of English will help, among other things, democratize knowledge and enrich the ongoing discussion on the application of human rights in various contexts by bringing civilians together on a global scale.

Finally, English could help Algeria rely less on oil exports and diversify its economy. It seems that a stronger presence of English in Algeria could only help facilitate cooperation, such as trade and investment, with Arab, American and other partners. Promoting English more forcefully, not necessarily at the expense of French, could not only facilitate communication with potential investors, but it could be seen as a political move aligning Algeria with the rest of the Arabic-speaking world and the US and its allies. Such a linguistic and political move could slowly but surely benefit Algeria.

### **Assisting With the Spread of Deethnicized, Peace-Promoting, Forms of English U.S. Embassy and British Council Programs**

The U.S. Embassy in Algeria offers a wide range of academic exchange programs for Algerian citizens, which I argue contribute to the spread of deethnicized English. One of these programs, the most internationally recognized, is the Fulbright program. Algerians are offered through this program the possibility of doing graduate work in a U.S. university, usually at the master's level, if they have a bachelor's degree and meet a few other criteria such as good scores on standardized tests (the TOEFL and the GRE). On the website of the U.S. Embassy in Algeria, it is explicitly indicated at the center top of a PDF providing information on the program: "Fostering mutual understanding between the people of Algeria and the United States through educational and cultural exchange" (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). This statement provides a rationale behind such programs and supports the spread of deethnicized, peace-promoting, English in Algeria. Below, I provide further evidence for this claim. Through a hermeneutic approach, I look at the Embassy's program descriptions and goals, arguing that learning English could allow access to these prestigious cultural, academic, and business programs. Participating in the programs can promote peace and mutual understanding and contribute to the development of Algeria and its workforce.

Another program that the U.S. Department of State offers through the Bureau of Academic and Cultural Affairs and the U.S. Embassy in Algeria is the Youth Leadership Program (YLP). As stated on the Embassy website, these are the goals of the program:

To promote *mutual understanding* [emphasis added] between the American and Algerian youth; to develop a sense of leadership potential, *civic responsibility*, and *commitment to community development* [emphasis added] among youth; to *strengthen English speaking skills* [emphasis added]; to foster relationships between Americans and Algerians with a focus on respect for diversity of ethnic, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds (US Department of State, n.d.).

This program is an excellent example of a program whose mission is in line with the framework that this paper puts forward, a framework that is intended to argue for the potential of deethnicized English to spread responsibly and play a positive role in strengthening the Algerian civil society and promoting peace. Future research could investigate the impact of such programs and whether their goals are achieved.

The British Council also puts efforts into building bridges between the UK and Algeria, promoting a deethnicized variety of English that Algerians can appropriate and use. One of their programs is called Active Citizens. It was launched in 2010 in partnership with Algerian Muslim Scouts:

Active Citizens is a community empowerment and social action programme that seeks to create a global network of socially-responsible citizens, collectively acting to create a more peaceful and prosperous society. The vision is a world in which people recognise their potential and exercise their responsibility to engage with others in the development of their communities at local and international level, i.e. a world of ‘Global Citizens’ (British Council, n.d.).

This program seems to be in line with a critical pedagogy of English for global citizenship. It promotes a strong commitment to the local community, “a strong sense of local culture and identity,” while developing “a sense of responsibility toward global sustainable development” (British Council, n.d.). Although the program does not make specific reference to language, English could be required in case of engaging with others internationally.

It is worth mentioning that the above quoted information is accessible only in English or word-of-mouth, which makes it inaccessible to the majority of Algerians who are not proficient in this language. However, bottom-up initiatives in Algeria provide increased opportunities to learn English, and more awareness about opportunities English, in addition to Algeria’s other languages, offers in terms of socioeconomic development.

### **Algerians’ Bottom-up Initiatives**

While there is much that governments could do, as demonstrated above, Algerians have made amazing use of social media platforms such as Facebook, contributing to the spread of English. Managed by the Hopeland Institute Algeria, *50/Fifty Magazine* used Facebook to recruit volunteer writers, publishing its first issue in October 2011. This magazine published a wide range of topics written by individuals from around the world. In fact, its name (*50/Fifty*) means that half of the magazine is devoted to Algeria and the other half to the rest of the world, building bridges among a community of English users. In addition, *Inelectronics’ Magazine*, sponsored by Schlumberger (an oil company), is a student magazine written in English. These students are in the only university program (in electronics) in Algeria in which the main language of instruction is English.

There are many Facebook groups that suggest an increasing presence of English in Algeria, and the larger Maghreb region. Some of these groups include *50/Fifty Magazine*, Algerian English Speakers, Maghreb United English Speakers, I am DZ [i.e. Algerian] and I Speak English. While in 2012, these groups had over a combined 60,000 members, the latter group alone now has close to 65000 members.<sup>2</sup> The latter group recently attempted the first Algerian Radio in English. Indeed, I have listened to a program in which the host was discussing tourism in Algeria with Skype callers. These observations and anecdotes point at a rapidly

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/IAMALGERIANANDISPEAKENGLISH/>

evolving sociolinguistic reality that includes the rise of English among an already complex multilingual environment. These languages, which include Algerian Arabic, Berber, English, French, and MSA, will have to co-exist.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

This paper could be improved in future research by examining a wider range of texts that present the role of various academic, cultural, and professional development programs in Algeria. This theoretical examination of the possible positive roles English could play in the Algerian context could also be strengthened by empirical investigations of whether the above-mentioned programs achieve the goals they set out to accomplish. A further look into attitudes toward rivals English and French could also improve our understanding of the sociopolitical situation in the country. Finally, future research in this area could examine the situation in other north African countries.

### **Conclusion**

It is hoped that this paper provides some insights to those interested in investigating the spread of English from a world Englishes perspective. I discussed the potential of English, a language the majority of Algerians seem to have positive attitudes toward, to promote multilingualism and prosperity. I also presented potential roles of a deethnicized worldly English, and ended with Algerians' possible bottom-up efforts and the supportive role American and British academic and cultural programs could play. In Algeria, it is hoped that more attention from policy makers, researchers, educators, and curriculum designers will be devoted to the growing presence of English, making the most out of a powerful language: English.

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