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The Sociolinguistic Dimensions of Dialect Use in Algerian Television and Its Role in Shaping and Consolidating National Historical Memory: A Case Study of the 'Screams of the People' Programme on El-Dhakira Channel

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Abstract

This study explores the sociolinguistic dynamics of media language in Algerian television, with particular emphasis on the strategic use of dialect in historical programming and its role in consolidating national historical memory. Language is conceptualized not merely as a communicative instrument but as a cultural and symbolic system that reflects collective identity, social affiliations, and civilizational continuity. Within the linguistically diverse Algerian context—characterized by the coexistence of Modern Standard Arabic, regional dialects, and Amazigh varieties—the question of language choice in media discourse assumes both communicative and ideological significance. The research examines the nature and functions of media language, highlighting its intermediate position between scientific precision and literary aesthetics. Television language, as an audiovisual medium, prioritizes clarity, immediacy, and accessibility by integrating verbal and visual elements. The study analyzes the distribution of linguistic codes in Algerian broadcasting, noting the predominance of Modern Standard Arabic in official and formal contexts, the widespread use of dialect in social and cultural programming, and the progressive integration of Amazigh language in the national media landscape. Adopting a sociolinguistic and descriptive-analytical approach, the study investigates the motivations behind the increasing presence of dialect in television discourse, including audience heterogeneity, competitive media environments, and the interactive nature of televised communication. It argues that the use of a refined, semi-standardized dialect—when employed consciously and professionally—functions as an effective communicative bridge that enhances comprehension and fosters a sense of belonging without undermining the symbolic authority of Modern Standard Arabic. Empirically, the study focuses on the El-Dhakira Channel as a thematic platform dedicated to safeguarding Algerian national memory. The programme 'Screams of the People' serves as a case study to assess how dialectal usage influences audience reception of historical narratives. Field data collected through a questionnaire administered to media and communication students indicate strong support for a blended linguistic model combining Modern Standard Arabic and dialect. Respondents emphasized that this hybrid approach simplifies complex historical events, enhances clarity, and increases engagement—particularly among younger audiences. The findings suggest that the measured and tactful incorporation of dialect into historical television programming constitutes a successful communicative strategy. It strengthens media effectiveness, reinforces national values, promotes collective memory, and contributes to a form of communicative inclusivity that accommodates diverse social groups while preserving linguistic balance.

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Introduction

Language is widely regarded as one of the most significant pillars of human communication. It serves as a medium for conveying ideas and knowledge, and as a bridge connecting successive generations in the transmission of experiences, values, and traditions. Emotionally and sentimentally, language represents the identity of peoples and nations, reflecting their cultural and civilisational specificities. Furthermore, language serves as a tool for communication that defines the symbolic space of a community within its geographical area.

Languages and dialects vary from community to community according to geographical location and the succession of civilisations and cultures. This diversity makes language a mirror that reflects societal affiliations and history through the ages. As language is the most effective means of mass communication, there is an increasing need for effective and appropriate communication, especially given the development and diversity of media in written, auditory and visual forms, such as newspapers, radio and television, which seek to address a wide audience at various cultural and educational levels.

In this context, a wide-ranging debate has emerged among researchers and specialists in the audiovisual field regarding the use of colloquial language in the media. One perspective argues that colloquial language is a linguistic reality that cannot be overlooked due to its simplicity, ease of understanding, and ability to connect with the audience, particularly those with limited education. Conversely, another perspective argues that excessive reliance on dialects threatens Modern Standard Arabic and leads to a decline in the linguistic quality of media discourse rather than elevating the audience's culture. A third, conciliatory perspective calls for using a refined dialect that blends various dialects with Modern Standard Arabic. This allows for the clear communication of media messages while preserving their linguistic value.

This discourse has become increasingly important in the Algerian context, particularly after independence, when public television became an active social partner in raising the cultural level of society, especially given the high illiteracy rate at that time. This necessitated the adoption of simple, clear language to ensure the media message reached various audience segments. This trend was further reinforced during the 1990s, particularly during the "Black Decade," when colloquial language was used in television programs to connect with citizens, guide public opinion, convey messages of national unity and calm, and contribute to societal stability.

Based on this, using dialect in some television programs or blending dialect with Modern Standard Arabic has become a communication strategy aimed at ensuring the effectiveness of the media message and reaching as many viewers as possible, especially in programs with social and historical dimensions. What role does the use of dialect in television programs play in consolidating historical memory?

1. General introduction to media language:

1.1 The nature of media language

According to AbdelazizSharaf, media language is the most widely disseminated form of language in the public sphere. It serves as a common denominator across all branches of knowledge, culture, industry, commerce, the pure sciences, the humanities, the social sciences, art and literature. It derives its elements from all forms of art, science and knowledge, and is used to express society and its environment. This definition affirms that media language touches upon all aspects of life and serves as a means of communication incorporating art, science and knowledge.

Sharafadds: 'Media language does not refer to what is described in scientific language as abstract theory. Rather, we mean by media language a language built on a simple social and scientific format that is generally understood. It is an art used in journalism and the media in general' (Charaf, 2003, p. 45).

Media language is one of the most important components of media discourse as it is the fundamental tool for conveying ideas, information and concepts to a wide audience. AbdelazizSharaf defines it as the most common and widespread language among the general public because it represents the greatest common factor among the various branches of human knowledge, including science, art, literature, culture, industry and commerce. It draws its material from various fields of knowledge and is employed to express society and its environment within a comprehensive communicative framework.

Charaf emphasizes that media language should not be understood as a scientific, abstract language. Rather, it is a language based on a simplified social and scientific format. This language is used in journalism and the media in general to target rapid and broad understanding among the audience. Thus, media language differs from scientific language, which is characterized by abstract and precise terminology. It also falls short of literary language, which relies on aesthetic qualities and rhetoric. Instead, media language occupies an intermediate position between the two, making it primarily functional.

In the same vein, Ahmed Hamdi refutes the idea that media language is similar to everyday spoken language. He asserts that media language has its own rules and artistry and is divided into two main branches: written and audiovisual. This perspective supports the independence of media language from classical Modern Standard Arabic, maintaining a degree of linguistic control that ensures clarity and accuracy.

Based on this, media language can be defined as a familiar, clear, and simple language used in media discourse according to specific rules and conventions to influence the audience. Its characteristics vary depending on whether it is written or audiovisual.

1.2 Language and Media: The Concept of Language

Language is considered a fundamental means of human communication. It is used by individuals to interact with their social environment and express their thoughts and feelings. The essence of language is that it is both spoken and heard, with communication occurring through sounds and words. However, the advent of writing resulted in the emergence of written language, creating two primary forms: auditory and visual.

Language is closely tied to humans and their social environment, enabling communication and interaction within society, and the expression of identity and self. Noam Chomsky defines language as a system of finite or infinite sentences composed of a limited set of elements, encompassing all spoken and written natural languages. He argues that language is a unique creative system that fundamentally differs from animal communication and is determined by innate and formative factors, rather than being merely a set of speech habits.

Language is also defined as a system of meaningful auditory symbols used according to a specific structure to express thought and exchange ideas and emotions between individuals and groups. From this perspective, language is an acquired social activity through which human connection is established.

Chomsky defines language as "a finite or infinite set of sentences, each of which is of finite length and composed of a finite number of elements, and all natural languages, in both their spoken and written forms, are languages in this sense" (Arabiya, 2004, p. 114)

On the other hand, media language is a specific application of language in the context of mass communication. It effectively contributes to the development of language itself because it is the most effective means of understanding life's meanings and clarifying its features. Its importance has increased alongside the evolution and diversity of media, establishing it as a widely used language that impacts the collective consciousness of the audience.

1.3 Characteristics and functions of media language:

Media language is characterized by features that enable it to perform its communicative functions. The most important of these are:

- Clarity and accuracy: Ensuring the meaning is conveyed without ambiguity or confusion.
- Brevity, especially in audiovisual media, where the audience does not have the opportunity to refer back to the text as they would with written media. Arabic tends to be concise and brief, evolving towards simplicity and ease. Sounds that were once suitable are replaced with sounds that are now difficult to pronounce without significant mental effort. This evolution is reflected in the elimination of the hamzah, the contraction of sounds, and their blending, which is a phenomenon of ease" (Al-Tawab, 1979, p. 189).
- Thoughtful repetition: aimed at reinforcing information in the recipient's mind.
- Implicitness rather than explicitness, particularly in contexts subject to censorship or political sensitivity.
- Ability to Influence: Addressing both the intellect and emotions simultaneously.
- Adaptation to local linguistic reality, especially in multilingual societies such as Algeria.

Media language serves multiple functions, the most prominent of which are:

Functions of language:

- Pragmatic function (fulfilment of needs): Known as the function of 'achieving purposes', language is used as a direct tool to satisfy desires and obtain requirements from the environment. This is the first way in which the 'self' and its needs are expressed from a young age.
- Regulatory function (guiding behaviour): This function is based on the principle of 'guidance and direction'. Language gives individuals the power to influence the behaviour of others, whether through commands and prohibitions, or signs and laws that organise societal movement and control its pathways.
- Communicative function (building bridges): This refers to the function of 'social integration', through which individuals assert their existence as social beings. They use language to strengthen bonds, exchange pleasantries and express appreciation, thereby breaking the ice between people and creating a common language for coexistence.
- Expressive function (self-assertion): Focused on 'personal identity', this function enables individuals to express their personal feelings, intellectual positions and worldviews, thereby contributing to the development of their independent personality.
- Investigative function (research and knowledge): This is the primary driver for exploring the unknown. Individuals use it to ask questions and understand the complexities of their environment, seeking to fill their knowledge gaps.
- Creative function (imagination and motivation): This function is evident in the 'aesthetic formulation' of language, such as poetry, songs and folk chants. It is not confined to art, but is also employed to inspire determination, alleviate the burdens of work, and cultivate enthusiasm and collaboration within groups.
- Informative and Persuasive Function (Transmitting News and Persuasion): This function embodies the essence of the media, involving the transmission of knowledge and experiences across time and space. Technological advances have multiplied its power, transforming it into a persuasive tool aimed at changing beliefs, promoting products, and modifying societal behaviors.

1.4 Language of Television:

The language of broadcasting is described as "the polished language with which we clearly communicate in the media, making it a common denominator among all individuals in society." In its early days, broadcasting borrowed its language, vocabulary,

and expressions from newspapers to the extent that it was called the "speaking newspaper." However, it later developed its own identity, distinguishing itself from print journalism and leading to what is now known as radio journalism (Badawi, 2009, p. 51).

In general, regardless of its content or purpose, a radio script is designed to meet the following needs:

1) To immediately capture interest.

2) To develop incidents to a peak or engage various fields of interest within the text, often doing both.

- To be written in a language that is common and understood by all people, despite their differences.
- Not to be written for reading, but to appear spontaneous.
- Adhere to good taste.
- Follow a series format.

Broadcast television is an invisible medium among communication tools because it consists of a collection of sounds and silences.

Television Language: Between Modern Standard Arabic, Dialect and Amazigh

Television language is a specific type of media language that combines sound and image to reach a broad and diverse audience. It is characterised by brevity in sentences, familiar vocabulary and alignment between words and images, facilitating rapid understanding and engagement.

Modern Standard Arabic remains the official language used in news broadcasts and national events due to its clarity and linguistic precision, and its ability to unify the audience. However, dialects are used in certain social and cultural programmes due to their familiarity with the audience and ease of understanding.

The Amazigh language has gradually entered the Algerian media space since the 1990s and has seen significant development since the establishment of the Amazigh channel in 2009, which broadcasts in various Amazigh dialects. This enhances linguistic and cultural diversity, strengthening communication among the different components of Algerian society.

Therefore, it can be said that the various forms of media language — Modern Standard Arabic, dialect and Amazigh — constitute a fundamental pillar of the communicative process. Its clarity and accuracy are essential for the success of the media message, enabling it to reach the audience and contribute to raising awareness and encouraging community participation.

1.5 Modern Standard Arabic in Official Broadcasts and National Events:

The language used in audiovisual products, especially on television, is characterized by clarity and simplicity to allow the general public to understand it. News broadcasts use distinctive voice-overs to make the language comprehensible to all, enabling literate and illiterate people to simultaneously receive and understand the media message. The language is devoid of subjectivity. Artistic forms and templates, such as images, symbols, movements, and signs, serve as indicators or frameworks that convey their meanings simultaneously.

Consequently, one could argue that "the symbols in audiovisual products, whether radio or television, and other media are their nerve and backbone. Without them, the communication process cannot function or fulfill its roles within society" (Al-Touni, 1992, p. 37).

One of its most prominent characteristics is simplicity because it targets a wide audience: the educated, intellectuals, academics, traders, café owners, homemakers, and taxi drivers.

1.6 Characteristics of Media Language in Audiovisual Content:

Modern Standard Arabic is considered the official medium for news broadcasts and national events. However, when used in audiovisual work, such as television and radio, it follows the principle of being "easy yet sophisticated" to ensure the media message is comprehensible to audiences of various cultural levels.

I. Core Principles of Media Language:

1. Simplicity and inclusivity: Media language targets a broad audience, including elites, intellectuals, and the general public. This necessitates a clear style that everyone can understand.

2. Centrality of Symbol and Meaning: Symbols (sound, image, movement, and signal) are vital to the communication process because these elements work together to form meaning and embody reality.

3. Objectivity and clarity involve avoiding subjectivity and information overload by relying on specific ideas that do not allow for multiple interpretations.

II. Artistic and Structural Features:

1. Linguistic dynamism: There is a preference for verbal sentences since the event is the protagonist. The present tense is used to create a sense of immediacy while the active voice is used to enhance accuracy.

2. Focus and brevity: Constructing short, coherent sentences while avoiding tedious digressions or extraneous information that distracts from the meaning. This ensures a balance between the word and its representation.

3. Contemporaneity and breadth: Using vocabulary that aligns with the spirit of the age and its fast pace, as well as possessing a rich lexicon capable of accommodating new and translated terms resulting from cultural openness.

4. Adaptability: Tailoring the language to the medium. For radio, descriptive language compensates for the absence of visuals. For television, the language resonates with the scene.

III. Evolution and Communicative Performance:

1. Capacity for Development

Media language is a living entity that evolves over decades. The vocabulary used today is more flexible and appealing than in the past.

2. The Art of Delivery and Influence

The success of the message depends not only on the written word, but also on the presenter's ability to:

- Properly enunciating consonants.
- Using "vocal modulation" (exclamation, questioning, and digression).
- Using tone of voice and body language to enhance the semantic and impactful power of words.

Therefore, contemporary media language can be described as a professional blend of linguistic precision and artistic flexibility, primarily aiming to achieve "complete clarity" and "immediate impact."

1.7 The Reality of the Amazigh Language and Its Dialectal Diversity in the Algerian Media Space:

Conceptual Framework (Language and Dialect): The relationship between language and dialect is based more on sociolinguistic and political considerations than on purely linguistic ones. Scientifically, languages often evolve from particular dialects that gain political significance or social prominence within a community, becoming a "standard" against which other linguistic variations are measured. In the Algerian context, Amazigh emerges as a unifying linguistic medium that encompasses a wide dialectal diversity. Contemporary media discourse seeks to absorb and standardize this diversity within institutional frameworks.

The historical trajectory of Amazigh on government television:

The Amazigh language on Algerian TV has undergone significant changes reflecting the country's political and social transformations:

1. Foundational phase (1992–1996): The experience began in 1992 with a news summary in Kabyle and Chaoui. Initially, it was characterised by the absence of visual material (images) and was broadcast after the main news bulletins.

2. Structural Development Phase (1996): On 7 June 1996, a significant development occurred with the introduction of the first Amazigh news bulletin, which was broadcast at a dedicated time slot, thereby increasing its communicative value.

3. Expansion and Empowerment Phase (2005–2007): The journalistic team was strengthened by the integration of new linguistic variants. "Targui" joined in 2005, followed by "Chenoui" and "M'zab", bringing the number of specialised teams managing the news operations to five.

Amazigh Media Institution (Channel Four)

This represents the state's strategic shift toward the Amazigh identity, as demonstrated by the decision to establish a thematic channel that broadcasts in Amazigh. The project was announced in 2002 and actualized on March 18, 2009.

Linguistic Diversity in the Channel

The channel did not restrict itself to the major variants, such as Kabyle, Chaoui, M'zab, Targui, and Chenoui, but also opened up to other local dialects, including Taqverrent (Ouargla), Zenati (Timimoun and WadiRigh), Shalhi (Béchar and El Bayadh), and Sanusi (Tlemcen).

Dialectal Dominance

Analytical studies of the channel's content, especially during peak viewership periods in 2011, indicate that the Kabyle dialect predominated in the time allocated to programs and news. This is attributed to several sociohistorical considerations, as well as the preparedness of technical and journalistic teams who are fluent in the dialect.

Strategic and Functional Objectives of Channel Four: The objectives of Channel Four extend beyond news to national and social dimensions, notably:

1. Socio-cultural Linking: Bridging distances between Amazigh-speaking regions (e.g., Béjaïa, Ghardaïa, Tamanrasset, and Batna) and promoting their heritage.

2. National Integration: Fostering communication between Arabic and Amazigh speakers to create a cohesive national space.

3. Cultural Development: Encouraging Amazigh cinema and drama production and enhancing its artistic quality to meet international standards.

2. Dialect in Television Programmes:

The concept of dialect and its seamless role in delivering media information

Dialect refers to the language used in everyday life, facilitating communication among members of society. Linguists use various terms for dialect, including 'colloquial language', 'informal dialect', 'vulgar language', and 'people's language', to name a few.

The term 'dialect' is used in contrast to Modern Standard Arabic, signifying the language commonly spoken by the public. Thus, it is evident that Modern Standard Arabic has lost some of its grammatical and morphological characteristics due to phonetic and semantic evolution. One researcher concludes that dialect is the language of the masses, created to adapt to their varying conditions, while the term 'dialect' represents different renditions of colloquial language (Zaghb, 2012, p. 19).

3. The Richness of Dialect and Its Utilisation in the Audiovisual Sphere:

3.1 Inevitability of Linguistic and Semantic Development

Languages are living social entities that are subject to continuous development in response to contextual changes. For example, contemporary Arabic has undergone significant changes compared to older forms due to interaction with technological and cognitive developments. This development has resulted in a media language characterised by flexibility and fluidity, primarily aimed at facilitating communication with the audience and overcoming complex lexical patterns.

3.2 Language as a Communicative and Functional Code of Dialect

Theorists in the field of media argue that language is more than just a tool for conversation. It is a system of "codes" that require the audience to decode them mentally. From this perspective, communicators strive to select a language that is clear

and simple. "Colloquial language" emerges as an effective choice due to its pragmatic characteristics, which make it comprehensible to various social groups regardless of their educational or cultural levels.

3.3 Dialect and Competitive Fields in the Audiovisual Space

The media landscape has undergone a radical transformation in linguistic roles. After being dominated by Modern Standard Arabic for many decades, dialect has begun to play a vital role and gradually enter the audiovisual arena. The reasons for this rise can be summarized as follows:

1. Psychological proximity: The use of dialect as a mechanism to connect with popular sentiment because it is the daily language of most of society.
2. Media Competitiveness: The explosive increase in television channels has heightened competition for viewership ratings, prompting media institutions to adopt a more "realistic" language to attract audiences.
3. Persuasive Function: The ability of local dialects to deliver advertising messages and entertainment programs more effectively than rigid, standardized language.

The increasing reliance on dialect in television programs reflects a pragmatic trend that values "access" and "influence" over "linguistic modeling." This presents a new linguistic reality that blends the informative function with a connection to the viewer's daily, local identity.

3.4 Objective Factors for the Spread of Dialect in the Audiovisual Sphere:

The Interactive Dimension and the Communicative Function of the Audience

Researchers of media sociology argue that the shift from "silent media" to "audiovisual media" has transformed the nature of reception. The combination of the human voice and moving images breaks temporal and spatial barriers. This transformation has led to the formation of a heterogeneous media audience with varying levels of literacy, knowledge, and culture, which presents Modern Standard Arabic with communication and terminological challenges.

The interactive functions of dialect can be summarized as follows:

1. Achieving intimacy and clarity: Dialect imparts an emotional quality to the communication process, contributing to mass media's core objectives by narrowing the gap between sender and receiver.
2. Symbolic and imaginative function: Dialect is used in artistic forms, such as popular poetry and national songs, to entertain and inspire motivation, thereby enhancing communal spirit and shared identity.
3. Interactive Efficiency (Model of the Program "And Anything Is Possible"): This program is a practical example of the success of "refined" dialect in stirring national emotions. The host, RiyadBoufji, employed language close to popular sentiment to stimulate social solidarity. This linguistic choice contributed to the phenomenon of "word of mouth" among community members, leading to the program's popularity and helping to achieve its humanitarian objective of finding missing persons.

4. Linguistic Reference and Dialectal Diversity in Algeria:

The 'Darja' or Algerian dialect is characterised by its complex linguistic fabric, which reflects the region's civilisational succession. It is a mixture derived from Modern Standard Arabic, with lexical borrowings from French and morphological structures stemming from Turkish.

Terminological framework (dialect – colloquial): According to DrTayebBouderbala's linguistic proposition, it is preferable to use the term 'dialect' to describe the Algerian situation, as it is linked to specific geographical and regional peculiarities. These dialects derive their core vocabulary from Arabic, while their derivational structures differ from those of Amazigh languages (Bournane, published 20/12/2018, accessed 10/04/2022 at 13:00).

5. Linguistic richness and geographical diversity

The linguistic richness of the Algerian dialect is manifested in its various forms in conjunction with geographical diversity. We find:

- High plateaus and eastern dialects (Sétif, M'sila and Batna), characterised by specific phonetic and lexical features.
- Linguistic hybridity: the dialect gains its richness from being a 'hybrid language', deriving its vocabulary from Arabic and flexibly integrating words from French, English and Turkish, making it a flexible tool capable of accommodating and adapting modern terms.

The prevalence of dialects on television is not merely a "relinquishment" of Modern Standard Arabic, but rather a pragmatic response to the demands of social interaction and the diverse nature of Algerian society. This makes dialect the most efficient medium for achieving widespread acceptance and popularity.

The functional role of dialect in conveying the media message and shaping collective awareness raises a scholarly divide in academic circles. The "conservative" faction argues that dialect may weaken the communicative structure of the media and strip it of its referential nature. They point out that geographical dialect diversity (north, south, east, west) may lead to semantic ambiguity that prevents the delivery of a unified meaning. This transforms the media message into fragmented ideas subject to individual interpretation based on each recipient's knowledge level.

In contrast, the "pragmatist" faction highlights dialect as an essential tool for ensuring the effectiveness of communication.

Simplicity and Pragmatic Flexibility in the Digital Age:

In today's digital age, dialects provide fertile ground for validating contemporary communication hypotheses, particularly in the context of social media platforms such as Facebook, which have evolved into open spaces for blogging in dialect as a form of self-expression and a means of articulating political and social perspectives.

The flexibility of dialect in audiovisual media can be analysed as follows:

1. Technological relevance: Modern communication technologies have changed interaction styles, prompting television channels to adopt an 'intermediary linguistic style' combining simplicity and contemporaneity to survive in a competitive landscape.
2. Identity and social function: According to MagdiWahba, dialect is characterised by its adaptability to daily concerns, making it a tool for simplifying information and guiding the audience in the media. It gives viewers a sense of belonging as it symbolises local culture and is an integral part of identity.
3. Voice of MarginalisedGroups:Abdel Majid Al-Habib views dialect as a means of expression for the lower classes, allowing them to voice their concerns and grievances. Using dialect in talk shows and social programmes can achieve 'media democracy' by reaching groups who may perceive Modern Standard Arabic as a class or cognitive barrier (Al-Habib, 2014, p. 146).
4. Cognitive Efficiency and Achieving Mutual Understanding: Dialect represents an important socio-linguistic reality in the construction of national identity. Academic studies do not seek to replace Modern Standard Arabic with dialect, but rather to emphasise its 'complementary' role in conveying the media message.
The importance of dialect in promoting quick understanding is reflected in the following points:
Accommodating Educational Diversity: The audience is culturally diverse. Some were educated in Arabic, while others were educated in foreign languages, such as French. For the latter group, the dialect serves as a "linguistic bridge" that makes complex content more accessible than it would be in the rigid structures of Modern Standard Arabic.
- Overcoming lexical rigidity: Modern channels seek to elevate the dialect to a "middle language" (white language) that transcends narrow, local confines and enters a collective knowledge space that is understood by all. This achieves the primary goal of media, which is to convey ideas and information with maximum ease and persuasion.
- Achieving an Immediate Response: The speed with which meaning is understood in dialect contributes to quicker responses from the audience, whether the goal is to disseminate abstract information, provide guidance, or influence behavior.
Using dialect in television programs reflects a shift from "elite media" to "public media," where language is a strategic means to deliver the message and interact effectively with the audience, rather than an end in itself.
Dialect in Television Programmes: El-Dhakira Channel as a Model
Identification of the study institution: El-Dhakira Channel (Algerian Public Television)
El-Dhakira Channel is one of the specialised media outlets affiliated with the Algerian Public Television institution. It was established with the aim of promoting national identity and preserving historical memory. Below is an overview of its key organisational and technical characteristics:
Establishment and historical context
The channel was inaugurated on 1 November 2020, the anniversary of the outbreak of the liberation revolution, a date of national symbolic significance. This reflects the channel's strategic direction to connect media with national memory.
Functional and structural description:
Field of specialisation: It is classified as a 'thematic channel' focusing on historical and cultural content, aiming to archive and document Algeria's struggle and civilisational trajectory.
- Reference language: The channel primarily uses Modern Standard Arabic for its broadcasts, while also accepting live testimonies that may include linguistic variations (dialect and Amazigh), given the nature of oral historical material.
Administrative Dependence
The channel operates under the supervision of the Algerian Public Television institution, which is headquartered at 21 Chemin des Martyrs, El-Madania, Algiers. It is managed by the institution's general director (Mr. ChabaneLounakel during the founding period).
Technical aspects and broadcasting: The channel functions within the government sector's programming system and relies on satellite broadcasting (Arabsat and Nilesat via frequency 11679) to reach its audience. Additionally, it uses digital communication platforms and the official Algerian Television website to ensure broad dissemination that transcends national geographical boundaries and reaches the diaspora abroad.
Technical profile of the program "Screams of the People":
Concept of the Program: Kenza Haj Hamadri
Production by Ghania Sid Othman
- Editing: MiqanaMuhyiddin
- Editing: Ayman Maida
- Script: Amin Brihimat
"Screams of the People," a 52-minute documentary film broadcast on El-Dhakira Channel, is a long-form program. It recounts the events of the December 11, 1960 demonstrations, detailing their causes and consequences at the domestic and international levels.
These demonstrations marked a critical turning point in the Algerian Revolution when the Algerian issue was internationalized and first included in United Nations sessions.
The program airs on several Algerian public television channels, including El-Dhakira, Channel One, Channel Three, and Channel Knowledge.
6. Results of the study:

After summarising the various data from the study in simple tables explaining the general characteristics of the research community comprising media and communication students, and relating these to composite tables associated with the study's variables, the results are presented as follows:

1. The majority of respondents who watch the programme 'Screams of the People' on the El-Dhakira channel are female media students, accounting for 60 individuals or 60% of the total sample.
2. 49% of respondents who work in the media watch "Screams of the People", compared to 51% of those who work outside the media field. Although this percentage is lower, these individuals still follow the programme and historical segments of all kinds to satisfy their interest in history.
3. Most respondents prefer watching historical programmes on television, with over 50% of the sample of 50 individuals expressing this preference. According to their responses on the questionnaires, this preference is due to their belief that television is a comfortable medium with advantages such as a larger screen and high quality.
4. The majority of respondents (52%) prefer to watch historical programmes in their bedrooms, indicating that television is used more frequently for viewing than smartphones, as televisions are more comfortable.
5. Most respondents prefer to watch historical programmes for no more than one hour in order to gather historical information from their favouriteprogrammes. This is because individuals are unable to absorb a vast amount of information all at once.
6. The preferred language for watching historical programs among most respondents is a mix of both languages, meaning Modern Standard Arabic and dialect. This is due to the difficulty in understanding one of the languages, coupled with their varied cultural and social educational backgrounds. Some have an education in French, others in Arabic, and some have minimal educational experience.
7. Over 80% of respondents (specifically 82 individuals) believe that the language of the program "Screams of the People" is understandable. This is attributed to the program's language being a combination of Arabic and dialect, which 80% of respondents noted as being closer to Modern Standard Arabic.
8. A significant majority favored the idea of using dialect in "Screams of the People," with a rate of 92%. This is due to several reasons, including the suitability of the program's presentation style, which 98 respondents answered positively, reflecting their admiration for the topics presented (42.3% favored this), and the presentation style itself (23.3%), while the language used was cited by 21.7% of respondents as understandable (82%).
9. Most respondents (87%, both genders) believe that Screams of the People helps raise historical and cultural awareness. The predominant age group watching various types of historical programs is 20 to 25 years old. This is because young people are eager to learn and explore.
10. Based on respondents' answers to question 9 in the third section, which asked how well the historical idea was communicated by following Screams of the People, the respondents highlighted the clarity of the ideas due to the straightforward manner in which the topics were presented through the language used. This reached a large audience, helping to elevate their historical and cultural awareness and enrich their knowledge.
11. Regarding the values derived by followers of Screams of the People, most responses indicated an immersion in the national spirit and esteem for the Algerian Revolution as a symbol of national identity. This reinforces historical memory among viewers and future generations.
12. Regarding the final question in the third section, which asked respondents to evaluate the use of dialect in the program, they all agreed that it was a valuable model and advocated for its use in other historical and general programs because it is a simple, effective language that unites various audience segments.

Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample:

The results revealed that 60% of viewers of the programme Screams of the People were female. There is a strong professional connection between those working in the media (49%) and other professionals, suggesting that the historical content of the channel attracts interest beyond academic circles, appealing to a broader audience's desire for historical knowledge.

Viewing habits and patterns: The study showed a clear preference for television as the primary viewing medium, surpassing 50%. This preference is attributed to technical and aesthetic considerations, such as image quality and screen size. Respondents favour viewing in private spaces, such as bedrooms, to ensure focus and comfort. They also prefer to watch for no more than one hour to avoid information overload.

Linguistic Preferences and Communicative Language:

The study revealed a strong preference for "linguistic duality," or mixing Modern Standard Arabic and dialect, when viewing. Respondents attributed this preference to varying educational backgrounds (those educated in Arabic versus those educated in French). Eighty-two percent of the sample confirmed that the language of "Screams of the People" is clearly understood thanks to its reliance on a "refined dialect" similar to Modern Standard Arabic.

Evaluation of Linguistic and Programming Performance:

The idea of integrating dialect into historical programs received broad acceptance, reaching 92%. Using simple language helped convey complex historical ideas to a wide audience and enhanced the historical and cultural knowledge of young viewers (aged 20–25), who are eager to explore new ideas.

Value and National Impact:

Respondents unanimously agreed that the program succeeded in instilling nationalistic values and reinforcing historical memory. They also supported the idea of using "simple communicative language" in other television programs to effectively communicate with various segments of society.

II. Critique and Evaluation of the Results:

After analyzing these results, I can present the following scientific observations:

1. Breaking the "Sacredness" of Language in History: The results demonstrate El-Dhakira Channel's success in breaking the stereotypical barrier that imposes the exclusive use of Modern Standard Arabic, or "standard language," in history. The fact that 92% of the audience accepts the use of dialect shows that they value "meaning" over "form." This indicates that dialect serves as a "valued intermediary" in historical programs, transforming dry material into vibrant human stories.

2. Communicative Democracy: Respondents' answers regarding their varying levels of proficiency in Arabic and French reflect the reality of Algerian society. Using dialect here is not a "linguistic weakness," but rather an intelligent communicative strategy aimed at making the media message accessible to the educated and the uneducated alike.

3. Identity and Memory:The results indicating a "saturation of national spirit" confirm that dialect does not weaken identity. On the contrary, it reinforces a sense of belonging because it is the "mother tongue" that connects viewers to their oral memory and the stories of their ancestors.

4. Important Recommendation: Despite the significant preference for the dialect, it is crucial to emphasize maintaining a "high standard" of the dialect (known as the "third language" or "white language") to prevent "linguistic degradation." Respondents expressed this sentiment, preferring a dialect closer to Modern Standard Arabic.

Recommendations and Suggestions of the Study: Based on field results revealing the positive impact of pragmatic language (dialect) on the success of historical media discourse, the study concludes with recommendations for decision-makers at the Algerian public television institution and researchers in this field:

I. Development of programming templates and content strategies

1. Adopting modern communication formats

There is a need to embrace interactive talk shows with a historical focus, and to target the youth demographic by creating edutainment content that blends entertainment and education, ensuring historical knowledge is transmitted in an appealing and contemporary manner.

2. Generalising linguistic strategy

It is recommended that the experience of 'refined dialect' or 'intermediary language' be generalised on other television channels, especially in documentary programmes, to transform dry historical material into 'storytelling' that is easier to comprehend and embed in the collective memory.

II. Enhancing Interaction and National Identity

1. Establishing Linguistic Heritage

Diversifying audiovisual products by integrating various Algerian dialects into programming contributes to preserving cultural and linguistic diversity as an integral part of national identity.

2. Activating Communicative Democracy

Efforts should be made to engage audiences in shaping program content and create spaces for direct interaction between viewers and public television broadcasts. This will enhance a sense of "media citizenship."

III. Media Confrontation and Institutional Coordination

1. Integration of the Media System: Coordination of efforts among various Algerian television channels (Channel One, El-Dhakira, Knowledge, etc.) is necessary to produce a unified, strong historical discourse. This discourse can serve as a barrier against media misinformation and intellectual invasion while reinforcing national memory among future generations.

2. Standardizing "Refined Dialect": There should be efforts to establish linguistic standards for the dialects used in the media. This will ensure that the dialect remains a "refined communicative language" balancing functional simplicity with the seriousness required by public institutions. The goal is to achieve the highest viewing rates without compromising the quality of the content.

Conclusion:

This study indicates that the contemporary audiovisual space is undergoing a radical shift in linguistic communication strategies due to fierce competition among television channels. The search for a "dynamic communicative language" has become imperative for communicators to ensure their message reaches various community segments and overcomes cognitive and educational barriers that strict normative language may impose.

The study has demonstrated that using dialect, either as an alternative to or alongside Modern Standard Arabic, does not alter the core of the media message. Rather, it serves as a mechanism to simplify concepts and embed them in the recipient's mind. The "linguistic simplicity" that dialect offers does not imply vulgarity, but rather a conscious attempt to employ a "third language" that combines rigorous thought with vibrant everyday expression. This strengthens the relationship between the media and its audience.

Based on these findings, we conclude that the Algerian media landscape requires an integrative approach. Modern Standard Arabic remains essential as the intellectual and civilizational reference for official discourse, and dialect is crucial as the most popular and impactful language in collective sentiment. Both serve essential communicative and interactive functions for a complete media process, especially in programs that aim to reinforce national memory and connect generations to their cultural heritage in a relatable manner.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with established academic and research ethics standards. As the research involved human participants through a questionnaire administered to students of media and communication sciences, ethical principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity were strictly observed. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences.

No personal identifying information was collected, and all responses were used exclusively for scientific research purposes. The data were analyzed collectively to ensure participant anonymity. The research did not involve vulnerable populations, invasive procedures, or sensitive personal data. The authors confirm that the study complied with institutional ethical guidelines applicable at the University of Algiers 3.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper. The research was conducted independently, and the authors confirm that there are no financial, institutional, or personal relationships that could have influenced the results or interpretations presented in this study.

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