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EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIQC RESEARCH UNIVERITY ABDELHAMID IBN
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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



MASTER degree in

'English language and Linguistics'

**A Sociolinguistic Study on Language Contact
between Algerian Deaf and Hearing Communities
on Social Media.**

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Master Degree

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Academic Year: 2019/2020

Dedication

To my sister *Ichrak* who made me read about Sign Language.

To my parents who never cease to support me.

To my best friend *Hakim* who's always there for me.

And to the Algerian Deaf community.

Acknowledgement

First of all, my deepest gratitude goes to God for choosing this path for me and for giving me the strength to pursue it.

I owe many thanks to my teacher Mrs. Kaidomar L. who accepted to rescue my academic year and supervise my work when I was running late. This work would not have been achieved without your guidance and precious remarks.

Special thanks to Mr. Moulai-Hacene Y. with whom I started this journey. Thank you for being a good teacher; your Research Methodology lectures are priceless.

I am also extremely grateful to all the interpreters and tutors of Sign Language who were immensely nice and patient.

Finally, lots of thanks to the members of the jury Mrs. Benstaali and Mrs. Hairech for assessing this modest work.

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List of abbreviations

SL: Sign Language

ASL: American Sign Language

BSL: British Sign Language

LSF: French Sign Language

LSA: Algerian Sign Language

ISL: Israeli Sign Language

D.P: Deaf person/people

SLI: Specific Language Impairment

MCE: Manually Coded English

SEE: Signing Exact English

PSE: Pidgin Sign English

CMDA: Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis

Abstract

The purpose of this investigation is to examine the sociolinguistic phenomenon of language contact between Algerian Hearing and Deaf communities on social media. The study is motivated by three problematics: “Is communication between Deaf and Hearing Algerians on social media possible? If yes, what are the features/strategies of such linguistic contact?”, “Do speakers from both communities influence each other’s use of language while communicating?”, and “Are interpreters aware of such communication?” To answer these questions, this investigation attempts to replicate the study of C. Lucas and C. Valli on Language contact between ASL and English. Two research methods were used: an interview with Sign language interpreters from different regions and a covert observation of Deaf Algerian people of varied ages on different social networks. Findings showed that this particular linguistic contact is possible on various platforms of social media and that it generates some distinctive features different from the outcomes of the original study.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, Language contact, Deaf and Hearing communities, Social media, Linguistic outcomes

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General introduction

Language contact is a sociolinguistic phenomenon that arises whenever two or more speakers of different first languages interact. This contact usually gives rise to some well-known outcomes such as borrowing, code switching/mixing, pidgins, and so on, according to most language contact studies. These studies often involve oral languages and little is known on Sign languages contact. A study by C. Lucas and C. Valli (1989) exploring this contact revealed some specific characteristics not found in oral languages, such as fingerspelling and mouthing.

Considering this, my research aims principally to replicate the study of the above-mentioned scholars. This is because studies on language did not pay enough attention to Sign languages, no least on the virtual world. It is also interesting to see whether the study is replicable in the Algerian context. To investigate this phenomenon, three research questions are raised:

- ❖ Is communication between Deaf and Hearing Algerians on social media possible? If yes, what are the features/strategies of such linguistic contact?
- ❖ Do speakers from both communities influence each other's use of language while communicating?
- ❖ Are interpreters of SL aware of such communication?

To these questions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- Hearing and Deaf communities do communicate on social media producing some linguistic phenomena that are adjusted to fit in the virtual world.
- Sign language users are used to interact with Hearing people in real life and they usually make sense of people's gestures even if it is not SL; thus, they would probably do the same on social media and adapt their speech to that of the Hearing community.
- Interpreters are aware of Hearing-Deaf interaction on social media.

Two qualitative methods were used: An interview and a covert observation. The dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter gives a theoretical background of language as used by both Hearing and Deaf communities. In addition, it tackles the linguistic phenomenon of language

contact and its outcomes involving oral and Sign languages. It also explains the role of interpreting in provoking Sign language contact and sheds light on our research gap: Sign language users' contact with Hearing people on social media. Chapter two is devoted to the research method used in this study. It describes the sample, the research instruments, and the procedure followed to collect data. The last chapter presents the findings and their analysis. It also shows the limitations of the study and offers some suggestions of further research.

CHAPTER ONE: LANGUAGE AND ITS DIFFERENT FORMS

Introduction

One of the most distinctive features that separate the human from other kind of species is the ability of using language. Language can take many forms; it can be spoken, written, acoustic, and signed. The chapter at hand provides an overview of oral and sign language within a linguistic framework in addition to their relatedness to society. The first section of the chapter will be devoted to spoken language. We will deal with the specificities that make language purely human to narrow our scope of study. Then, we will direct our focus to spoken language in a social context; that is, we will see the phenomenon of language contact and its outcomes, for it is the main subject of this study. After that, we will mention one form of language impairment so that it takes us to the second section of our chapter. Sign language is the other form of language to be tackled. Firstly, a definition along with a brief historical background aim to introduce Sign language to the reader. Then, part of the chapter will present some key concepts of the latter to understand its mechanism. Besides, we will reveal some unique phenomena that result from contact between Sign Languages. Moreover, we will define two concepts, which are unavoidably present in language contact situations, and finally, we will shed light on hearing-deaf contact in a specific setting, that is social media, which will be our single source of data (see chapter two).

1 The common form of language and its relation to society

1.1 Language as Purely Human Entity

Both animals and humans have codes, or what M. Rowe and P. Levine (2016, p.11) called “discrete signals”. If we take birds as an example, they have about thirty codes depending on the species. These calls are used in various situations: signalling danger, communicating with other birds of the flock, attracting a mate, and even by chicks before hatching. We might question, at this point, why is the human race more dominant on Earth (in terms of evolution) while they can perform nearly

similar tasks as other creatures? The main argument is the use of ‘language’. Language, then, is attributed to humans for many reasons.

The major reason is the physiological gear. Teeth, lips, mouth, and the larynx, according to Yule (1996, p4), are all significant factors that distinguish humans from other creatures. Human teeth are shaped in a manner that makes possible to produce certain sounds like /f/ or /th/; whereas the lips are helpful in uttering other sounds like /m/ or /p/. The mouth on the other side, with the involvement of the larynx, is flexible enough to produce any thinkable sound. We can, consequently, make a set of sounds combined together to produce an infinite set of sentences. This makes the human language open and not restricted to a number of codes (like the case of birds).

Another reason is the properties of language. In 1960, Hockett proposed sixteen “design-features” that constitute the human language. In certain cases, other species’ systems of communication may include some of these features, but never all of them at once. Yule (1996, p17-22) tackled only six of these properties that he called ‘core features’.

First, Arbitrariness is the lack of a reasonable association between a word and its referent. Second, Displacement is the ability to tackle previous, future, or imaginary topics. Moreover, Productivity refers to the linguistic innovation, where speakers produce words they have never heard before. Then, Duality is the capacity of combining meaningless sounds to create meaningful utterances. Additionally, Discreteness means the autonomy of sounds; each sound we produce, no matter how similar it may seem to another sound, is meaningfully and purposely distinct. Lastly, Cultural Transmission means that language is culturally inherited. Hence, a child does not necessarily acquire the language of his parents but rather, the language used in the speech community he belongs to.

The use of language is a multipurpose process. We communicate to express emotions, thoughts, and information; to strengthen or destroy relationships; to spread beliefs; to influence others, and so

on. But most importantly, none of this is done in isolation. Aristotle claims that “Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human. Society is something that precedes the individual.” (As cited in A.K. Agarwal, 2019, p.145). That is, the need of interaction and the use of language is a natural reaction to fit into a particular social context.

1.2 Language Contact and its Outcomes

Since the beginning of humanity, language has always been present. Once Man started using more than one language, he unconsciously provoked a linguistic phenomenon called ‘language contact’. As noted by S.G. Thomason (2001, p.1) “In the simplest definition, language contact is the use of more than one language in the same place at the same time.” To put it differently, when speakers of different languages, or different varieties of a language, communicate, language contact occurs leading to an exchange of linguistic features between interlocutors.

First formal studies of language contact are attributed to Uriel Weinreich as he published his book ‘Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems’ in 1953. At the time, the field of language study was witnessing the rise of two mainstreams: Sociolinguistics and Generative linguistics. Hence, language contact was not of primary concern to linguists. However, it was tackled by scholars from other disciplines. In addition, it was inevitably involved in studies concerned by Indo-European, Germanic, and Romance languages.

Another reason for the indifference of linguists, especially in the English-speaking world, towards language contact, was the firm belief that the latter was caused by bilingualism and generates new features to language. Thus, they believed that nothing could be added to this scope. However, recent studies brought new understandings about this phenomenon.

By 1988, S.G. Thomason and T. Kaufman took interest in language contact studies and led to the revitalization of the latter as a field of study. Thomason and Kaufman provided a set of scenarios of language contact to come up with all possible assumptions about its nature and consequences.

Proceeding from this, linguists gave more consideration to contact whenever analysing language change or the emergence of new linguistic attributes. According to Thomason (2001, p.08) “Language contact is everywhere: there is no evidence that any languages have developed in total isolation from other languages.” Therefore, the time span of contact, its consistency, and the social conditions were the elements examined to determine the outcomes of the aforesaid phenomenon.

The manifestations and consequences of this phenomenon have been the foci of interest to many linguists in the last decades. Generally, bilingualism or multilingualism are the main factors that give rise to language contact. Yet, linguistic phenomena such as borrowing, code switching, code mixing, pidgins, and creoles are also products of the latter. In this paper, we will define most of those concepts to provide a clear picture of language contact as a linguistic phenomenon and to link it to our field of study.

1.2.1 Bilingualism

Many scholars attempted to give a sharp definition to bilingualism based on their perceptions. Bloomfield (1933, p.56) defined a bilingual as one who possesses “native-like control of two or more languages” (As cited in R. Appel and P. Muysken, 2005, p.2-3), whereas Macnamara (1969) referred to a bilingual as someone who ‘has some second-language skills in one of the four modalities (speaking, listening, writing, reading), in addition to his first language skills.

If the languages used within a society exceed two, it is referred to as multilingualism. In this context, the languages adopted are in constant contact as speakers use them parallelly and automatically affect each other. With this in mind, bilingualism involves Sign language as well. That

is, a person who masters a spoken and a signed language is a bilingual; a Deaf person who masters more than one sign language is a bilingual.

1.2.2 Borrowing

Borrowing is often associated with the phenomenon of language contact. Thomason and Kaufman (1988, p.37) define borrowing as “the incorporation of foreign features into a group’s native language by speakers of that language” (as cited in D. Winford, 2010, p.170). In other words, when speakers include unfamiliar words to their first language in their speech, it is called borrowing.

The words borrowed are not of a single grammatical group, as Poplack & Meechan (1998, p.127) stated, “major-class content words such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives are the most likely to be borrowed” (as cited in G. Sankoff, 2001, p.12). Besides, the process of borrowing does not involve lexicon only, but also different levels of language such as phonology, morphology, etc. The influence of speakers on one another depends on the dominance of their language (i.e. the less dominant is the one which borrows).

Borrowing can also occur between a spoken and a Sign language, or between two Sign languages. C. Lucas and C. Valli (2002, p.187) spotted some borrowed words from English into American Sign Language (ASL) such as ‘*BOY-FRIEND*’, ‘*HOME-WORK*’, and ‘*BLACK-BOARD*’. To explain more, each spoken word has its equivalent in Sign language as a whole concept, and the borrowing occurs when the equivalent is non-existent. Hence, the sign ‘HOME’ is merged with ‘WORK’ to obtain the full word. In some cases, it may be a two-way process. The scholars have also identified some borrowed words from ASL into English like the word ‘*cha*’, which is originally one of ASL signs that refer to a ‘thick book’.

1.2.3 Code switching and Code mixing

In most contact situations code switching appears to be one of the outcomes. K.U. Ihemere, (2013, p.03) refers to code switching as “the ability to use more than one language within a single

utterance.” In simple terms, when a speaker moves from one code (language or language variety) to another within one context, it is called code switching. It is found, as Gumperz and Hernandez (1969, p.2), stated “each time minority language groups come into contact with majority language groups under conditions of rapid social change” (as cited in P. Gardner-Chloros, 2010, p.188). Other scholars contrastingly, argue that code switching occurs within bilingual communities as a prominent feature because the speech community masters both languages. However, this claim cannot be generalized.

On the other hand, the phenomenon of code-mixing is more complex to spot and sometimes even used interchangeably with code switching. To differentiate between the two, J. Davis (1989, p.89) argues, “The term refers to “pieces” of one language being used while a speaker is basically using another language.” That is, the latter refers to moving from one code to another simultaneously. In this regard, Lucas and Valli (1992) insist, “Code-mixing can also apply when the “shifting” between the languages occurs intrasententially” (As cited in C. Lucas, 2002, p. 34).

1.2.4 Pidgin and Creole

Pidgins and creoles are languages that arise as a result of contact between different languages. As defined by S.G. Thomason (2001, p.159), “Pidgins and creoles emerge in contexts in which people from different linguistic backgrounds need to talk to each other regularly, and they are therefore *lingua francas* in origin” That is, when two groups that share no linguistic knowledge come into contact but need to communicate constantly, a pidgin is developed. However, neither of the groups in contact learns the other group’s native language. Instead, they create a simplified yet meaningful language inspired from one of the languages’ vocabulary

When a pidgin evolves to be spoken by a new generation as a native language, it becomes a creole. However, S.G. Thomason (2001, p.160) claims, “Other creoles seem never to have gone through a pidgin stage at all” But the general assumption about creoles is that, their lexicon is drawn from one of the languages in contact (known as the *lexifier language*) and their grammar from both languages.

1.3 Deafness and Mutism as Language Impairments

The process of communication is quite complicated. It requires the cooperation of language comprehension along with language production (speech, written form, or sign language) for both interlocutors. The deficiency of one of them leads to a noticeable disorder of the whole process. The first documentations of language disorders began two centuries ago. Nevertheless, the causes were not fixed, and sometimes even unknown. The most common disabilities in which language impairments manifest are: Specific Language Impairment, Aphasia, Language-based learning disabilities, Mutism, and Hearing impairment. In this paper, we will focus only on Deafness and Mutism, for they are linked to our investigation.

Mutism is defined in the 'Medical Dictionary Online' as "The inability to generate oral-verbal expression, despite normal comprehension of speech.", and Deafness in 'Vocabulary.com' as a "partial or complete loss of hearing". They often go hand in hand, for instance, a person who cannot hear would naturally have difficulty in speaking.

Hearing loss occurs when one or more part of the ear are damaged. Based on the parts injured, we can distinguish two major types of hearing loss: Conductive and Sensorineural. Conductive hearing loss occurs when sounds cannot reach the outer or middle ear. Whereas sensorineural hearing loss is a result of a damaged inner ear. If a person demonstrates a damage in both sections, this is referred to as mixed hearing loss. Moreover, the impairment can affect one (single-sided) or both ears (bilateral). Deaf and hard of hearing people usually use a unique type of language to communicate, known as 'Sign Language'.

2 The other form of language and its relatedness to society

2.1 The Notion and Historical Background of Sign Language

Since the beginning of human existence, Man has always figured out a way to express his ideas. When the auditory-vocal modality is absent, the visual-gestural modality takes place; also called 'Sign language'. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2020), sign language is "a system of hand and body movements representing words, used by and to people who cannot hear or talk". Additionally, deaf and mute children develop Sign Language naturally as a mother tongue just like hearing children develop speech way before any formal education (A. Schembri, 2005 as cited in Aussie Kids, 2015). In other words, Deaf children "babble" using their hands, produce their first sign, and then combine the signs to forms meaningful sentences until they are able to communicate fluently in Sign language.

Interestingly, the design features that characterize the human language are, too, found in sign languages. To explain more, the ability for signers to control their signing and to provide feedback is known as Interchangeability. Moreover, many signs are arbitrary and others, even if they seem as a descriptive picture of the word signed, are conventional. Additionally, Deaf people can produce words they have never seen before by merging words they know in different manners without violating the rules of their language; this feature is called Productivity.

Discreteness, a feature that refers to the diversity of elements of human language, is also found in Sign language. For instance, the word 'Green' and 'To steal' in Algerian Sign language (LSA) are signed in the same way with a distinction in movement. Besides, British Sign language (BSL) is one of the sign languages that enables its users to talk about the present, past, future, and fictional topics; this feature is known as Displacement. Finally, Sign languages include the feature of Duality, which refers to the combination of meaningless gestures to create meaningful signs. Taking for example the word 'yes' in LSA, it is signed by making a circle with the thumb and the index and keeping the other three fingers open followed by a semi-circular movement of the hand towards the listener. Hence, the slightest difference in these gestures would make no sense for an Algerian deaf person.

Tracing back the history of sign language was not an easy task for linguists due to the scarcity of documentations. Still, data have shown that sign language existed since olden times (4th century BC) as W. C. Stokoe, Jr. (2005, p.03) asserts, “sign language is as old as the race itself, and its earliest history is equally obscure.” In this respect, R. J. Ruben (2005, p.464) claims, “This hypothesis comes, in part, from evidence that there was linguistic communication before the voice/speech tract evolved into a form that allowed for articulated auditory communication.” Furthermore, the scholar claims that it was seen as an odd mode of communication, and Deaf people were thought to be unteachable (2005, p.464).

Early forms of Sign language took place during the vow of silence (13th century), where a system of visual communication was developed to facilitate interaction. Based on this, a monk called Pedro Ponce de Leon used those gestures and taught them to the upper-class Deaf. Later on, Juan Pablo Bonet, who was a linguist, developed Pedro’s gestures and adapted them to publish the first guide of finger alphabet for all the Deaf community in Spain.

Despite this, the official emergence of Sign language occurred in France when Charles Michel de l’Epée founded the first school for the Deaf ‘*Institution Nationale des Sourds-Muets à Paris*’. In addition, L’Eppé also developed a dictionary of Sign language and was recognized to be the ‘Father of the Deaf’. In the early 1800s, a minister in Hartford, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, went to Europe to learn the teaching procedures of Sign language. He met there an instructor in one of l’Epée’s institute and they established together the first school for the Deaf in the United States ‘*American School for the Deaf*’.

3 Key Concepts of Sign Language

One other characteristic that makes sign languages real, complex, and rich is the internal structure they have. There is a number of elements, also called parameters, which make signs meaningful. The first scholar to reveal this fact was W. Stokoe (1960), who used minimal pairs to

extract those elements. Successive studies on sign languages identified the same parameters and added two others to provide precise descriptions of the signs. In this paper, we will focus on the distinguishing aspects presented by Stokoe, who focused his investigation on American Sign Language (ASL) as T. Siedlecki Jr. and J.D. Bonvillian (1993, p.32) explain, “Stokoe coined terms for these aspects (tabula or tab, designator or dez, and signation or sig, respectively), but they are commonly referred to as location, handshape, and movement.”

3.1.1 Handshape

As its name indicates, the handshape refers to the manner in which the hand is formed to convey the sign. One sign can involve more than one handshape; hence, signers may switch their handshapes throughout the sign. I. Meir and W. Sendlar (2008, p.23) used the example of the signs ‘SAY’ and ‘ASK’ of Israeli Sign Language and claimed, “In both signs, the hand moves in an arc path from the mouth forward. The only difference is in the shape of the hand.” Another example can be given from LSA, where the Signs “THEY (Masculine plural)” and “THEY (Masculine dual)” differ only in the handshape: raising the index then moving the hand backwards in a circular movement, and raising the index and middle finger, keeping the same movement; respectively.

3.1.2 Location

The signer is put in an invisible framing that generally starts from the waist to the head. Location refers to the place of the hand(s) while signing within the space allowed. Among the locations that can be mentioned, are the forehead, nose, mouth, cheek, and neck. In this case, a slight contact between the hand(s) and other parts of the body may occur. Also, some sign can be neutral in location. Again, I. Meir and W. Sendlar (2008, p.24) provide a clarification based on ISL parameters,

“A different formational category distinguishes the pair LEARN and EAT [...] The handshapes are the same in these signs, and both are characterized by a small repeated arcing movement from the wrist. What distinguishes the two is the location at which the sign is produced.”

3.1.3 Movement

This element means the way in which the handshape moves throughout the sign. Thus, the direction of the handshape, its speed, and its frequency are all components of the movement. However, sometimes the handshape does not move at all to form a sign. Stokoe defined the movement as “the action of the hand or hands forming a sign.” (As cited by T. Siedlecki Jr. and J.D. Bonvillian, 1993, p.32). By way of illustration, the signs ‘MINE’ and ‘YOURS’ in LSA are signed by closing the hand, raising the index and middle finger, located at the level of the chest, and moving toward the speaker and listener, respectively.

3.2 Sign Language Contact Outcomes

We have hitherto defined the phenomenon of language contact occurring only between spoken languages since the focus has mostly been between oral languages, then spread to include Sign Languages as well. Bellugi and Fischer (1972) claim, “The deaf community is a fertile testing ground for linguistic and sociological (Meadow, 1972) theories, since the deaf community is in some special ways unique.” (As cited by James C. Woodward, Jr., 1973, p.191).

In other words, language contact may arise between a spoken and a Signed Language or between more than one Sign Language. In this respect, C. Lucas and C. Valli (1989, p.11) claim, “One of the major sociolinguistic issues in the deaf community concerns the outcome of language contact.” In addition to the common outcomes of language contact like borrowing, code switching, pidgins, and so on, Sign Language contact engenders other features highlighted by Bruce A. Sofinski (2002, pp. 27-45), such as

3.2.1 Mouthing

Also called ‘foreigner talk’, is the production of speech while signing. This phenomenon requires the sender, who is often Deaf, to be bilingual. That is, once in contact with a hearing person, the deaf bilingual generally “opts to use spoken English in combination with gestures.” claims C. Lucas (1989, p.15). J. Davis (1989, p.95) argues, “The latter is a salient characteristic of intensive

language contact between ASL and English and appears to be a type of simultaneous code-mixing.” However, the words produced are not necessarily heard.

Accordingly, J. Davis (1989) identifies three types of mouthing: full English mouthing, reduced English mouthing, and lexicalized mouthing (As cited in C. Lucas, 2002, p.32). They refer to the production of full, limited, or highly limited production of words while signing, respectively. In addition, they generally all occur without any use of vocalization and help in conveying meaning.

3.2.2 Fingerspelling

As its name indicates, this phenomenon means symbolizing each letter of a particular word through the hand. J. Davis (1989, p.96) explains, “Fingerspelling is a system for representing the English alphabet manually by varying handshapes. It is used primarily to represent proper nouns and English terms that do not have ASL lexical equivalents.” That is, fingerspelling enables the signer to describe the word through sign language alphabet as it is uttered in oral language.

4 Deaf-Hearing Interaction through Interpreting and Transliterating

Just like between oral languages, contact between spoken and sign language often occurs during the process of interpreting. According to Frishberg (1990) “Interpreting is the transmission of a spoken or signed message from one language (the source language) to another (the target language).” (As cited in C. Lucas, 2002, p.68). In addition, the transmission of a spoken message into a signed one, and vice versa, is done orally and instantly. Furthermore, the interpreter should master both spoken and Sign languages in order to achieve a successful transmission of the message.

Historically, the first organization of American interpreters (RID) was founded in 1964. Before that, interpreting was done unofficially as claimed by C. Lucas (2002, p.29). Through time, the process was mistakenly mixed with another one: transliterating. In this respect, scholars, including C. Lucas (2002, p.29-30), made a clear distinction between the two, saying that transliteration is the transmission of English into a Manually Coded English (MCE). The latter can take many forms, such

as SEE (Signing Exact English), and PSE (Pidgin Sign English), which are basically spoken English on hands. In other words, transliterators sign exactly what they hear keeping the grammar of the spoken language, and sometimes even its syntax.

5 Deaf-Hearing Interaction on Social Media

Social media has made the world smaller and connected people from different regions, ethnic groups, social classes, people with different beliefs and abilities, and the Deaf community is no exception. Luckily, the language of social media is universal and its growth has made synchronous and asynchronous communication possible. Furthermore, it enables users to express themselves by producing their personal and original content.

On one hand, the Deaf community has always been isolated even though it is located within a dominant Hearing community due to its atypical language, which most of Hearing people ignore. On the other hand, the virtual world seems to connect everyone including Sign Language users. According to BBC News (2016), the British Sign Language (BSL) community recognized the significance of Facebook in their daily lives for it has expanded their social connections.

Lucas and Valli (1986) claim that the lack of language contact is one of the major sociolinguistics issues in the Deaf community. In fact, different forms of language create linguistic barriers between individuals. Consequently, direct contact between Hearing and Deaf communities arises rarely and engenders some specific, above-mentioned outcomes. However, such phenomenon might occur constantly and naturally in the virtual world provoking uncommon outcomes; except that few studies deal with Sign Language contact and even fewer studies involve such contact on social media.

Conclusion

Summarily, we have defined two forms of language and their characteristics. We have also focused on a linguistic phenomenon that arises due to the existence of more than a language in the

same social context. Furthermore, the chapter uncovered the various outcomes of the above-mentioned phenomenon. However, what we have dealt with, hitherto, concerns mostly real-life language contact. This is due to a lack of empirical research on virtual contact apart from the small number of studies conducted abroad. For this reason, the next chapter will deal with a purely linguistic contact between Hearing and Deaf communities in the Algerian society.

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHOD

Introduction

This chapter describes the research method used in this study. The current investigation is qualitative as it replicates C. Lucas and C. Valli's research conducted in America between ASL and English. This chapter opens with an overview of both the sociological and linguistic situations of the Algerian Deaf community. Then, it briefly explains the original study to give a clear background of the research context and to define its aims. Next, it explains the method and the research instruments to see if the findings are similar when the research is applied in a different setting and with different participants.

1 The Sociological and Linguistic Situation of Algerian Deaf People

It is hard to be updated about the situation of the Algerian Deaf community unless you are part of it. On the internet, for instance, the only available data are press articles dating back to years ago. With this in mind, we came to know that Algerian Deaf people form a solid, yet, isolated social group. This is due to some boundaries between them and the Hearing community.

Since Deaf people depend often on Sign language, it is hard for them to overcome the linguistic differences and fit in the society. Mrs. C. A., a teacher at the School for the Deaf in Oran, asserts that Sign Language users do not allow 'strangers' to access their community unless they trust them, and to gain their trust, one should first learn their language. This does not make them brutal or less sociable but conservative of their own 'culture'.

According to an online article, Deaf people undergo social discrimination in the Algerian society. This discrimination is experienced in the salary, where a Deaf person gains less than their hearing partner for the same task, in addition to the pension they receive that is four times less than

that of the other disabled people. Moreover, they claim to be marginalised by the society, insufficiently educated, and increasingly jobless (*Algerie Focus*, 2014).

While Deaf people have always been part of the Algerian society, their first language has not been recognized until recently. On May 8, 2002, ‘The Algerian Law on the Protection and Promotion of Persons with a Disability’ adopted the Algerian Sign Language (LSA) as the official language for the Deaf. According to Lameen Souag (2018), LSA is the least documented language in the country.

In view of this, studies that involve LSA are limited and are mainly descriptive and pedagogical in perspective. Nevertheless, tracing back the history, language family, and the characteristics of LSA is possible. L. Souag (2018) points out

“Notes that Algerian Sign Language is descended from French Sign Language (LSF), but that about 50% of the vocabulary is different; that there are many differences within Algeria between the North and the South; and that efforts at standardization are being undertaken.”

Speaking of vocabulary, *African Sign Languages*’ (2014) claims that the first dictionary of Algerian Sign Language was launched in 2017. The latter is trilingual (Arabic, French, and Sign language) and contains 1560 most common signs of 29 themes from daily life. To illustrate, ‘good’ is found in the dictionary as “Bien”, “حسن”, and a picture of a man raising his thumb with a small movement forward. Introducing LSA is in favour of Sign Language users to standardize a common SL within the Deaf community, and to enable other members of the society to step into their sphere such as Hearing individuals, teachers, parents, and interpreters.

Sign Language training gained some popularity these few last years among the Algerian society. Police and firefighter personnel received training courses in SL in different cities of the country (Eladjwaa, 2018 and Elbilad, 2019). During an ASL course in the Association for the Deaf of Oran which I attended for my research, I met a city hall employee learning SL. She claimed that it was hard to communicate with Deaf people with whom she had frequent contact. Thus, this training is supposed

to facilitate communication and to minimize the boundaries already existing between the two communities.

2 Lucas and Valli's Study

In order to describe the American Deaf community from a Sociolinguistic standpoint, C. Lucas and C. Valli led a study in 1989. Their aim was first restricted to analysing and describing the features of PSE, which is a concept proposed by Stokoe. Subsequently, based on some interesting findings, their study was redirected towards language contact within Deaf community as C. Lucas (2004, p.04) explains

“My research with Clayton Valli illustrates how these considerations can affect sociolinguistic research. We have investigated a kind of signing that results from the contact between English and ASL and has features of both languages (for a full description of the project, see Lucas and Valli, 1992). Our description of what we call contact signing naturally led us to a review of language contact phenomena in spoken language situations, [...] It was in trying to illustrate the distinction with examples that we realized where the focus in language contact studies has been.”

For the scholars, the sociolinguistic situation of the Deaf community lacks empirical research. This includes the linguistic contact with the Hearing community and its outcomes. Furthermore, previous studies suggested that such contact engenders a kind of signing called PSE, which combines the linguistic features of both ASL and English. However, Lucas and Valli claimed that it is unfair to assign such linguistic terms of Oral languages' situations to Sign Languages' ones. In this regard, Lucas (2004, p.05) develops,

“The Deaf community has been looked at all too often within the framework of spoken language sociolinguistics, and labels from spoken language situations have been applied too hastily to sign language situations. [...] For example, the term “pidgin” as applied to the Deaf community needs to be re-examined. [...] Many other terms used in sociolinguistics to describe oral language use

such as “lexical borrowing”, “code mixing”, “code switching” and even “bilingualism” also merit re-examination.”

Accordingly, they aimed to analyse the phenomenon of language contact within the Deaf community, be it between two sign languages or between a spoken and a sign language, and to extract its outcomes. Interestingly, such contact occurs in various occasions naturally, namely in educational settings and during the process of interpreting. In this respect, Bruce A. Sofinski (2002, pp. 27-50) examined a two minutes and twelve seconds long face-to-face conversation that involved a selected narrative between a nationally certified sign language interpreter and a bilingual deaf woman (see list of appendices) from which he uncovered some unique features (see chapter one, pp. 11-12).

3 Language Contact on Social Media in Algeria

Our research is a replicated version of Lucas and Valli’s investigation. Yet, this research is exploratory because it is applied in a setting not yet explored. Hence, this paper attempts to examine naturally occurring language contact situations within the Algerian Deaf community on social media. That is, our aim is to analyse and describe the language used by Algerian Deaf people on social media on one hand, and to describe the methods they use to communicate, especially with hearing people. This is to see whether hearing and hearing-impaired people in Algeria influence each other’s use of language while communicating virtually, and to extract the outcomes of such contact and evaluate their effectiveness in reaching a successful communication/interpretation.

Language contact rises whenever users of different first languages interact, and it takes place in different circumstances. Regarding Sign Language users, they are in regular contact with oral language users as they are both members of the society. By way of illustration, Deaf pupils receive education from bilingual, mostly Hearing teachers. Besides, interpreters, who serve as a mediator between the two communities, are as well bilingual and mostly Hearing people (for this study, only two interpreters out of eight are Deaf).

Additionally, according to '*World Federation of the Deaf*', a survey in 2008 showed that the number of Deaf people in Algeria is estimated around 240,000 (as cited in AASL, 2017) while in the same year, the population reached 34.73 million people. That is to say, the Hearing community is prevalent in terms of quantity, and is, consequently, in unavoidable contact with the Deaf one.

The original study, in all its forms and phases, was conducted in real life situations. This was unfortunately impossible in the Algerian context due to the lockdown of all educational institutions and to the prohibition of group gatherings regulation in public places. Social media, then, were an alternative and challenging setting in which we decided to investigate the linguistic exchange between two different communities.

It may seem that communication on social media comes in one form (writing), and that language contact occurs in face-to-face interactions only; however, people developed countless techniques to communicate virtually. Moreover, Zentella (1990, p.1098) asserts, "Since linguistic accommodation or acceptance requires exposure in the form of personal contact, social media has greatly increased the number of people exposed to new words and new word usage." (As cited by W. Finke and H. Kitabayashi, 2018, p. 280). That is to say, social media nowadays unite people from different communities and enable them to create their own ways of communication in order to share their ideas, and in this paper, we intend to know more about this specific communication.

3.1 Participants and platforms

In order to gather dependable and authentic data, the participants of this study were chosen randomly. However, we made sure they were from different cities of Algeria in order to avoid any misleading factors. To explain more, Sign Language users in Algeria, just like Hearing people, might demonstrate a linguistic variation from a region to another as clarified by R. B. president of the Association for the Deaf in Algiers and founder of the company SARL LSA (see table2.1). Hence, it

was necessary to have participants from different areas to determine whether or not the findings can be generalized.

We started first by asking 82 Algerian hearing people if they have ever experienced a linguistic contact with a Deaf person. If yes, we asked how did it occur, in which circumstances, and how did they manage to communicate successfully. This survey was kind of a pilot study to determine the frequency of such contact. However, the above participants were not part of our sample.

Our actual participants were divided into two categories: interpreters/tutors and ordinary people. The interpreters/tutors help both communities (Hearing and Deaf) to interact, be it on social media or in real life; therefore, they are expectedly in non-stop contact with Deaf people. As for the other category, we could not have relied on the claims of interpreters to answer our research questions without trying to provoke such linguistic phenomenon with the most concerned sample: the Deaf community.

We interviewed eight participants from the first category:

Participant	Age	City	Occupation
Said M.	53	Oran	A legal interpreter of Sign Language
Mohamed B.	41	Oran	Interpreter of Friday Sermons at Riadh Es-salihin mosque
Amina G.	27	Batna	Psychologist/tutor of SL
Reda B.	/	Algiers	President of the the Association for the Deaf in Algiers/founder of the company SARL LSA
Said S.	35	France (originally from Tizi Ouzou)	Teacher of SL

Rania and Zineb B.	24/28	Batna	Interpreters of SL
Tahar B.	45	Tiaret	A legal interpreter of Sign Language

Table 2.1: Representing the first category of the sample

Then, we initiated and tried to maintain short conversations with 12 Deaf persons (their age varies from 19 to 35) in addition to the researcher as the only Hearing participant from the second category. This was the number of people who accepted the researcher's friend request on social networks. Also, we were afraid the conversations would not proceed as naturally as we wished if the participants knew about the investigation; therefore, only interpreters were informed about being part of the study since they needed to be interviewed.

Participant	Gender	City
(A)	F	Algiers
(B)	F	Algiers
(C)	M	Algiers
(D)	M	Algiers
(E)	M	Bejaia
(F)	M	Blida
(G)	M	Bouira
(H)	M	Boumerdes
(I)	M	Constantine
(J)	M	Mascara
(K)	M	Oran
(L)	M	Tlemcen

Table 2.2: Representing the second category of the sample

The platforms used were Facebook (16 interpreters and D.P), Instagram (1 interpreter and 2 D.P), and Viber (1 D.P). This was to show the presence of Sign Language users everywhere and the unrestricted possibility of such social and linguistic contact. Moreover, it is generally not hard to find or to distinguish a Deaf person or even a SL interpreter on social media since their profiles say it all at the first glance (profile picture, username, posts). For this study, we selected the majority of our participants from the comments sections of different posts related to the Deaf on Facebook.

3.2 Research instruments

The study relied on more than one research tool to obtain reliable information and results. First, we conducted mainly an observational study through which the researcher adopted a covert observation (without telling one category of the participants of their role in the study). The observation focused on the ways participants communicate with me (as a member of the Hearing community) to ensure a successful communication.

The procedure of data collection, hence, involved an action research, as the researcher was member of the sample for the sake of reporting genuine data. This was with regard to holding conversations with Deaf people only. As for the interpreters, they were fully aware of the topic and aims of our study. Furthermore, we obtained their approval to report their claims, analyse their videos, and to reveal their identities if necessary.

Another research instrument we used was an online interview. We used semi structured Messenger and Instagram interviews. Two of the interviewees were Deaf and preferred to be interviewed through a video call but since the researcher does not master SL, we agreed to communicate through instant writing. We had five basic questions, but sometimes we had to ask for more explanation in case the interviewee mentions an interesting point.

3.3 Procedure

The researcher started by sending friend requests to all participants on different social networks (except for the participant on Viber because we have haphazardly met in a pharmacy and exchanged

phone numbers). Once our requests were accepted, we immediately initiated conversations with them. With ordinary Deaf people, we focused first on the language they preferred to use in order to avoid any difficulties in communicating. Then, we relied on some conversation starters such as introducing myself (name, age, educational status, and place of residence) and asking them to do the same. The length of the conversations depended on the mutual intelligibility. In other words, once communication became impossible, we stopped.

As for the interpreters, I started the conversation directly by introducing myself and my topic; then, explaining what I expect from them. After that, I asked for their permission to start interviewing them whenever they are available; I also asked for their permission to record or screenshot their claims. Furthermore, the interviews lasted approximately 14min with each; this is because we went with the flow of the conversation while making sure our inquiries were solved. To explain more, the questions below were already pre-established; yet, some were added and some were omitted throughout the interview based on the answers or on other factors. In Case the interviewee is not officially an interpreter, we started by asking them if they consider themselves interpreters of SL and the answer was “yes” in all cases.

Question 1: Is your job as an interpreter restricted to real life situations only? If no, how is it done via social media?

We opened our inquiry with this question to determine first if the interpreter is aware of professional usage of social media. If yes, we needed to know more about it to indirectly extract the strategies of such linguistic contact.

Question 2: Is your target group the Deaf community or the Hearing one?

It is important to spot the interpreters’ target group to conclude who benefits the most from such interpretation, and to see if it is a two-way process.

Question 3: Do you think such communication is easier than real life interaction between both communities (especially monolinguals)?

By monolinguals, we mean people who master either the spoken language or the signed one. This question aims to determine the effectiveness of virtual communication between Deaf and Hearing people who can hardly communicate face to face.

Question 4: Do you think Deaf people are more expressive on social media than in real life?

As mentioned before, the Deaf community is isolated by nature and does not decisively come in contact with the Hearing one but rarely. With this question, we thought of challenging this fact to measure Deaf people's sociability and involvement among the Hearing community on social media, which automatically influences their use of language.

Question 5: Do you find yourself speaking audibly while talking or interpreting to a Deaf person?

Not only we aimed to discover the features of the linguistic contact between Deaf and Hearing Algerian communities on social media but also, we wanted to know if the outcomes that arise between ASL and English contact also exist between LSA and Algerian colloquial Arabic. We did not need to ask about the other outcomes because we could extract them by analysing the interpreters' videos on networks.

Conclusion

The second chapter deals with the methodology used for this study. We introduced the original study that we intend to replicate. Interestingly, applying this research in the Algerian context required a different data-gathering procedure due to the present circumstances in the country and we had to adjust it enough to have dependable data eventually. Therefore, we presented our research instruments, defined our sample, described the procedure, and justified our choices throughout the chapter. However, the investigation is still not completed. In the next chapter, we will report, analyse, and discuss what the data gathered generate.

CHAPTER THREE: PRACTICAL PART AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This study aims to uncover the outcomes and features of Deaf-Hearing linguistic contact on social media. Hence, throughout this chapter we will make use of the data gathered to conclude our study. To achieve this, we will adopt a content analysis method following a Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) through Text Analysis paradigm. The approach is inductive for the study is not theory-driven; instead, the focus is on the patterns of Deaf people's messages. The method followed includes the analysis of interviews as well to construct dependable findings. Then, a discussion of the findings will follow. Finally, all of the limitations of the study, the researcher's implications, and suggestions of further research will be mentioned.

1 Interpretation of Findings

As to the frequency of the linguistic contact between the two communities, data showed that out of 82 Hearing person (from Oran and Mostaganem), only six have experienced communicating with a Deaf person. These reported conversations were rea-life and none of them occurred on social media. All of the hearing people admitted that they succeeded to convey their messages through gestures because they do not master Sign Language, and that their interlocutors managed to grasp the idea even though the gestures were meaningless.

1.1 First category

As mentioned in the second chapter, eight interpreters/tutors of SL (3 females and 5 males) were interviewed. As the interview was semi structured, extra questions were added during the process for clarification. Based on the interviewees' preferences, the interviews were conducted either in Arabic or in French; yet, the answers are directly translated and reported in English.

For the first question that concerns practicing their job on social media, only two of the interviewees claimed that they mostly interpret in real life situations. Not because they are not aware

of interpretation through social media but because they prefer addressing Deaf people face-to-face. The others revealed that when it comes to social media, they usually post videos on their profiles on specific topics, or use video calls via Messenger or other social networks.

The second questions that deals with which community is most concerned by the interpretations, only one interviewee claimed that his videos are made for Deaf people only because “Only Deaf people can understand the language I use in those videos” (M.B, June 4, 2020). The others, however, consider their videos on social media to both communities as long as they master or intend to learn SL. One interviewee clarified “Since the interpreting is done through sound and image, everyone can understand” (T.B, June 10, 2020).

Regarding the third question on which way of communication is most suitable. Three interviewees preferred face-to-face communication and three others disagreed. One interviewee claimed that neither of them is easy and justified “Some Deaf people are illiterate, which makes it hard for them to communicate through social media; and in real life, a monolingual hearing person cannot convey the exact idea through meaningless signs so the communication will be poor” (A.G, June 4, 2020). Another participant, contrastingly, asserted that communication is possible and easy in both cases because “the most important in such communication is conveying the message so both interlocutors will focus on achieving that” (T.B, June 10, 2020). However, they all agreed that the educational level of the Deaf determines the effectiveness of communication.

As for the fourth question on where are Deaf people more expressive, two interviewees stated that Deaf people are more expressive in real life without any further explanation. The others stated that social media allow them to express themselves freely as explained by R. and Z. B. (June 9, 2020) “This is because on social media, they are not embarrassed to reveal their ideas or to show who they really are, and also because they can e-meet other Deaf people from all over the world and be united”. Another participant stated, “They feel more comfortable on social networks” (T.B, June 10, 2020). However, they clarified once again that it depends as well on their academic level.

Finally, all participants revealed that they vocalize when communicating with a Deaf person. Two Deaf interviewees also recognized that they simultaneously utter some words when signing. A hearing interviewee claimed that it is a must since “Deaf people rely on lip-reading along with the signs to grasp the message, so we find ourselves ‘talking’ from time to time” (A.G, June 4, 2020).

To sum up, the answers of the interviewees were grouped in the table below to help readers detect the common answers:

Questions	Answers	Number
1	Only real-life interpreting	0
	Mostly real-life interpreting	2
	Both real-life and social media	6
2	Only to the Deaf community.	1
	To both communities	7
3	Face-to-face communication is easier.	3
	Communication on social media is easier.	3
	Neither of them	1
	Both	1
4	They are more expressive on social media.	6
	They are more expressive in real life.	2
5	Yes, I do.	8
	No, I never do.	0

Table 3.1: Common answers of the interviewees and their recurrence

1.2 Second category

The observational study on our 12 Deaf participants aimed at provoking a linguistic contact by talking to them on different social networks. Moreover, the focus was on their ways of interaction, the extent of mutual intelligibility between them and me (as a member of the Hearing community), and the strategies used to ensure a successful communication. According to the ethical principles of any scientific study, confidentiality is mandatory. Hence, I will report some passages of my conversations with the participants without revealing their identities or any personal information in the table below. Note that my messages will not be reported in this chapter because I asked the same questions to all participants (see chapter 2, p8) using simple and clear sentences.

Participant	Example (in source language)	Literal translation into English	Semantic translation
(A)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tu connais moi? 2. Ouiii je d'accord avec toi 3. Algérie 4. Toi? 5. Je suis l'université pas 6. Je suis lycée 7. Pardonnez beaucoup 8. Je oublies 9. Tu femme juste? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You knom me? 2. Yesss I okay with you 3. Algeria 4. You? 5. I am university not 6. I am high school 7. Forgive a lot 8. I forget 9. You woman right? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do we know each other? 2. Yes I agree with you 3. I am Algerian 4. What about you? 5. I am not a student at university 6. I am still in high school 7. I am so sorry 8. I forgot to do it 9. You are a woman right?
(B)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tu es la femme? 2. Quand passe tu es bac ? 3. Je me demande pour toi tu es déjà marie ou célibataire ? 4. Tu écoutes bien ? 5. Je n'écoute pas 6. Je fais messenger mes amis 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You are the woman ? 2. When pass you are bac? 3. I wonder about you you are already married or single? 4. You hear well? 5. I don't hear 6. I do messenger my friends 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are you a woman? 2. When did pass your BAC exam? 3. I wonder if you are married or single 4. Are you a hearing person? 5. I am Deaf 6. I text my friends
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Non très moyen... Mais j'écris en arabe très faible 2. Très bien le français ☺ 3. Excusez moi... Tu entends exactement ? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No very average... But I write in arabic very weak 2. Very good French 3. Excuse me... you hear exactly? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. My Arabic is very weak (to the question can you write in Arabic?) 2. But I am excellent in French

(C)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Ah oui je crois que t'es sourd 5. Tu comprends bien langue de signe Algérie ? 6. Je peux aider toi 7. Je peux donner application play store apprendre LSF 8. Non je ne travaille pas... Prochain inchallah à cause du coronavirus 9. Alors d'argent payer donne moi 😊 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Oh yes I think you are deaf 5. You understand well sign language Algeria? 6. I can to help you 7. I can give an app playstore to learn LSF 8. No I do not work... soon inshallah because of the coronavirus 9. Then of money give me 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Excuse me, are you a hearing person? 4. Oh alright, I thought you were Deaf 5. Do you master LSA? 6. I can help you 7. I will give you an app available on PlayStore to learn LSF 8. No I don't go to work currently because of the lockdown but I will go back soon if God willing 9. Then you have to pay me for that (referring to SL dictionary he sent me)
(D)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Je ne connais pas 2. Jeune bien 3. Je suis alger 4. Tu photo ? 5. Désolé pas arabe 6. Tu entendu ? 7. Pas travail 8. Je suis sourd 9. Algérie la 10. Tu fait envoyer lui voilà 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I do not know 2. Young good 3. I am algers 4. You picture ? 5. Sorry no arabic 6. You heard ? 7. No work 8. I am Deaf 9. Algeria here 10. You do send him there 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I do not know you 2. You are young, that's good 3. I am from Algiers 4. Can I see a picture of you? 5. I'm sorry I can't speak Arabic 6. Are you a hearing person? 7. I am jobless 8. You live in Algeria? 9. Just send him a message
(E)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tu es jeune c'est bien. J'ai plus âge lol 2. J'ai alle vision mostaganem trop beau 3. De rien. tu besoin aller a bejaia le quand tu m'appelle dois ok 4. T'as la lycée où l'Université ? 5. Voila merci Tu connais parle en français ?? 6. Je te demande ton copine les sourds ? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You are young that's good. I have more age lol 2. I have went sight mostaganem very beautiful 3. You are welcome. You need go to bejaia when you call me should ok 4. You have the high school or the university 5. That's it thank you you know speak in French?? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nice, you are young. I am older than you 2. I have visited Mostaganem city before, it is gorgeous 3. You are welcome. You should give me a call whenever you want to visit Bejaia, alright? 4. Do you go to high school or to university? 5. That's it thank you, do you speak French?

	7. Encore t'envoyer les signes après	6. I ask you your friend the Deaf? 7. Again to send you the signs after	6. Do you have any Deaf friends? 7. I will send you more signs later
(F)	1. Je désolé ☹ mais je écrit en arabe un peu oui 2. Alors que je besoin en arabe veux oui 3. Tu es rêve moi je femme ? 4. Mais tu es quel âge ? 5. Tu es habite où ? 6. Mais deux la maison le passé je suis la bouira changé la maison w Blida vie même	1. I sorry ☹ but I write in arabic a little yes 2. While I need in Arabic want yes 3. You dream me woman? 4. But you are what age? 5. You are live where ? 6. But two the house the past I am bouira changed the house blida live even	1. I'm sorry but my Arabic is too weak 2. Yes I need your help to learn Arabic 3. I suppose you are a woman 4. How old are you? 5. Where do you live? 6. I used to live in Bouira then we moved to Blida
(G)	1. Faire quoi? 2. Vous êtes qui? Sourde ou entendre? 3. Ne pas 4. Ne pas arabe 5. Français bien 6. Les raisons 7. Image lsf j'envoie	1. Do what? 2. Who are you? Deaf or to hear? 3. Do not 4. Do not Arabic 5. French good 6. The reasons 7. Pictures lsf I send	1. What do you do in life? 2. Are you Deaf or hearing? 3. No, I do not (to the question "do you know Oran city?) 4. I cannot speak Arabic 5. I can speak French well 6. Why did you stop learning LSA? 7. I will send you some signs in LSF
(H)	1. Merci beaucoup invitation accepté ok 2. Et l'école vous? 3. Oui coiffure homme 4. Aider travail cherche d'emploi mieux dossier vous venir 5. Tu entrée d'emploi voir parler chef de bureau compris 6. Tu veux cam demande	1. Thanks a lot request accepted ok 2. And school you? 3. Yes man hairstyle 4. To help work look of job better file you to come 5. You entry of job see talk office manager understood 6. You want cam request	1. Thank you for the friend request, I have accepted it 2. Do you go to school? 3. Yes, I am a hairdresser 4. You better submit your CV there (referring to the ANPE office), they can help you find a job 5. You need to talk to the office manager to help you do you understand? 6. Can we make a video call?

(I)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Oui je peux vous aider comment faites vous? 2. Merci je vous respecte 3. Non arabe mais j'ai appris en langue française 4. Mais j'ai beaucoup étudié le français mon seul à la maison de jour en jour avec l'aide ma famille 5. Non je suis muet et j'essaie des signes 6. Mes amis tous les sourds et les entendants 7. Merci j'aime toujours de soutenir à tous 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes I can help you how do you do? 2. Thanks I respect you 3. No Arabic but I learned in French language 4. But I studied a lot French my only at home day by day with the help my family 5. No I am 'mute' and I try signs 6. My friends all the Deaf and the hearing 7. Thanks I like always to help to all 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes, I can help you, what do you need? 2. Thank you (showing respect) 3. I don't master Arabic but I can speak French 4. But I studied French hard and learned it alone, step by step, with the help of my family 5. No I am Deaf and I use Sign Language 6. I have both Deaf and Hearing friends 7. Thank you, I am always glad to help people
(J)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Slm 2. Deaf 3. ? w 4. W 29 oui 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hi 2. Deaf 3. ? W 4. W 29 yes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hi 2. I am Deaf 3. Where do you live? 4. I am from Mascara yes
(K)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tu viode 2. Tu je viode 3. Tu viodes je oui 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You 'viode' 2. You me 'viode' 3. You 'viodes' me yes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you accept video calls? 2. Can we make a video call? 3. Do you accept video calls?
(L)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ou habité tu? 2. 27 oui 3. Je suis? 4. Sourd 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where inhabited you? 2. 27 yes 3. I am? 4. Deaf 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where do you live? 2. 27 (referring to Mostaganem) yes, I do know it 3. Do you want to know who I am? 4. I am Deaf

Table3.2 Messages from the conversations with the Deaf

The observation had two objectives: linguistic and sociological. The Deaf participants selected for this study were very friendly even after knowing that I am not a member of their community. Moreover, six of them were the ones who started the conversation because they were curious to know what I wanted from them; especially that nothing on my Facebook profile says that I am Deaf. Furthermore, after showing my interest towards SL, five among them offered me some help to learn it. They sent me videos, links, apps, pictures, and even added me on some Facebook groups created by and to the Algerian Deaf community.

In addition, some of them mention on their profiles that they belong to the Deaf community. If not, one would generally notice it via their posts. To explain more, Deaf people often share videos, news, and interpretations in SL. Some tend to go Live on Facebook to express themselves in SL. I also noticed that the Deaf community is as unified and solid on social media as in real life. That is to say, they maintain friendships with each other across all the cities of Algeria; and they gather to communicate, exchange information, and express themselves in groups devoted only to the Deaf.

2 Discussion and Analysis of Data

2.1 First category

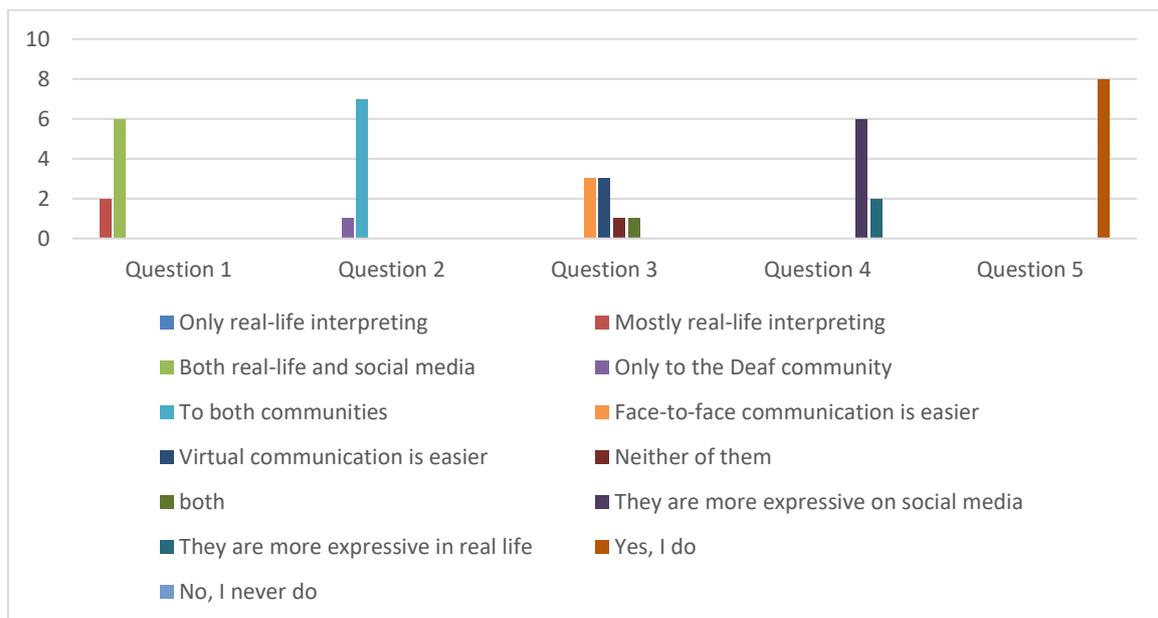


Figure3.1 interpretation of the interpreters' answers in a graph

Based on the results we gathered, we can make some genuine remarks. All the interpreters or tutors of SL interviewed in this study are aware of the possibility to practice their job on social media, and six of them already do. In addition, seven among them address both Hearing and Deaf people through their posts, videos, and interpretations. This is to normalize the use of SL on social media and to merge both communities by reducing the language barriers.

Regarding which is easier, is it almost impossible to obtain a definite answer. Three interpreters support face-to-face interaction, while three others are against because they believe that virtual interaction is more convenient. On the other hand, only one says they are both impossible if the hearing community does not master SL, while another one claims that communication is possible in both cases. These contrasts mean that the possibility of such communication depends on the interlocutors. In other words, some people (Hearing and Deaf) prefer face-to-face interaction while others are more comfortable on social networks; and in both cases, they are responsible of the strategies used to convey the intended message.

Six interpreters claim that Deaf people are more expressive on social media and two of them are opponent. This is because in real life, a Deaf person rarely maintains a discussion with a hearing one, or even expresses their ideas within the Hearing community. On social media, however, they can post, share, write, and interact with everyone. Nevertheless, the extent of communication is still limited on social media because it does not always depend on the setting but rather on the educational level of the Deaf.

Finally, all of them claim that they unintentionally vocalize while signing, even the Deaf ones, when it comes to face-to-face or video-call interaction. The vocalization often happens naturally because SL users focus on lip-reading and the signer needs to pronounce the word carefully. This shows that one of the outcomes between ASL and English 'Mouthing' does exist as well between LSA and Arabic.

2.2 Second category

Linguistically speaking, my contact with the Deaf community was not via video calls but rather through writing. All of them are French language users, even the ones who cannot form a sentence and communicate with just words or letters. Moreover, the length of our conversations depended mainly on them. In other words, I had some long conversations with many of them such as participants (C), (E), (H), and (I); on the other hand, I barely managed to understand what participant (J), (K), and (L) meant to convey even though I used the language they preferred.

Additionally, the participants with whom I had long conversations claimed that they are self-educated. They often work hard at home to learn the grammar and vocabulary of French language, but they rarely make effort to learn Arabic because it is “hard”, they declared. One common thing between them that I noticed is that they sometimes do not follow the appropriate sentence structure of the French language (SVO) apart from the common or basic expressions. For example,

1. Participant (H)

1.1 Basic expression: « Oui je suis sourd »

S
V
O

English translation: ‘Yes, I am Deaf.’

1.2 Compound sentence : « Aider travail cherche d’emploi mieux dossier vous venir »

V2
O2
O1
S1
V1

English translation: ‘You better submit your CV there; they can help you find a job.’

Figure3.2. Example of not respecting the sentence structure in a compound sentence

When answering my questions about his name, age, and so on, participant (H) did not face any difficulties making correct sentences. Then, I mentioned that I would like to find a job once I finish my studies, so he improvised and tried to be helpful. In the example above, he showed me where and how to easily find a job. In the compound sentence he used, he tends to put the object first, the subject, and the verb lastly.

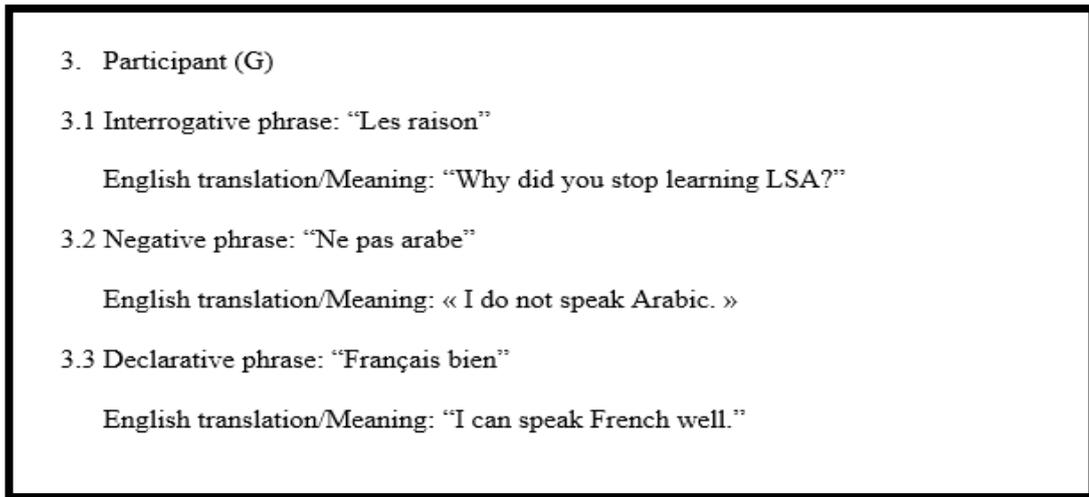


Figure3.5. Example of communicating through concepts using different forms of a phrase

The example shows three different forms of a phrase in which the participant used single words to convey different ideas. In the interrogative form, he did not use any question mark but the word “*reasons*” refers to his eagerness for an explanation. Also, in the second sentence, the negative form “*do not*” indicates a denial. Lastly, the words “*French*”, “*well*” together mean that he can speak French.

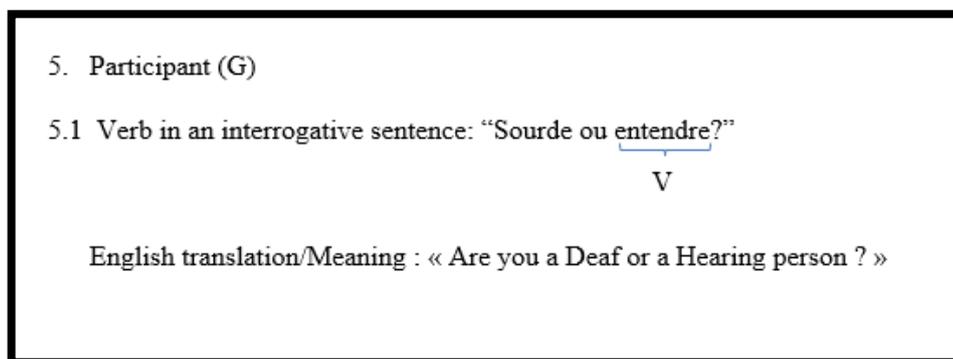


Figure3.6. Example of communicating through concepts using a bare infinitive

Participant (G) used the verb “to hear” instead of an adjective to ask me whether I was Deaf or Hearing. Again, this did not influence the meaning because it still made sense on one hand, and I was already familiar with the idea of concepts on the other hand.

According to ‘Languesignes’ (2010), a signer of LSF would describe the scene (time and setting), puts the doer next, and then states the action. That is to say, LSF is either an OSV or a free-

word order language (synthetic). By comparing this fact to our Deaf participants' messages, we can assume that they sometimes use LSF patterns when writing; or at least, they think in LSF when writing. Some of our participants, including the well-educated ones, manage to form correct sentences that are usually used in daily talk. Parallely, they still communicate using syntactically incorrect sentences. This is because they usually focus on delivering the meaning not the form. It may also involve their ignorance of the appropriate word order of sentences in French language.

The same thing applies to the use of concepts. According to Jonathan Strickland (2007), Signers do not use words but concepts, and this includes basically most, if not all, Sign Languages. That is to say, a signer and a speaker form, semantically, the same sentence in two different ways when it comes to the word order and the choice of words itself. One sign may sometimes include a whole idea, which equals in spoken language many words. This phenomenon was common among our Deaf participants. Interestingly, they communicate through concepts even when writing. For instance, "W." refers to the word 'wilaya' (city) and means 'What city are you from?' or 'What city do you live in?' and the answer they usually expect is a number (the postcode of the city), not its name. This is because as SL users, they are programmed to communicate in a particular manner (that of SL), and they hardly drop this reasoning when writing.

Another observed feature is the extent of intelligibility. In fact, the reason why some of my conversations with Deaf people were short and some were ceaseless is the mutual comprehensibility. Even though the linguistic contact occurred through writing and we communicated with the same language (French), we did not always understand each other. This is because some of them were literate and some were not. Therefore, the educational level determines the effectiveness of communication for both interlocutors. Moreover, the participants with whom I had long conversations did not necessarily receive higher education. Instead, being aware of some basic rules of grammar and the simplest vocabulary was enough for us to tackle various topics and exchange ideas. Besides,

the majority of the interpreters confirmed this and claimed that intelligibility generally depends on their academic level when it comes to communicating through writing.

3 Implications

As demonstrated above, language contact occurs on social media as naturally as in real life. Although the Deaf and Hearing communities do not share the same linguistic code, they can still communicate through the medium of social media generating some unique features. Interpreting, which is one option of arousing language contact, is commonly used on social media and dedicated in most cases to both communities because interpreters believe that SL should be learnt by all members of the society next to the Deaf ones just like the spoken language. In addition, the Deaf community is thought to be isolated and unfriendly in real life but seems to be open, expressive, and sociable on social media.

Moreover, Deaf-Hearing interaction on social media requires at least a minimal linguistic luggage by both parties. Our participants were all French language users even though they were selected randomly from different cities of Algeria. Self-education appeared essential for them to ensure successful communication with strangers on social media and for their personal needs (to understand what is posted on social media). If the interlocutors are monolinguals (master only SL or Spoken language), then communication is nearly impossible. We revealed at least one example above where the participants communicated with a single letter, number, character and I succeeded to grasp the meaning only because I was used to talking to them.

The linguistic contact that we provoked engendered some interesting outcomes. Deaf 'talk' on social media is often *topicalized* and results in *scrambling*. This is because they tend to apply SL patterns to written language (note that all the messages we analysed were in French, and this does not include other languages without evidence). It is still not known whether it is a matter of identity or it

is due to the education they received. Besides, such ‘talk’ may seem odd to a hearing person; yet, it is still understandable.

Finally, I believe the influence was mutual. To explain more, some of the participants asked for a video-call so we can communicate with SL and I clarified that I do not fully master it yet. This did not affect our conversation nor our relationship; instead, they continued to talk to me through writing even though it might not be their favourite means of communication. As for me, I found myself sometimes adapting my speech to their way of communicating unintentionally. For instance, I tried to use simple and clear sentences without any abbreviations and I avoided whatever may cause ambiguity. Furthermore, a Deaf friend (who is not part of my sample) told me that I “write exactly like Deaf people” and this made him doubt I was a Hearing person. In this regard, I strongly believe that *convergence* in these circumstances helps achieving effective communication.

Based on the analysis carried out, data collected confirm the hypotheses that I suggested. This means that indeed, Hearing and Deaf Algerian communities can and do communicate on social media. The features of such linguistic contact are different from the outcomes of the original study between English and ASL because the setting is significantly different. Also, the linguistic impact does exist but on both parties not only the Deaf community. As for the interpreters, they are completely conscious about this communication and most of them use social networks as a medium to connect both communities.

4 Limitations of the Study

The present investigation faced too many challenges. The aim at first was to replicate the study conducted in the American context following the exact methodology to obtain new results. However, things did not go as planned. The challenge, then, was to preserve the original study and to make the necessary changes in order to test it in a ‘virtual’ context. Additionally, my ignorance of the ‘culture’ of the Deaf on social media was an obstacle because it made it hard for me to find a considerable

number of participants on one hand, and to adapt myself to the alternate sample in a short period on the other hand. Lastly, it was impossible to analyse both conversations and videos of interpreters to extract the other outcomes of contact signing; hence, I focused only on my conversations with the Deaf, leaving the analysis of videos to future researchers.

5 Recommendations for Further Research

Studies in sociolinguistics that implicate the Algerian Deaf community can be counted on fingers. This field of study lacks a lot of empirical research. In this regard, future researchers have limitless choices and questions to answer. However, if one needs a stepping-stone to pursue this specific path, the study of language contact, until now, has not been replicated in real life and this should be done once the circumstances are suitable. Moreover, another research question might rise to investigate the outcomes of language contact within the Deaf community involving more than one SL. Furthermore, Deaf 'talk' on social media needs a wider and a deeper analysis from a pragmatic, semantic, and a syntactic perspective. Finally, linguistic variety within the Deaf community is an interesting and fresh topic to deal with in the Algerian context

Conclusion

This chapter showed that communication between the two communities is possible through the medium of writing. Moreover, this communication has some specific features that are mentioned above. Unfortunately, the participants were not numerous enough to generalize the features to all the Deaf community; nevertheless, they were from different regions of Algeria and they received education in different institutions, which follow different strategies of teaching supposedly. Furthermore, we revealed the importance of interpreting on social media especially that it aims to eliminate the linguistic barriers that are faced in real life between the Hearing and Deaf communities. The results also showed the possibility of convergence while interacting in order to avoid miscommunication.

General conclusion

The present investigation aimed to shed light on the linguistic situation of the Deaf community in Algeria by providing future researchers with a starting point in this particular scope of study. This contribution to the field lies in raising awareness of the linguistic phenomenon of language contact between the Hearing and Deaf communities via a unique channel: social networks, along with highlighting some of its features. Moreover, this study is a replication of Lucas and Valli's research and can capture as well the attention of interpreters of SL and sensitize them to their ability to connect both communities on social media.

Throughout this study, we made sure to give a clear background on language in two different forms: Oral and Signed. We also raised the phenomenon of language contact to put the reader in context. Then, we provided a detailed methodology of data gathering and analysis in order to ensure a reliable evaluation by the end. Finally, the results showed some exceptional features of Deaf 'talk' on social media.

Data showed that Algerian Deaf people (or at least the ones we spoke to) use Sign Language grammar even when writing. This includes communication through concepts and a frequent, incorrect word order. In other words, our participants often used *topicalization* through writing, which resulted in *scrambling*. This was with regard to the ones who already received schooling; but the ones who did not cannot communicate at all (unless they use visual communication and express themselves in SL). It can be concluded that the probability of such linguistic contact depends on the educational level of both interlocutors. Lastly, our conversations engendered a *convergence* by both parties to maintain a successful communication.

Findings validate the hypotheses provided at the beginning of the study. It is assumed now that the linguistic contact between Deaf and Hearing communities in Algeria occurs on social media and engenders some unique features listed above. While both communities interact, they tend to influence

each other's use of language leading to a linguistic accommodation that results in a convergence. Also, interpreters and tutors of SL often use social networks to practice their work and aim to reduce language barriers between both communities via social media.

The area of Sign language contact still needs to be investigated in this specific context. This study is but an aperture into Sign language contact in Algeria. Future researchers can uncover the outcomes of language contact between Deaf and Hearing communities in face-to-face interactions as well as the effectiveness of these 'strategies'. Not only that, but a researcher might also investigate the situation of the main factor that determines the success of such linguistic contact: the education that Algerian Deaf people receive (considering different regions) and to what extent it is beneficial.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview questions

Question 1: Is your job as an interpreter restricted to real life situations only? If no, how is it done via social media?

Question 2: Is your target group the Deaf community or the Hearing one?

Question 3: Do you think such communication is easier than real life interaction between both communities (especially monolinguals)?

Question 4: Do you think Deaf people are more expressive on social media than in real life?

Question 5: Do you find yourself speaking audibly while talking or interpreting to a Deaf person?

Appendix 2: Narrative used in Bruce A. Sofinski's study

How I Met My Husband

I grew up in Pennsylvania. I went to school in Mt. Airy, which is an eastern suburb of Philadelphia. I grew up there, and that's where I met Wren. He went to the same school. That's how we met when Wren was a senior and I was a freshman! We met and then we went steady for a while. Then, he graduated and I stayed at the school until my graduation in 1957. It's really funny that we met there, because Wren was born here, in Richmond, Virginia, but his parents sent him to the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (PSD). So, that's why we got the chance to meet at school. After one year at PSD, Wren's parents looked into transferring him to the Clarke oral school in Massachusetts. They went on site to the Clarke school grounds and met with either the principal or superintendent of the school only to find out that he could not attend Clarke because he already knew how to sign. At the Clarke school there was strict enforcement of the oral-only approach. His parents were very upset at these developments, but it didn't bother Wren. He said he was happy at our school because we had vocational opportunities and sports teams in which he could participate, whereas the Clarke school didn't have these extracurricular opportunities. They focused solely on academics, and that's just not right! So, he preferred to stay at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf until his graduation in 1954. I graduated in 1957. So how did we end up together? He told me, "you date and go with other boys because you're still young," but I liked him better. I knew that he was the one for me! Eventually we got married and moved to Richmond.