

Author's Response to Prof. István Csernicsekó

Dissertation's title:

Language Maintenance and Language Shift among Algerian Arabic Speakers in France

First, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. István Csernicsekó for the time and effort invested in reviewing my dissertation, and I find myself truly humbled by the depth of insight put in this process. The reviewer provided a highly positive and detailed evaluation by addressing every aspect of the dissertation. Such comprehensive feedback does not only validate the seriousness of my research, but also offers constructive feedback that would undoubtedly help me grow as an independent researcher. For all this, I am deeply grateful.

I am very pleased that the reviewer has recognized the novelty and contribution of my dissertation to the field of language maintenance and shift, particularly given the lack of research on the linguistic practices of Algerians in France. The Algerian community in France is sociolinguistically unique. Unlike many other immigrant groups, Algerians are familiar with the host country's language and culture prior migration, and this was in fact my main motivation for undertaking such research in the first place. I am glad that the reviewer appreciated the research design and analytical depth of my dissertation. He also considered adopting a mixed-methods approach to be appropriate for addressing the research questions, allowing for drawing rich and reliable conclusions that would advance our overall understanding of heritage language dynamics. I am also grateful for the reviewer's positive feedback concerning the theoretical engagement, structure, format, and Academic writing style of my dissertation.

It is well recognized that no research is entirely free of limitations, and my dissertation is no exception. I have sought to identify and acknowledge these limitations in the final chapter of the dissertation. I fully understand that the reviewer's comments and observations were not intended to undermine the quality of the work, but rather to draw my attention to areas where the study could be further refined in order to strengthen my future research. In what follows, I will address some concerns raised by the reviewer and clarify how these were considered within the scope of the study.

I totally agree with the reviewer that using the snowball sampling technique resulted in an uneven number of participants across the three generations, with the first generation being more strongly represented than the second and the third. It is well documented in sociolinguistic research that representative sampling requires reliable demographic knowledge of the entire population under study, including its generational distribution, gender balance, and socioeconomic background (Milroy & Gordon, 2003). In the case of Algerians in France, no official census data exist on ethnic backgrounds and no conclusive figures are available on the

distribution of Algerians across generations, which make it impossible to have a representative sample (see p. 12 of the dissertation). The use of probability-based sampling methods like random sampling was also not a feasible option due to Algerians' reluctance to partake in either the online or the pen-and-paper questionnaire. The snowball sampling remained the most viable and effective strategy in the present context, allowing for accumulating more data from all three generations.

It is important to note that the imbalance between generations in number reflects, in part, the demographic reality of Algerians in France. Second- and third-generation Algerians in France are much fewer than the first generation, and migration patterns continue to reinforce this fact. It is true that comparisons between the three generations in the present study would have been more reliable if each group had included the same number of participants. However, to minimize the impact of such imbalance on the validity of generational comparisons, I opted for non-parametric statistical tests that are robust to unequal group sizes. Particularly, I used Kruskal-Wallis H test for overall generation comparisons and Mann-Whitney U tests for post-hoc pairwise comparisons. To further ensure the validity of the comparisons, I applied Bonferroni corrections to reduce the risk of error when conducting multiple comparisons. While this methodological constraint was explicitly acknowledged in the limitations section of the dissertation, I fully agree with the reviewer that future research should place greater emphasis on the second and third generations, given that more balanced samples would allow for stronger intergenerational comparisons and more nuanced insights into language maintenance and shift among Algerians in France. The use of targeted recruitment strategies, such as collaboration with community associations, schools, and youth networks, could help decrease the generational imbalance observed in the present investigation.

I appreciate the reviewer's observation regarding the self-reported nature of the quantitative data. While it is true that participants' assessments of their proficiency levels, language use, and attitudes can be subjective, self-report questionnaires are widely accepted in large-scale sociolinguistic research and were well-suited to the aims and scope of this study. Incorporating objective measures, as was recommended by Prof. Csernicskó, would indeed provide additional rigor; however, both the reviewer and I agree that such measures were beyond the practical scope of this project. I carefully addressed potential limitations by cross-validating self-reports with interview data, which helped ensure the reliability and richness of the findings.

I would like to thank the reviewer for paying close attention to the incomplete exploration of code-switching in my dissertation. Indeed, my initial intention was to examine code-switching quantitatively, since some earlier studies suggest it may significantly contribute to language shift (e.g. Nor Hisham, 1994). However, in practice, the data collected in this section were not sufficient for a meaningful statistical analysis. Besides, the main focus of my dissertation was on broader patterns of language maintenance and shift and I already had rich data to address the main research questions. In response, I decided to leave this part. I am fully aware that a more detailed analysis of code-switching would have been valuable had sufficient data been available. For this particular reason, I explicitly acknowledged this as a limitation in the dissertation and suggested it as an avenue for future research (see p. 99 of the dissertation).

The reviewer also raised an important concern regarding the categorization of participants into different generations, suggesting that the classification was too clear-cut and did not sufficiently consider factors such as the age of arrival in France. I would like to clarify that the study did explicitly account for these factors. I am fully aware that the classification of generations - particularly the second generation - is a complex and debated topic in both migration studies and sociolinguistics. In general, among social scientists, the term 'second-generation' does not only refer to children born in the host country to foreign-born parents but also to children who emigrated with their parents at a very early age (typically before formal schooling), because according to Rumbaut (2004), these children were as much socialized in the host country as those who were born there. I made this explicit in my dissertation taking both the participants' age of arrival to the host country and their country of birth as criteria for classification (see Appendix A. 1). I considered:

- First generation as individuals born in Algeria who immigrated to France after the age of six.
- Second generation as both (1) individuals born in France to at least one Algerian immigrant parent, and (2) those born in Algeria but immigrated to France before the age of six.
- Third generation as individuals born in France to at least one second-generation parent.

This ensured that the distinctions between the first, second, and third generations were applied consistently, while still recognizing the variability introduced by migration differences.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Prof. István Cserniczkó for his thorough review. His evaluation highlights the significance of my work and will undoubtedly guide my future research endeavours. The reviewer's engagement with my dissertation has greatly contributed to its academic quality, and I sincerely appreciate that.

References

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- Rumbaut, R. G. (2004). Ages, life stages, and generational cohorts: Decomposing the immigrant first and second generations in the United States. *International Migration Review*, 38(3), 1160–1205.

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