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**Current Sociolinguistic Issues in Malian Context: Future  
of Bambara and French**

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I, Marka DEMBELE, hereby declare that this thesis entitled " The Sociolinguistic Issue in the Malian context: the future of Bambara and French" and submitted for the fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master is entirely my original work. I have appropriately acknowledged all the sources of information and ideas used in this thesis.

### **Dedication:**

I would love to dedicate this work to my beloved parents, Dad and Mom Sakary DEMBELE and Awa THERA for their support throughout all my studies. Thank you, Dad, and thank you, Mom, for believing in me and supporting me in the choice of my field.

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## Abstract

This sociolinguistic research focused on the changing language dynamics in Malian society, particularly regarding Bambara and French. The study examined the context surrounding Bambara's status as an official language in Mali, alongside other national languages, while French remained the language of work. The research explored the current diglossia state between Bambara and French, investigated Malians' attitudes and perceptions towards both languages, and examined language planning and potential outcomes of the new constitution's language provisions. Additionally, the study identified the optimal language choice for formal education to improve educational outcomes. The findings supported the hypothesis that Bambara's prestige has increased compared to French due to historical linguistic imperialism and negative perceptions of French as a tool of domination. However, contrary to predictions of complete substitution, the findings suggest a bilingual education system where both French and Bambara coexist as languages of instruction. Overall, this research provided insights into the sociolinguistic situation in Mali, including language choices in education and the future of Bambara and French in the country.

**Keywords:** *Mali, Bambara, French, diglossia, education.*

## Résumé

This sociolinguistic research focuses on the evolving linguistic dynamics in Malian society, particularly with regard to Bambara and French. The study examines the context surrounding the elevation of Bambara to official language status in Mali, along with other national languages, while maintaining French as the working language. The research analyzes the current state of diglossia between Bambara and French, studies the attitudes and perceptions of Malians towards the two languages. It also explores language planning and the potential outcomes of the language provisions of the new constitution. Additionally, the study identifies the optimal choice of language for formal education to improve academic outcomes. The research results support the hypothesis that the prestige of Bambara has increased relative to French, due to historical linguistic imperialism and negative perceptions of French as a tool of domination. However, contrary to the full substitution prediction, the results suggest a bilingual education system where French and

Bambara coexist as languages of instruction. In summary, this research sheds light on the sociolinguistic situation in Mali, provides insight into language choices in education and the future of Bambara and French in the country.

**Mots-clés :** Mali, Bambara, Français, diglossie, éducation.

### ملخص

تركزت هذه الدراسة السوسiolسانية على تغيرات ديناميكية اللغة في الم جتمع المالي، وتحديدًا فيما يتعلق بالبنبارا والفرنسية. الدراسة السياق المحيط بوضع البنبارا كلغة رسمية في مالي، ج الوطنية الأخرى، بينما استمرت الفرنسية كلغة العمل. استكشفت البحث الحالة الحالية للثنائية اللغوية بين البنبارا والفر الماليين تجاه اللغتين، وناقش التخطيط اللغوي والنتائج المحتملة لأحكام اللغة في دستور جديد. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، حددت الدراسة اللغة المناسبة للتعليم الرسمي لتحسن بين النتائج التعليمية. أيدت النتائج الفرضية التي تشير إلى أن شهرة البنبارا قد زادت مقارنة بالفرنسية نتيجة للاستعمار اللغوي التاريخي والتصورات السلبية للفرنسية كأداة للهيمنة. وعلى الرغم من التوقعات بالاستبدال الكامل تشير النتائج إلى وجود نظام تعليم ثنائي اللغة حيث يتعايش الفرنسية بين للتدريس بشكل عام، تقدم هذه الدراسة نظرة ، على الوضع ساني في مالي، بم ا في ذلك اختيارات اللغة في التعليم ومستقبل البنبارا والفرنسية في ال بلاد.

.الكلمات الرئيسية: مالي، البنبارا، الفرنسية، الثنائية اللغوية، ال تعليم

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Language as a social phenomenon is the primary tool that brings together individuals to constitute a society: “Language presents the foundation of human socialization” (Kovacevic, Spetic, Pleslic, 2018, p.174). the topic of language use cannot be addressed without introducing the field of sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics is concerned with the sociological aspects of language immersed in the 1960s, partly as a reaction to Chomsky’s autonomous linguistics that thus led us to sociolinguistics (Cambridge University Press, 2001). According to Spolsky (2010), sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and society, of language variation and attitudes about language. Sociolinguistics studies the social factors that influence language use in the community, including gender, age, social class, etc (Hudson1996). Certain functions of language use within a community are in fact of a political decision; for instance, the choice of the language of instruction. However, the influence of those social factors on language results in some issues in sociolinguistics primarily due to language planning in contexts of bilingualism and diglossia which will be discussed in this study in relation to the case of Mali.

The literature and philosophy of a given country are often composed in that country's native language. However, in multi-ethnic countries where the ethics are of different origins or roots as part of a historical empire, much of the country's literature and philosophy may be imported like the case of Mali, known as a multilingual and multicultural country with more than 70 languages, among which 13 have been recognized as national languages (not standardized), Bambara<sup>1</sup> being a vernacular and French the only official language.

With all this diversity of languages and cultures, Malian society has always been facing a lot of issues, the most recent of which is concerned with the future of Bambara and French. In fact, following the recent political conflict between Mali and France. As a

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<sup>1</sup> Bambara is a Mande language from the Niger-Congo phylum (Minkailou, 2017).

matter of fact, the question of giving more value to the national languages has been brought up on the surface with the preliminary draft of the new Constitution: “l’avant-projet de la nouvelle Constitution” (Kane, 2022). This draft project includes the idea of advancing Bambara as an official language in Mali as well as some other national languages and French as the language of work (Article 31, new Constitution). In fact, the tension between Mali and France started after the overthrowing of the current interim president Colonel Assimi Goita elected President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita on August 18, 2020, by the. Thus, following the breaking of the biggest military collaboration “Barkhan” between Mali and France officially announced by the president of the Republic of Mali on August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022, and officially announced by the president of the Republic of France on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022 (Le Monde, 2022), some linguists brought up to the surface the proposal of advancing Bambara to become the official language of education in Mali. According to Professor Abou Diarra, a Malian linguist at the University of Bamako, it is necessary to have nearby French, the official language our national languages too, and this will not cause any developmental issues (Kane, 2022).

However, the matter remains a subject of debate because of the opposition. According to Amadou Sangha, it will still be dangerous to change the school program because of the issue of regional and international competitiveness (Kane, 2022). Nevertheless, the majority of the population seems to deny the prestige of the French, giving space to Bambara. According to Fishman (1967) two genetically unrelated languages can co-exist in an extended diglossia situation within a speech community where the one considered as high is used in religious, educational, literacy, and other such prestigious domains while the low is a vernacular used in informal, primarily spoken domains. Thus, before, French was considered by the majority of the society as ‘High’; a prestigious language in the society compared to Bambara and the other national languages. Being the official language of Mali and the language of the colonizer, French remains the language used in education, in administrations, and written on official documents. On the other hand, Bambara as the vernacular language of Mali spoken in most of the country and

used by 4/5 of the population (World Factbook, 2009) was considered as ‘Low’ compared to French. This proposal was rapidly spread on Malian social media and has become a subject of debate between linguists and intellectuals of the country and media. Accordingly, the future of Bambara and French is currently at stake.

This research is an attempt to explore the current sociolinguistic situation in the Malian context, bringing out some aspects of the Malian education system; to explore the development of the Malian education system through the language choices in the educational setting through the use of national languages in the new education system; that thus will provide an assumption of the future of Bambara and French in Mali. This, therefore, leads us to set up the following goals: investigating the current diglossia state of Bambara and French in the Malian context by determining the attitudes and conceptions of Malians about French, Bambara, and the other national languages; determining the new language planning and the outcomes of the project of the new constitution; identifying the right choice of language to be introduced in formal education for better results. Consequently, we strive to answer the following questions:

1. Has the diglossia situation between French and Bambara changed in terms of prestige in Malian society?
2. Does the decline of French prestige in Malian society affect its position as the language of instruction in the education system?
3. Can Bambara be implemented as a language of formal instruction in Mali?

The above questions lead to the formulation of the three following hypotheses:

1. The diglossia situation between French and Bambara got reversed in a way that Bambara became more prestigious than French, which led to the proposal of its introduction as the language of formal instruction.

2. The negative shift of the prestige of French in Malian society can lead to its decline as the language of instruction, and thus to its replacement by Bambara which is highly solicited.

3. Bambara can be introduced as the language of formal instruction in Mali by creating a new education system that excludes French; developing and equipping Bambara to be able to substitute French in the formal education setting.

To achieve the set objectives mentioned above, an exploratory case study to will be designed to approach the issue. This case study will collect quantitative data using a questionnaire addressed to Malian students and teachers in Mali and Algeria, and qualitative data using a semi-structured interview with Malian teachers. The results will be analyzed and reported based on a mixed approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods.

To carry out this case study, the present work is purposefully divided into two chapters. The first chapter gives an overview of the literature review about language planning, bilingualism, and diglossia linked with the sociolinguistic situation in Mali. It will attempt to provide an understanding of the language and the sociolinguistic situation of Mali since its independence, reviewing the historical backgrounds, the language planning and policy, the education of Mali, the bilingual state of French and Bambara, and the diglossic situation. The second chapter reports the detailed research methodology of the data collection and analysis, the interpretation, and the discussion of the results seeking answers to the research questions by confirming or disconfirming the hypotheses.

## **CHAPTER 1: Sociolinguistic Concepts and Linguistic Situation in Mali**

### **1.1. Introduction**

Mali is a landlocked nation in West Africa, located in the southwest of Algeria, extending southwest from the southern Sahara Desert through the Sahel to the Sudanian savanna zone. Mali's size is 1 240 238 square kilometers; thus, Mali is one of the largest countries in Africa and the 24th biggest in the world (World data info). The population is estimated at 21,726,000 inhabitants in 2022, of which 50.4% are women and more than 60% are aged under 25 and those under 15 represent 45.4% of the total population in 2022 (OCHA, 2023). Mali is bordered by seven countries: Algeria to the north, Niger to the east, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire to the south, Guinea to the southwest, Senegal to the west, and Mauritania to the northwest. The country is crossed by the Niger River, which is the main source of water for the population and agriculture. The capital of Mali is Bamako, located in the southwestern part of the country. In Mali, as in all equatorial countries, there is a tropical climate. Depending on the season, the average daytime temperatures range between 32 and 41 degrees. In some parts of the country, the temperature rises to 44 °C. In the colder months, depending on the region, the temperature can drop to 16 °C on a month's average (World data info). Mali is part of the African Union, the Non-Aligned Movement, OIC - Organization of Islamic Cooperation, United Nations (UN), UNESCO, World Trade Organization (WTO), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (COMESSA), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Economic and Monetary Community of West Africa (UEMOA) (World data info). The most dominant religion is Islam with about 94% of the population. Nowadays, the country is divided administratively as follows: the collectivity of Bamako, 19 regions, 156 circles, 466 districts, 819 communes, and 12,712 villages (Mohamed Dagnoko, 2023).



Figure 1.1 Map of Mali with the 19 regions and the capital city.

[http://aivmcoopdec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/carte\\_mali.jpg](http://aivmcoopdec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/carte_mali.jpg)

## 1.2. Historical Background

Mali has a rich history, emerging from the Mali Empire which was the first major Muslim kingdom in the Sudan region. The empire's cultural, linguistic, and religious influence was significant in West Africa. Before the late 19th century, much of the Sahel region, including Mali, was under French colonial rule known as French Sudan. The colonizers imposed their laws, their administration, their educational system, and their language. Bamako became the capital in 1900, and the borders of French Sudan were established in 1947. In 1960, after almost 80 years of colonization, Mali declared itself an independent republic and adopted the name of the former empire, with Modibo Keita as its leader. Despite the French colonial influences, Mali remains largely attached to its traditions and languages.

### **1.2.1. Bambara and French**

Bambara is a Mading language from the Niger-Congo family (including Bambara, Malinké, Dioula, and Khassonké) that has spread and influenced French-speaking West Africa. Manding languages were already used in the Mali Empire until the time of colonization. For historical, political, economic, administrative, and military reasons, Manding languages were among the most important languages in West Africa at that time (Maurice Delafosse cited in Dumestre 2003: 7). Bambara also played a special role during French colonization as a means of communication between French and non-French-speaking Africans, especially in the army. Bambara was the command language of West African military troops (Cannut 1996). As previously mentioned, Mali is one of the few francophones sub-Saharan African countries with an indigenous language spoken by the majority of the population. As a vehicular language, Bambara is mastered by 80% of Malians (Chaudenson and Rakotomalala 2004). Bambara is spoken throughout the country but dominates mainly in the south. The Bambara language dominates in the capital, but it is also growing in importance throughout Mali and gaining more and more national importance. Being considered the second language of power in the country, Bambara is increasingly used in the management of political and judicial affairs, and political statements are often made in Bambara alongside French to reach a larger part of the population. Among the indigenous languages, it is the most used in the media, education, and literacy programs. In Mali, the importance of Bambara continues to grow: today's infrastructure allows for more and more travel and migration is increasing towards Bamako. Dominant in the capital, Bambara is used as a means of interethnic communication in other cities as well. In Skattum (2008: 107), we see that Bambara is also gaining ground, even in the field of writing. We can find publications in this language, such as a monthly rural press of 12 pages (Kibaru), scientific popularization brochures in the fields of health, agriculture, and technology, a quarterly scientific popularization magazine, another quarterly magazine with humorous content featuring comics, and textbooks in



various disciplines: morality, grammar, history, geography, physical and natural sciences (Cannut, 1996).

Regarding French, it has been the official language of the country since independence in 1960 and is privileged by the constitution on a national level. French is almost the only language used in writing in the national administration, it dominates political, administrative, and legal life, and it is the main language of instruction. Internationally, French serves as the main language of communication, both with other former Francophone colonies and with the West. French is not a first language acquired in Mali, and thus very few Malians speak this language: only between 5 and 10% (Skattum 2008). This low rate of Malian speakers of French is because there is Bambara, a dominant indigenous vehicular language in the country, mastered by the majority of the population (Beniamino, 1997). Only a minority elite has the possibility, through their mastery of French, to participate in the political life and administrative management of the country, which represents a democratic problem (Manessy, 1994). Mastery of French or lack of it corresponds to a distinction between more or less elevated social classes, where francophones are favored. French generally benefits from positive representations linked to its high status, being considered the language of social progress and emancipation.

From 1960-1961, a demographic survey was conducted on the knowledge of French in Mali by the Institute for Research on the Future of French (IRAF). The survey, conducted by sampling, covered the entire territory and population, except for the area belonging to the Office du Niger, which includes about 30,000 people, and the nomadic tribes that are difficult to access, representing approximately 200,000 people. The extrapolated results of the survey apply to a population of 3.5 million inhabitants, with the total population being around 3.7 million. These results revealed a very low diffusion of French among the Malian population. At the time of independence, the diffusion of French among the Malian population was as follows: only 4.6%, or 105,000 people out of a total of nearly 2.3 million, had some knowledge of French, more often written than spoken according to the unverified statements of the people surveyed. This survey also reveals that, depending on the sector

of residence, only 8.2% of men and 1.2% of women are francophone in rural areas, while in the urban population, nearly a quarter of the population knows French compared to less than 2% of the rural population. However, those over 40 years old have only an oral knowledge of the language, and among them, more of them understand French without even being able to speak it, unlike those under 40 who mostly have only written knowledge. In conclusion, only 1% of the population can read and write French, compared to 16.5% of the urban population, thus, the overall literacy rate of the population remains limited to a little less than 3%. The enrollment rate in primary education in Mali was only 7% in 1960 (BLONDE, 1979). However, it is noted that over time, according to more recent research, the data has changed significantly regarding the diffusion of French throughout the territory.

### **1.2.2. Linguistic imperialism: Dominance, Power, and Language**

Linguistic imperialism refers to the dominance and imposition of one language over others, often driven by political, economic, and cultural factors. It reflects a power dynamic in which certain languages, typically those of economically and politically influential nations, exert influence and suppress the development and use of other languages. This essay aims to explore the concept of linguistic imperialism and its implications, drawing upon scholarly perspectives and research.

The history of linguistic imperialism can be traced back to the colonial era when European powers expanded their empires and imposed their languages on colonized territories (Phillipson, 1992). The spread of languages such as English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese served as tools of control and domination, leading to the marginalization and even extinction of indigenous languages (Pennycook, 1998). Likewise, linguistic imperialism in Mali finds its roots in the country's colonial history. As a former French colony, the imposition of the French language served as a tool for control and assimilation during the colonial era (Bambara, 2012). The education system, governance, and economic structures were all designed around the French language, reinforcing its position of dominance and marginalizing local languages (Diallo, 2010). The dominance of French

has marginalized these local languages, leading to a decline in their use and endangering their survival (Diallo, 2015). Indigenous languages such as Bambara, Soninke, and Dogon are often relegated to informal contexts, limiting their use in education, media, and public discourse (Toure, 2012).

### **Economic Factors:**

Economic globalization and the rise of multinational corporations have further reinforced linguistic imperialism. English, in particular, has become the de facto global language of commerce, science, and technology (Crystal, 2003). This dominance has been perpetuated by the economic power of English-speaking nations and the necessity for individuals and countries to participate in the global economy (Phillipson, 2003).

Cultural imperialism plays a significant role in linguistic imperialism. The dominance of certain languages is often associated with the promotion of specific cultural values, norms, and ideologies (Kachru, 1992). For instance, the spread of English has been linked to the dissemination of Western cultural products, such as films, music, and literature, which can lead to the erosion of local cultural identities (Pennycook, 2007). Linguistic imperialism in Mali has had profound cultural implications. Local languages are carriers of unique cultural knowledge, expressions, and identities (Igboanusi, 2018). The marginalization of these languages contributes to the erosion of cultural heritage and weakens the connection between language and cultural identity (Toure, 2016). Additionally, the dominance of French in media and literature further perpetuates the influence of Western cultural values, often overshadowing local traditions and artistic expressions (Shibamoto-Smith, 2014).

Education policies and language planning decisions can also contribute to linguistic imperialism. The prioritization of certain languages in educational systems can marginalize indigenous languages and perpetuate social inequalities (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995). English-medium education, for example, is often seen as a gateway to economic opportunities, creating a demand for English language proficiency and reinforcing

linguistic hierarchies (Canagarajah, 2005). Language policies in Mali have perpetuated linguistic imperialism. French is the official language of government, administration, and education (Stevens, 2019). This preference for French in educational institutions has resulted in limited access to education for those who do not have proficiency in the language, particularly in rural areas where local languages are favorably spoken (Shibamoto-Smith, 2014). As a consequence, this linguistic hierarchy has hindered educational opportunities and contributed to social inequalities. However, linguistic imperialism is not without resistance. Language revitalization movements have emerged worldwide, seeking to preserve and promote indigenous languages (Hornberger & King, 2008). Additionally, scholars have emphasized the importance of linguistic diversity and the rights of individuals to use their native languages (May 2014). Efforts such as bilingual education programs and the promotion of multilingualism can challenge linguistic imperialism and foster linguistic justice.

In addition to the historical review of colonialism, we realize that the French colonialists imposed their language on the colonized population in Mali in many ways, and one of them was schooling (Lavoie, 2008). If the French, considered as high, has this prestige and these functions, it is for historical and sociological reasons relating to the form of power, and the organization of the society. (Calvet, 1987). To reinforce the use of French in the colonies, especially in school, many kinds of punishment were imposed on those who spoke another language at school than French. In Burkina Faso for instance, French colonialists used the symbolic punishment of tying a wooden stick, dry monkey head, or seashell around the neck of students who were caught talking in their mother tongue to reinforce the superiority of the French language (Lavoie, 2008, p. 662). Likewise, a system existed in Malian at that time (still in existence in some schools) whereby a symbol is given to the pupils who express themselves in Bambara or another language different from French (all languages except the national languages of Mali) at school; and sometimes those students are called to pay an amount of money or are punished by the teachers. Thus, a mentality was perceived that speaking your first language or even furthermore practicing

your culture is a sign of ‘inferiority’ or ‘being uncivilized’. This led to the loss of a lot of Malian traditions and cultural practices that are now unknown to the new generations. Moreover, even parents lead and encourage their children to learn and speak more foreign languages, which is for them a means of being educated. However, reversing this ideology is the main goal of many patriots today.

### **1.2.3. Education**

The coexistence of nearly 14 languages officially recognized by the Malian government makes it a multilingual state where one language, Bambara, appears as the national language of communication, spoken by approximately 80% of the population. Bambara and other national languages are used for literacy, but French, the official language, holds a monopoly on education, even though it only accounts for 5 to 10% of the population (Skattum, 2008, p.99), except for Quranic schools that operate in Arabic and some experimental classes using one of the following 4 national languages from the early years of schooling: Bambara, Fulani, Songhai, Tamasheq (BLONDE, 1979). The education system in Mali, like other French-speaking West African countries, is divided into three main phases: primary education, secondary education, and higher education using French as the language of instruction.

#### **Primary Education:**

Primary education consists of a first cycle (premier cycle) corresponding to the first 6 years of education which ends with a certificate of completion of the first cycle (CFEPC) that no longer exists, and a second cycle of 3 years culminating in the diploma of primary education called DEF (diplôme de l'enseignement fondamental). At the end of these studies, a national commission examines the files of students admitted to DEF and guides them in the various streams of secondary education, also known as high school.

#### **Secondary Education:**

This is divided into several streams, including general secondary education, which lasts for 3 years and culminates in the baccalaureate examination; technical secondary

education, also lasting 3 years, culminating in the technical baccalaureate; short technical and vocational education, lasting two years, leading to a professional certificate called CAP (Certificat d'aptitude professionnel); medium technical and vocational education, lasting 4 years, leading to various technician diplomas. At this level, there exists the Pedagogical Institutes of General Education (Instituts pédagogiques d'enseignement general: IPEG) which recruit future teachers of the first fundamental cycle that they train in two years after DEF; Secondary Normal Schools (les Ecoles Normales secondaires : E.N. Sec.) recruiting future teachers of the second fundamental cycle but for a 4-year training; the Normal School of Feminine Technical Education (; l'Ecole Normale d'enseignement technique féminin: ENETF); the National Institute of Arts (; L'Institut national des arts: INA) and the National Institute of Sports (L'Institut national des sports: INS), which also train for 4 years after DEF.

### **Higher Education:**

Education in Mali is more or less oriented towards vocational training, as there are many vocational schools in higher education but few normal universities. Among the schools in higher education, we have: the Higher Normal School (l'Ecole normale supérieure : E.N.Sup), the first institution of higher education responsible for public secondary school teachers for a duration of 4 years after the baccalaureate; the National School of Administration ; (l'Ecole nationale d'administration : E.N.A.), open to competition to baccalaureate holders and civil servants in service for a training duration of 4 years in the senior positions of administration, economy, and the judiciary; the National School of Engineers (l'Ecole nationale d'ingénieurs : E.N.I.), also open to competition for baccalaureate holders and civil servants for a training duration of 4 years; the Rural Polytechnic Institute (l'Institut polytechnique rural : I.P.R.); the School of Practical Higher Studies (l'Institut polytechnique rural : E.H.E.P.); the Higher Pedagogical Center (le Centre pédagogique supérieur : C.P.S.); the Institute of Productivity and Predictive Management (;l'Institut de productivité et de gestion prévisionnelle : I.P.G.P.); etc.

### **1.2.3.1. French in education**

According to surveys conducted by the Institute for the Future of the French Language (IRAF: L'Institut de Recherches sur l'Avenir du Français) (BLONDE, 1979), the internal performance of education in Mali is particularly low for the first cycle of basic education. From 1977 to 1981, it was estimated that 28% of students in the first to sixth grades repeated each year, and 10% dropped out of school from the first to fifth grade. Nearly 35% of children who enter school never reach the fourth year, which is considered the basis for sustainable literacy in the current system. More than half (approximately 53%) do not reach the sixth year, and of the 47% who do, only 9% do so without repeating a grade, while 38% do so after one or more repetitions. The number of years required for a student to reach the sixth year is 12.4 years per student instead of the theoretical six years, resulting in a coefficient increase in the unit cost of 2.1. Approximately 53% of children who do not complete the cycle spend an average of four years in school. p.50-51). Primary education is the foundation for better education at higher levels.

The low performance of education in Mali, as well as in many African countries, has several causes, such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teacher training, inappropriate programs, and students' linguistic difficulties. Referring to the latter, the fact that French is used as the medium of instruction for school subjects mainly increases the difficulty of understanding and assimilating courses by students. Thus, several end-of-study theses in psych pedagogy supported at the "Ecole Normale Supérieure" in Bamako (ENSUP) highlight the difficulties encountered by children in mathematics, mainly due to linguistic problems in French (BLONDE, 1979. p. 56). For example, an eight-year-old child who can count money and many other things in his or her mother tongue may encounter difficulties in school with addition and subtraction calculations simply because the language used is unfamiliar. Therefore, the problems of repeating, dropping out, and low levels of students at the basic level are mainly linguistic. Given all these problems, progress has been made since 1979 to enable the main Malian languages to quickly access the status of a teaching language, at least for the first years of schooling.

### **1.2.3.2. National languages in education**

In the 1962 education reform (Skattum, 2010), ideas had already been put in place to introduce national languages in Malian education, but it was not until October 1979, following the recommendations of the Second National Education Seminar in 1978, that four Bambara experimental schools were opened (Skattum, 2010). Two other education systems have been developed subsequently, namely, Convergent Pedagogy and Bilingual Competency-Based Curriculum.

#### **a. Experimental school of the first generation (1979-1987)**

In 1979, Bambara was tested for the first time in schools as a teaching medium for primary school subjects (BLONDE, 1979). These schools were established in 4 villages, specifically in the Koulikoro and Ségou regions. The experiment also continued using 3 other Malian languages, namely Fulfulde, Songhay, and Tamasheq. Thus, from 1979 to 1983, Bambara was used experimentally in approximately 35 classes in primary schools (BLONDE, 1979). The main goal of introducing these national languages in education was to improve literacy and allow for better adaptation of students to the stagnant local realities of low enrollment rates and massive repetitions from the first year of schooling. However, this introduction of national languages in education did not mean the exclusion of French from the Malian educational system, because French is, in fact, the language of opening up to the outside world, playing an essential role even in inter-African relations, and also giving Mali access to the technical and scientific universe. But what is at issue is the monopoly of French in education, which is responsible for the high number of school failures, with students facing from the very beginning of school education in a language that is foreign to them (BLONDE, 1979. p.50-51).

As previously mentioned, well-equipped classes were created in certain regions of Mali to test the use of national languages in primary education. In these classes, French was still partially used as a teaching tool but also studied as a subject. The results of this experiment, also known as the first-generation experiment, were rather favorable (Skattum, 2010).



From the obtained results, it was noted that the potential generalization of the use of national languages in schools was done without harming the French language, which continued to be highly valued by the population, especially by the elites (BLONDE, 1979). This means that the use of national languages in collaboration with French not only improves students' adaptation, comprehension level, and success rate but also increases their understanding of the French language itself. Therefore, the establishment of a bilingual school system could contribute to adapting education to the linguistic realities of Mali if it took into account the complementarity of the functions held by national languages and French. As evidenced by the experiment, this adaptation would promote the better performance of the education system and could put an end to the numerous dropouts currently occurring at the beginning of schooling, which constitutes a waste of public finances. However, due to a lack of follow-up, the results declined over the years (Skattum, 2010). For example, from 1985 to 1988, the enrollment rate in 7th-grade classes for experimental schools dropped from 47.66% to 29.96% (Skattum, 2010). As a result of this sharp decline, the first-generation experiment lost the support of the authorities (Skattum, 1997).

#### **b. Convergent Pedagogy (1987-2002)**

Abandoning the first experiment, authorities turned to a new system called Convergent Pedagogy (PC) a term that refers to the convergence of French and a national language as means of instruction, as well as the convergence of pedagogical approaches in both languages. It was introduced in 1987 in two schools in the Bambara-speaking zone for an experiment. The experience continued from 1987 to 1993 (Skattum, 2010), and in 1994, the PC was generalized. It was first introduced in the New Fundamental School (NEF) but was abandoned after one year for several reasons. It was quickly reintroduced to the system in 1998, under the Ten-Year Education Development Program (PRODEC). By 2002, this pedagogy was being used in 2050 schools across 11 national languages (Skattum, 2010). Unlike the first system, the PC, which is intended to be more modern, bilingual education continues until the end of the first cycle, that is, the first 6 years. The

PC is based on the principle that children learn to read and write better in their L1, and that this mastery facilitates access to other knowledge, including L2, which means that the mastery of writing in the mother tongue determines all subsequent learning (National Commission, 1995). This PC methodology is inspired by the work of James Cummins on the transfer of skills from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2). According to this theory, if L1 is well mastered before moving on to the teaching of L2, the child will have satisfactory cognitive development and good mastery of L2 (Cummins, 1979).

### **c. Bilingual Competency-Based Curriculum (2002)**

The PC allowed for the development of a bilingual competency-based curriculum, which was adopted by the Education Orientation Law in 1999 (Law No. 99/104). This curriculum was tested in 2002 in 80 schools for the first two years of elementary school. The goal of the bilingual curriculum was to capitalize on the achievements of the Convergent Pedagogy and to correct the weaknesses observed in its implementation (Traoré 2009, p.159). According to Y. Haïdara (2003), the curriculum uses the same teaching methods and didactic materials as the PC. By 2005-06, the curriculum was introduced in 2550 schools, including the 2050 PC schools and 500 traditional schools across the country (Traoré 2009). These 2550 bilingual schools constituted 31.62% of the 8063 schools in the first cycle. All Pedagogical Animation Centers (CAP), local cells of the Academies of Education (which correspond to the regional directions of the national education system), thus had bilingual schools using 11 national languages. Nowadays, the national languages are included at the secondary level (in general secondary schools), with the teaching of the transcription of Bambara in the LL (Language and Literature) stream for all three years. The teaching of national languages deepens and specializes in higher education, at the Faculty of Letters, Languages, Arts and Humanities (FLASH).

### 1.2.3.3. Bilingual education

Many experts advocate the integration of national languages (LN) in schools alongside French, leading to a bilingual education system. Adama Ouane, a Malian linguist, argues that in the long term, the goal should be for every Malian to receive a basic education in their mother tongue, and therefore research on linguistic and pedagogical aspects of all languages should be deepened. He suggests a "hierarchical bilingualism," where one language is a national language chosen based on its weight in the existing communication sphere, and the other language is French as a global auxiliary language, facilitating communication with the outside world. For example, a study by Skattum (2000) showed that students in a French-Bambara bilingual school had better results in French than those in a monolingual French school. However, implementing harmonious bilingualism in education requires redefining the role of French in Mali and its relationship with national languages, as well as linguistic planning to enable Malians to use these languages in their daily lives and the public sphere beyond education. This would require the adoption of the "draft of the new Constitution" in Mali. While schools are a powerful tool for development, M. L. Traoré argues that using national languages in other spheres of life such as justice, communication, and public administration is equally important (Traoré, 2009).

### 1.3. Language Policy

The policy developed in Mali regarding the official language and national languages is defined in Article 25 of the 1992 Constitution:

*Le français est la langue d'expression officielle.*

*La loi fixe les modalités de promotion et d'officialisation des langues nationales.*<sup>2</sup>

Despite being a Francophone country, Mali has a linguistic situation of multilingualism where about twenty indigenous languages coexist with French (Calvet 1987; Canut and Dumestre 1993). The exact number of languages is uncertain, particularly

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<sup>2</sup> One translation in English: "French is the language of official expression. Law shall establish the method of promoting and officializing of the national languages."

because the distinction between dialect and language remains unclear, and it is also difficult to know precisely the rate of speakers per language. The Malian government has chosen to have 13 national languages, 10 of which were named in 1967: Bambara, Songhay, Fulfulde, Tamasheq, Bobo, Bozo, Dogon, Sénoufo, Minyanka, and Soninke. Three others were added in 1996: Maure, Malinké, and Khassonké. National languages have all been given an alphabet and spelling rules, and for most of them, there is also a vocabulary and grammar (Skattum 2008). A national language is therefore an endogenous language that has received a status and assumes certain functions (in the media and primary education). Mali is one of the few Francophone countries in sub-Saharan Africa that has given legal status to bilingual education. Since independence, the authorities wanted to revalue and develop national languages to introduce them into the education system, and today, eleven of these languages are used as languages of instruction alongside French for 21.1% of primary school students (Skattum 2010). Malians can be monolingual, bilingual, trilingual, or multilingual. Those who are educated speak French and add this language to their repertoire of endogenous languages. This represents only 5 to 10% of the population. Approximately 40% of the population speaks Bambara as their L1 (Chaudenson and Rakotomalala 2004).

### **1.3.1. Language Planning in Mali**

According to UNICEF (2009), Mali is recognized with the rating of the 6<sup>th</sup> least developed nation in the world; thus, education has proven to be a major factor of development. Therefore, the language planning of a nation is crucial to its development. Language planning in a community is a result of political decisions. The term ‘language planning’ is said to have first been used by Haugen (1959, p.8) who says:

By language planning, I understand the activity of preparing a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogeneous speech community. In this practical application of linguistic knowledge, we are proceeding beyond descriptive linguistics into an area where judgment must be exercised in the form of choices among available linguistic forms. Planning implies an attempt to guide the development of a language in a direction

desired by the planners. It means not only predicting the future based on available knowledge concerning the past but a deliberate effort to influence it.

Language planning is defined in sociolinguistics as a deliberate effort to influence the function, structure, or acquisition of languages or language varieties within a speech community. Brock-Utne (2001, p. 118) argues that “The choice of a language of instruction in Africa is a political choice, a choice that may redistribute power in a global context as well as within an African country, between the elites and the masses”. Language planning in Mali is a result of the colonial influence: “no fundamental change in language or teaching methods since the colonial era” (Alidou, 2003, p. 107). French is indeed the only official language in Mali, recognized as the language of instruction, used to teach in mainstream primary school; and Bambara the national language and the vernacular: “Mainstream primary schools in francophone Africa are mere copies of colonial schools” (Alidou, 2003, p. 107). However, French is only used by a very small percentage of the population, yet it is the official language used for instruction. In Mali, 80% of the population is rural (Ouane, 1994, cited in Ginsburg et al., 2000, p. 36); this means that 80% of the Malian population does not comprehend and speak French (World Factbook, 2009). Poor rural areas in Mali have lower academic success than the middle and upper-class urban counterparts since the language of instruction used in schooling is French which is not comprehended (Lavoie, 2008, p. 663). Research conducted in Mali “evidenced limited French language literacy among Malian children” (Ginsburg et al., 2000, p. 37). Low rates of secondary school attendance, less than 17% for both Burkina Faso and Mali (UNICEF, 2009). Thus, “The children of middle- and upper-class families are more likely to pass their exams and can move into higher education opportunities due to their exposure to French, and thus obtain more cultural capital, affording them a place in the global society” (A’ame Kone 2010, p.11).

The preliminary draft of the new Constitution initially mentioned in the introduction (l’avant-projet de la nouvelle Constitution) proposes a review of the status of the languages in Mali, which will also bring changes in language planning. According to this draft,

languages spoken in Mali by one or more linguistic communities are part of the cultural heritage; they have the status of national languages and are intended to become official languages. The law establishes the procedures for the protection, promotion, and officialization of the national languages. French is the official language of expression; the State may adopt, by law, any other foreign language as the official language of expression as mentioned in Article 31 (Avant-projet de constitution de la République du Mali (2022, p.7):

*Les langues parlées au Mali par une ou plusieurs communautés linguistiques font partie du patrimoine culturel. Elles ont le statut de langues nationales et ont vocation à devenir des langues officielles. La loi fixe les modalités de protection, de promotion et d'officialisation des langues nationales. Le français est la langue d'expression officielle. L'Etat peut adopter, par la loi, toute autre langue étrangère comme langue d'expression officielle.*<sup>3</sup>

This article decreases the status of French in Mali since it is only considered as the language of expression as mentioned above. On the other hand, the national languages of Mali, mainly Bambara, increase in status, having the status of national languages. Moreover, the national languages are intended to become the official language as mentioned in the article: “*Elles ont le statut de langues nationales et ont vocation à devenir des langues officielles*” (l'avant-projet de constitution de la République du Mali, 2022, p.7) This implies that Bambara, the most and highly solicited language is intended to become an official language in Mali, which is already the subject of debate between linguists and intellectuals. Professor Abou Diarra, a Malian' linguist in the University of Bamako supports the idea by saying that it is necessary to advance our national languages as official languages beside French, but implement their operation in a gradual way: « *Je crois qu'à côté du français, nous devons affirmer clairement que les langues nationales sont des*

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<sup>3</sup> “The languages spoken in Mali by one or more linguistic communities are part of the cultural heritage. They have the status of national languages and are intended to become official languages. The law establishes the methods of protection, promotion and officialization of the national languages. French is the official language of expression. The State may adopt, by law, any other foreign language as the official language of expression.”

*langues officielles et que leur opérationnalisation se fera de façon progressive*” (Kane, 2022). Besides him, there is the young intellectual and revolutionary Aziz Traore of the movement “Mali Kura” meaning “the new Mali” who strongly believes that the main issue with the development of Mali’s education is the language (Mali Kura, 2022). According to him, if the majority of the population cannot understand the official language used for instruction and on official documents, the nation cannot be developed intellectually. Moreover, he said that if the language (Bambara) is inserted officially in instruction, the learners will comprehend the lectures and will not lose interest in school which, therefore will guarantee school success for more than the majority of learners: this does not mean that French will not be learned at school, but in contrast will be aside of Bambara (Mali Kura, 2022). Furthermore, he argued that the reason why learners drop out of school is because they fail to understand the knowledge that they are supposed to learn: the language in which the knowledge is transmitted is not comprehended. He finally said that if the learner understands the language in which the knowledge is transmitted, he will surely succeed (Mali Kura, 2022). Nevertheless, this project remains a subject of debate because of the opposition. According to Ibrahim Maiga, a young national from northern Mali, this decision could have serious consequences: “Trying to adopt the Bamanankan language as an official language would really exclude the people of northern Mali. For now, we don't need it. Because there is not only the Bamanan language, there are several other languages. In our north, we speak Songhai, for example. If adopted, it would be a very serious situation that could endanger the unity and social cohesion between the populations.” (Kane, 2022).

However, in March 2023, the draft of the new Constitution was presented in a referendum, voted and validated (Kane, 2022). On the other hand, many reasonings and realities come against the project of the new republic of Mali “Mali Kura”. First of all, Trudell (2006) argued that “Embracing colonial languages is the surest way to economic and social progress”. This is believed by many parents, teachers, and other stakeholders in many colonized countries. This is because they don’t want the future generation to suffer the same segregation that they endured. Moreover, the new modern world is running

towards globalization (Hamilton and Webster, 2012). Globalization aims at creating a global political system, implementing democracy and communism; economic globalization, implementing socialism and capitalism; monetary globalization with the use of one global currency not yet defined; communication integration with the use of English which is the only official global language; the promotion and implementation of a global education system with global school curriculum proposal (Liz Jackson, 2016), Hamilton and Webster (2012). With all this evidence, many citizens and intellectuals carry the mentality that the development and success of a nation are not possible when this nation adopts systems that can decrease its fame and position on an international scale designed by the new world order governing the world. Thus, Amadou Sangha thinks that there is a question of competitiveness at the regional and international levels; he said: “ From there, you are not aware that we want to move towards standardization of exams at the level of the sub-region within the framework of ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and the WAEMU (West African Economic and Monetary Union).” For instance, in 1974, Burkina Faso reviewed their education system by creating national reforms that include first acquired languages at the medium school level of instruction. But the Burkinabe themselves refused to send their children to those schools that teach in a language that they already know and speak at home (Lallou, 1998, p. 2). Trudell argues that “It is recognized that successful initiatives for combating linguistic and cultural marginalization must be grounded in the indigenous community itself” (Trudell, 2006, p. 196). Likewise in Mali, a “government-backed initiative called “pédagogie convergent” (convergent pedagogy), an alternative primary school curriculum which combines local language use with interactive teaching methods” (Trudell, 2007, p. 556) encountered some opposition in Mali. The argument to those oppositions was majorly “lacking a grasp of the French language would limit prospects for Malian children to have a place in the francophone world” (Trudell, 2007). As mentioned above, the new world order controlled by the Western world aims at globalizing all the governmental systems of the world including the education systems and the use of English as the only global language.



According to Professor Abou Diarra, a Malian linguist at the University of Bamako, it is necessary to have our national languages besides French as the official language and this will not cause any developmental issues (Kane, 2022). However, the matter remains a subject of debate because of the opposition. According to Amadou Sangha, it will still be dangerous to change the school program because of the issue of regional and international competitiveness. Nevertheless, the majority of the population seems to deny the prestige of the French, giving space to Bambara.

#### **1.4. Bilingualism**

Mali is a multilingual country in the African context, with about twenty endogenous languages (Calvet 1992: 215). In Mali, there is a phenomenon of trilingualism, Bambara being the central and vernacular language which stands as an intermediary between French and the local languages (Chaudenson and Rakotomalala 2004: 16). On a linguistic and sociolinguistic observation, this reality makes us note the existence of a trinomial French-Bambara-national language (Dumestres, 2003). However, this work will only address the bilingual phenomenon of Bambara and French.

Bilingualism can occur at the individual level as well as at the social level (Mackey, 1992; Canut and Dumestre 1993). A bilingual society is not a collection of bilingual individuals, but rather a situation where two languages coexist on a more global level. Mastery of different languages varies greatly, both written and spoken; some actively practice the different languages by writing and speaking, and others are more passive and just understand (Baker 1996). In the case of Mali, a large part of the population masters, in addition to their L1, Bambara, the vehicular language, and their practice of these languages is to be considered active. As for French, many Malians understand it without knowing how to use it. Some are bilingual from an early age, which refers to as simultaneous bilingualism (Baker, 1996) and others learn a second language later, ‘successive bilingualism’. Taking my case, I am from the Bwa ethnic group (both parents are Bwa) but come from a large family where parents and family members communicate daily in Bwa and Bambara. So, before the age of 5, I could already understand and speak both Bwa and

Bambara languages. So, it is really difficult to determine which one is my L1. It is also possible that the mastery of a language decreases over time, which is also my case. After more than 15 years away from the Bwa community and communicating only in Bambara, French, and English, I noticed a difficulty in communicating in Bwa; for example, thinking before finding a word in my linguistic repertoire. An individual bilingual situation can therefore be permanent or temporary. The different languages spoken by an individual often have different contexts of use. For example, Bambara is the language of communication in the family, and French at school (Fishman, 1965).

“Mali is a multilingual country in the African context, with about twenty indigenous languages” (Calvet 1992: 215). There is a phenomenon of trilingualism in Mali and Bambara is the center of that phenomenon, a vernacular language that serves as an intermediary between French and the local languages (Chaudenson and Rakotomalala 2004). From a linguistic and sociolinguistic view, this trinomial is realized as the use of French-Bambara-national languages (Dumestre 2003: 9). However, this work will only address the bilingual phenomenon of Bambara and French.

### **1.5. Diglossia**

The term *diglossia* was first used in sociolinguistics by Charles A. Ferguson in his 1959 article. This renowned sociolinguist and language scholar used the term ‘diglossia’ to delineate a phenomenon where two varieties of the same language are used in distinct contexts or for different purposes, one prestigious being labeled ‘High variety’ and the other regarded as a ‘Low variety’ and thus with less prestige. The H variety is employed for formal or official functions, while L is used for informal or everyday communication. The high variety is usually acquired through formal education and has a standardized, codified form, while the low variety is the mother tongue used in everyday speech.

Since its introduction, the term diglossia has gained widespread acceptance among sociolinguists and sociologists of language and has been further developed and refined. However, Ferguson's original concept of diglossia has been criticized and revisited over

the years. In his later article "Diglossia revisited" published in 1991, Ferguson himself acknowledged some flaws in his original concept. He recognized that the boundaries between high and low varieties can be blurred, and the diglossic situation can be more complex and dynamic than initially described. For example, the high variety may not always be strictly limited to formal contexts, and the low variety may have its own rules and conventions that differ from the high variety. Despite these criticisms, Ferguson's concept of diglossia has been influential in linguistics and has led to further research and discussions on language variation, multilingualism, and language planning. Scholars continue to revisit and refine the concept of diglossia to better understand the complex sociolinguistic dynamics of language use in different communities.

### **1.5.1. Ferguson's ninth Criteria for determining diglossia**

Charles A. Ferguson proposed a set of nine criteria for identifying and analyzing diglossia situations. These criteria provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexities of diglossia and its implications for language variation and social dynamics.

#### **Criterion 1: Linguistic Structure**

The first criterion focuses on the divergence of linguistic structures between the high (H) and low (L) varieties. Linguistic structures encompass phonology, morphology, and syntax. In diglossia situations, the H variety typically exhibits more complex structures, while the L variety tends to be simplified or restricted to certain domains.

#### **Criterion 2: Functional Distribution:**

Functional distribution refers to the allocation of functions and domains to the H and L varieties. The H variety is usually associated with formal and prestigious domains such as literature, education, and official discourse, while the L variety is used in informal settings and everyday communication.

#### **Criterion 3: Heterogeneity of the Speech Community**

Diglossia often occurs in linguistically diverse communities where multiple languages or dialects are spoken. The H variety is generally associated with a higher-status group, while the L variety is used by a broader range of speakers. The speech community's heterogeneity contributes to the maintenance and stability of diglossia situations.

#### **Criterion 4: Standardization and Codification**

Standardization refers to the establishment of a normative variety through formalized rules and institutions. The H variety is typically standardized and codified, while the L variety lacks standardization. Standardization enhances the prestige and symbolic value of the H variety.

#### **Criterion 5: Stability and Persistence**

Stability refers to the long-term coexistence of the H and L varieties within a community. Diglossic situations often persist across generations, resisting language shift or assimilation. Stability is facilitated by social factors, cultural traditions, and linguistic norms.

#### **Criterion 6: Diglossic Switching**

Diglossic communities exhibit patterns of code-switching or code-mixing between the H and L varieties. Speakers can shift between the varieties depending on social contexts, interlocutors, or communicative goals. Diglossic switching reflects the speakers' linguistic repertoire and their awareness of language variation.

#### **Criterion 7: Diglossic Literacy**

Diglossic communities typically exhibit differential literacy skills, with the H variety being the medium of formal education and literacy. The L variety may have limited or no written form, and literacy skills in the L variety are often acquired through informal means or oral traditions.

#### **Criterion 8: Diglossic Pedagogy**

Educational systems in diglossic contexts incorporate the teaching and learning of both the H and L varieties. The H variety is prioritized in formal education, while the L variety is primarily acquired through informal socialization processes. Diglossic pedagogy aims to maintain language continuity and ensure functional bilingualism.

### **Criterion 9: Diglossic Elaboration**

Diglossic situations can lead to linguistic elaboration, where the H and L varieties develop distinct registers or genres. The H variety may have a rich literary tradition, specialized terminologies, and formal registers, while the L variety adapts to fulfill everyday communicative needs.

#### **1.5.2. Fishman's Diglossia**

Another famous, well-known scholar who contributed a lot to the field is Joshua Fishman who introduced the concept of 'extended diglossia' in his 1967 article 'Bilingualism with and without Diglossia; Diglossia with and without Bilingualism' in which he expanded Ferguson's classical diglossia. For him, this sociolinguistic phenomenon can also characterize situations where two unrelated languages in a community are differentiated in terms of high and low, as in the case of Paraguay where Spanish is the prestigious language used in education and formal settings while Guarani is the Low vernacular used in everyday speech. He also mentioned this type of diglossia in his influential book *Language and Nationalism: Two Integrative Essays* (1972) where he explained how languages can be divided into distinct varieties used in different social contexts. Fishman identified a formal high variety, called the H-variety or "high" code, used in formal or official domains like education, literature, and media, and an informal low variety, called the L-variety or "low" code, used in everyday conversations with family and friends.

Such is the case of Mali where French is considered as high (H) because of its official use in formal activities, education, and administration, while Bambara, considered as low (L), is used in daily communication. The diglossic situation of Mali is Fishman's

extended diglossia whereby two genetically unrelated languages “occupy the H and L niches” (Fishman 1967). Fishman argued that diglossia is characterized by a functional separation between the high and low varieties, where the H-variety is used in formal settings and the L-variety is used in informal settings. It was observed that different languages were used for different functions, with each language expressing behaviors, attitudes, and values that were distinct from those associated with the other language (Fishman,1967). One language is associated with one set of behaviors, attitudes, and values, while the other language is associated with a different set. Both sets of behaviors were maintained, rather than one displacing the other, over time. Fishman's concept of diglossia has significant implications for language planning and policy, as it sheds light on the complex sociolinguistic dynamics of language use and maintenance. Diglossia can have both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, it can provide communities with access to formal education, literature, and media, and can be a tool for social mobility and empowerment. On the negative side, it creates language hierarchies where the H-variety is associated with prestige and power, while the L-variety is stigmatized or marginalized. Fishman also noted that diglossia can impact language maintenance and shift, as communities may shift towards using the H-variety more and may experience changes in language use patterns.

Diglossia often arises in multilingual societies where different languages or dialects coexist, and it can contribute to maintaining social order and cohesion. Fishman also emphasized that diglossia is not limited to specific regions or languages, but can be found in various societies worldwide. Fishman further elaborated on the concept of diglossia by identifying three patterns of diglossic relationships: "congruent diglossia," "heteroglossia," and "interference diglossia." Congruent Diglossia.

Congruent diglossia is when two separate language variations exist within a community. These variations, known as high (H) and low (L), are used in different social contexts. The high variation is associated with formal situations like education, literature, or official speeches, while the low variation is used in informal conversations or by less

educated groups. The key characteristic of congruent diglossia is the similarity between the two variations in terms of grammar and vocabulary, with distinctions primarily relating to formality and social prestige. A prominent example of congruent diglossia is found in Arabic-speaking countries, where Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) serves as the high variation and local dialects are the low variation. MSA is employed in formal domains such as media, education, and religious ceremonies, whereas local dialects are used in everyday interactions. This coexistence allows for effective communication across different social contexts while also reinforcing cultural and linguistic identities.

Heteroglossia, a concept introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin, explores the coexistence of multiple language variations or voices within a linguistic community or text. Heteroglossia recognizes that language is not a singular entity but rather a collection of diverse perspectives, ideologies, and cultural backgrounds. It emphasizes the presence of multiple voices in society and challenges the idea of a single authoritative language. In literature, heteroglossia becomes apparent when different characters use distinct linguistic styles that reflect their social, cultural, or regional backgrounds. This technique enhances character development and adds depth to the narrative. Similarly, in multilingual communities, heteroglossia is observed through the simultaneous use of multiple languages or dialects, enabling individuals to express their identities and navigate complex social environments.

Interference diglossia refers to a language scenario where two language variations or codes coexist within a speech community but with notable differences and interference between them. Unlike congruent diglossia, which involves similar variations, interference diglossia occurs when two distinct language systems interact and influence each other. Interference may arise when a dominant language exerts its influence on a minority language, leading to the adoption of vocabulary, grammar structures, or phonetic features. This phenomenon is commonly observed in situations of language contact or colonization, where the dominant language affects the grammar, pronunciation, or lexicon of the subordinate language. Interference can also manifest as code-switching, code-mixing, or

the borrowing of loanwords and loan translations between the two variations. For example, in some communities in India, English is used as the H-variety in formal domains, while regional languages are used as the L-variety in informal settings but code-switching between English and regional languages is common

Speaking of the diglossic situation in Mali, it cannot be ignored that Bambara is the vehicular language of Mali, but some languages are vehicular in certain regions. According to the survey results (Canut, 1995), Songhay appears as the vehicular language in the northern part of the country, in the central Sahelian zone; but the same survey also proves that Songhay is becoming less acquired as a second language in favor of Bamakokan (a variation of Bambara). As for the languages of the south - Minyanka (Dombrowsky 1995), Bozo, or other Manding languages such as Malinke (Canut and Keita 1995), Khassonke, etc., they are also becoming rare in commercial situations, especially in markets, cities, and formal situations (administration, professional situations, etc.), always in favor of Bamanakan, which is becoming the first language in villages or small towns that are less isolated. French, on the other hand, does not offer real resistance to it since it is only used in very rare social situations (commercial and international exchanges; school, administration in alternation with Bamanakan (Cécile Canut, 1996). From a macro-linguistic point of view, Bambara is also a language of prestige and culture (importance of Manding culture through griots and today's songs, female griots, etc.). This function does not imply that it should have a status of domination over other languages; however, Bambara is indeed the language of social or individual promotion, the language of the city, the language of power, the language of radio and television, etc. (Canut, 1996, p. 57).

### **1.5.3. Relationship between Diglossia and Bilingualism**

The correlation between bilingualism and diglossia has been a topic of interest and discussion in the field of sociolinguistics. By exploring the complexities of these language phenomena, a deeper understanding of language variation dynamics and their societal implications is developed. Fishman in his *Journal of Social Issues* (Fishman, 1967), illustrates the different correlations between diglossia and Bilingualism, saying that



Bilingualism can exist with or without diglossia, likewise, diglossia can also exist without Bilingualism, and finally, a case where it is nor diglossia neither bilingualism.

- **Bilingualism with Diglossia:**

Bilingualism refers to individuals' proficiency in speaking two languages. In certain language contexts, bilingualism coincides with diglossia, a situation characterized by the presence of two distinct language varieties used in different social domains. These diglossic systems typically involve a high variety (H) used in formal or esteemed settings and a low variety (L) employed in informal or everyday conversations (Fishman, 1967, p.23). For example, in Switzerland, individuals may be bilingual in German and French. The high varieties of each language, Standard German and Standard French, are used in formal contexts such as education or official proceedings, while regional dialects or variants, such as Swiss German and Swiss French, are spoken in informal interactions. Bilingualism facilitates effective communication across various social domains, while diglossia reinforces social hierarchies and linguistic identities.

- **Bilingualism without Diglossia:**

It is important to acknowledge that bilingualism can exist without diglossia. In many immigrant communities, individuals maintain proficiency in their native language while acquiring the dominant language of their new country. In these cases, there may not be a distinct division between high and low varieties, as both languages are interchangeably used across different domains (Fishman, 1967, p.29). For instance, in multicultural urban areas, individuals may engage in code-switching or code-mixing, blending elements of different languages in their speech. This flexible language use enables effective communication within the community without a rigid diglossic separation. Bilingualism without diglossia highlights the adaptability and versatility of language use in diverse social contexts.

- **Diglossia without Bilingualism:**

Conversely, it is also possible to observe diglossia without bilingualism, where individuals primarily use a single language variety but encounter a different variety in specific social domains. This situation is commonly seen in communities where a high variety, often associated with formal or standardized contexts, coexists with regional or vernacular varieties used in everyday speech (Fishman, 1967, p.38). An example of diglossia without bilingualism can be found in Arabic-speaking communities. Many individuals primarily speak their local dialect in their daily interactions but encounter Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in formal settings such as education, media, or religious ceremonies. Although they may not be bilingual, the diglossic situation enables them to navigate different linguistic registers and participate in broader Arabic-speaking communities.

- **Neither diglossia nor bilingualism:**

"Neither diglossia nor bilingualism" refers to a language situation that does not fit into the traditional concepts of diglossia or bilingualism. It implies that the language dynamics or characteristics of the situation are different from what is typically observed in these two sociolinguistic phenomena. Only very small, isolated, and undifferentiated speech communities may be said to reveal neither diglossia nor bilingualism (Gumperz, 1962). This could be a scenario where there is no clear division between high and low varieties of a language (as in diglossia) or where individuals do not exhibit proficiency in two distinct languages (as in bilingualism). It is important to note that without further context or specific examples, it is difficult to provide a precise interpretation of what "neither diglossia nor bilingualism" refers to in a particular context.

The relationship between bilingualism and diglossia is intricate and multifaceted. While they can coexist in specific language contexts, it is important to acknowledge situations where one exists independently of the other. Bilingualism without diglossia highlights the fluid and adaptable nature of language use, while diglossia without bilingualism underscores the influence of high varieties on individuals who primarily use regional or

vernacular varieties. Understanding these intricate language dynamics enhances our understanding of language variation and its impact on social interactions and identities. The study of bilingualism and diglossia contributes to the knowledge of how languages are utilized, adapted, and influenced in diverse sociocultural contexts, fostering a deeper understanding of multilingual societies worldwide.

## **CHAPTER 2: Methodology: Data Collection and Analysis**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter first presents the research methodology designed to collect the data, including the sampling methods and the research instruments and procedures. Then describes the data analysis procedures including quantitative and qualitative data analysis, interpret the results of the analysis, and finally discusses the result with the hypothesis.

### **2.2. Research methodology design**

To investigate the current existing issue of diglossia between Bambara and French, which is likely to bring some changes in the Malian education system, we use a sociolinguistic methodology. To achieve the goals of this work, we use an exploratory case study to investigate the current diglossia situation of Mali between French and Bambara, in the society and the education setting and determine the future of French and Bambara in education. Therefore, we use a quantitative (questionnaire) and a qualitative (interview) method to collect both types of data. This methodology provides data that help determine the attitudes and conceptions of Malians about French, and Bambara; determine the new language planning and the outcomes of the project of the new constitution; identify the right choice of language to be introduced in the formal education for better results. However, the results of this study can not help us reach generalization because of the low limited number of the sample population.

#### **2.2.1. Sampling method**

The current diglossia situation between Bambara and French is likely to influence the education of Mali. To elicit relevant data on this issue under investigation, the population of Bamako (Mali) was targeted, where the study will be conducted within the information-reach paradigm, meaning that the chosen sample will be the richest in information. To achieve this goal, a purposive non-reliable sampling method was adopted,

because this will allow the collection of data directly from the sample population that fulfills the participation criteria. The first participation criterion is the profession of the informant, only students and teachers are eligible. The second criterion is the age which should be above 18 years; the last one is the residence of the informant which should be Mali or Algeria for the students, and Mali for the teachers. Thus, the purposive sampling strategy determined the exact sample needed, which is university teachers and students.

### **2.2.2. Research instruments**

The instruments used for the data collection are the questionnaire and the interview. The quantitative data collection used a questionnaire addressed to students and teachers, and the qualitative data collection used a semi-structured interview with only Malian university teachers.

#### **2.2.2.1. Questionnaire**

Quantitative data analysis refers to the analysis of data, using statistical techniques. It refers to the transcription of data numerically without it losing its meaning. The instrument that was used to collect the quantitative data for this study is a questionnaire.

To collect statistical data, a series of 12 questions have been formulated in a Google form and shared via WhatsApp and Facebook into groups for students and teachers, and to some contacts. Three types of questions were used in the questionnaire. The first type is closed-ended questions such as: Do you sometimes use French to feel important before others? Yes /No. The second type is multiple choice questions such as: In which language do you follow your Malian broadcasts? French / Bambara / Other; and rating scale questions such as: How do you judge the level of importance of French in Malian society? Very important / Important /Less important / Not important.

The questionnaire was answered by 81 people, among which 52 are students, 15 are teachers, and 14 are of other professions. However, the 14 informants from other occupations were removed because the research sample population is only concerned with students and teachers. Concerning age, 78,8% of the retained informants are between 18 to

24 years, 16,7% are aged between 25 and 30, and 4,5% are above 30. Finally, 27,2% are Malian students in Algeria, and the remaining is in Mali (Bamako).

**Table 1: informants' details**

	<b>TOTAL NUMBER</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE (%)</b>
<b>STUDENTS</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>64,2%</b>
<b>TEACHERS</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18,5%</b>
<b>OTHER OCCUPATIONS</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17,3%</b>
<b>AGE: 18-24</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>78,8%</b>
<b>AGE: 25-30</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16,7%</b>
<b>AGE: &gt; 30</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4,5%</b>
<b>LACTION Mali (Bamako)</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>72,8%</b>
<b>LOCATION: Algeria</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>27,2%</b>

**Note:** Percentages for age and location are based on retained informants only, after removing 14 informants from other occupations.

To analyze this data, the questions are divided into 3 categories: the attitudes of Malians toward the French Language, the attitudes of Malians towards the Bambara language, and Bambara and French in the education setting. The questions are analyzed in these three categories according to their purpose.

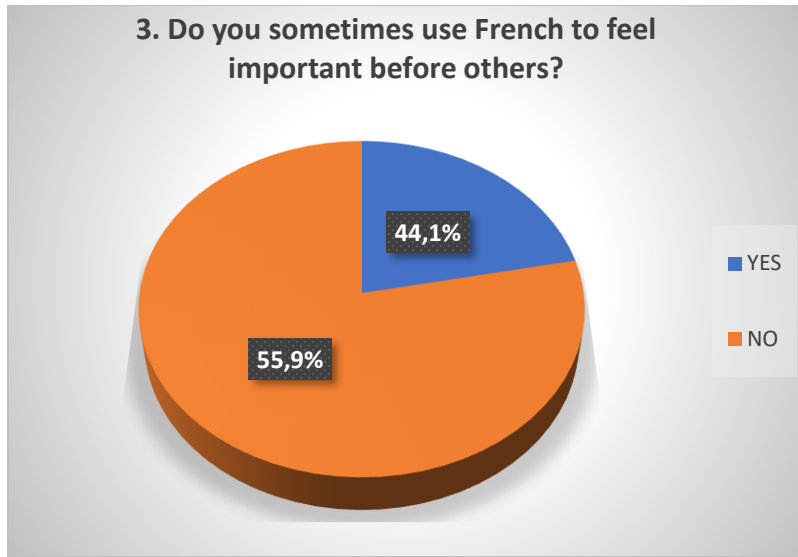
**Question 1:** This was the introductory question that aims at knowing the awareness of the informants about the issue, which is important to determine the relevance of the answers. The informants were asked in the first place to confirm whether they are aware or not of the current political crisis between Mali and France to verify if they are eligible to participate in this survey. Among the responses of the informants, 95,5% affirmed being aware, while 4,5% affirmed their ignorance of the issue. This shows that the majority of the informants' answers are reliable.

### **a. Attitude of Malians towards French Language.**

The aim of this category of questions is to determine the current state of the French language in Malian society.

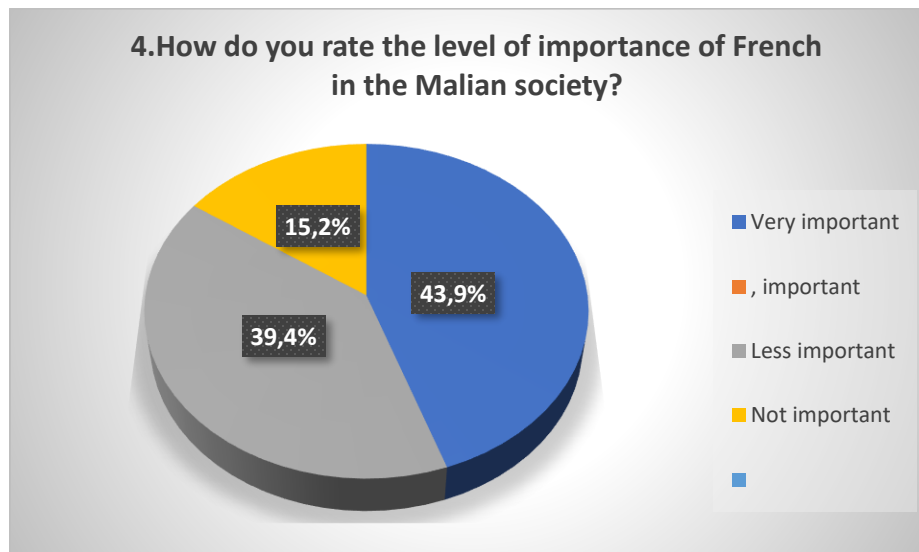
**Question 2:** To elicit data on the current attitude of Malians towards the French language, the informants were asked whether they like French or not. The results show that 73,1% have a negative attitude toward the French language and 26,9% show a positive attitude. This indicates that a significant portion of the Malian informant does not have a favorable view of French. This can be related to the decline of French by the current most popular political and social movement called “Mali Kura” meaning new Mali which is against the monopoly of French in Mali as the language only official language and the language of instruction; this group represents the majority of the population of Mali (Mali Kura, 2022). As a matter of fact, we remark a shift in the status of French in Mali, from an official language to a language of administration (ADMIN, 2023). This was a request from the majority of the population; voted in the general assembly in March 2023 and approved by the interim government (Maiga, 2023).

**Question 3:** To elicit data on the personal consideration of French, the informants were asked whether they sometimes use French to feel important before others. According to the results, 44,1% affirm that they sometimes use French to feel important before others, while 55,9% affirm the opposite. This suggests that a considerable portion of the respondents perceive French as a language that cannot enhance their status or social standing. We remark from the results of previous research that French was used as a tool of exaltation, meaning that speaking French was a sign of being educated or being part of a higher social class. As mentioned by Trudell (2006), embracing colonial languages is the surest way to economic and social progress. This had been believed by many people including parents, teachers, and other stakeholders in Mali. However, Malians seem to believe now that embracing the colonial language rather devalues (Mali Kura, 2022). This seems to be a reason for the decline of the prestige of French.



**Figure 2.1 Personal importance of French**

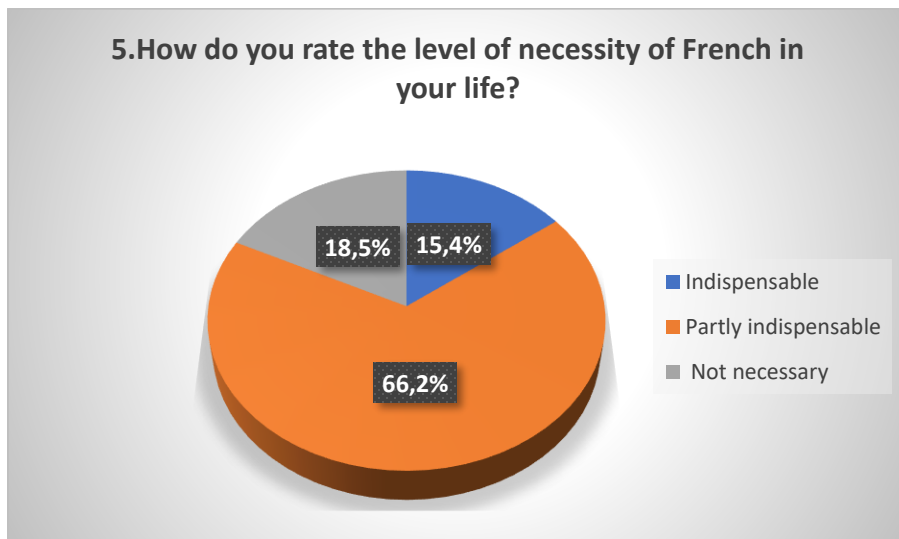
**Question 4:** The informants were asked to rate the French Language in terms of importance in society to know the value given to it. The results reveal that 43,9% find French very important, 39,4% find French less important, and 15,2% think that it is not important. Only 1 informant was neutral. These results indicate a diversity of perspectives regarding the significance of French in Malian society.



**Figure 2.2 Value of French in the society**



**Question 5:** The informants were asked to rate the level of necessity of French in their life, to determine its value for them as individuals. The responses reveal that 15.4% find French indispensable, indicating that a minority of respondents highly value the language joining the point that French is only used by a minority of the population, in particular areas and circumstances. The majority (66.2%) consider it partially indispensable, suggesting that they acknowledge its importance but may not rely on it exclusively. Furthermore, 18.5% find French not necessary, indicating that they do not consider it essential in their daily lives.



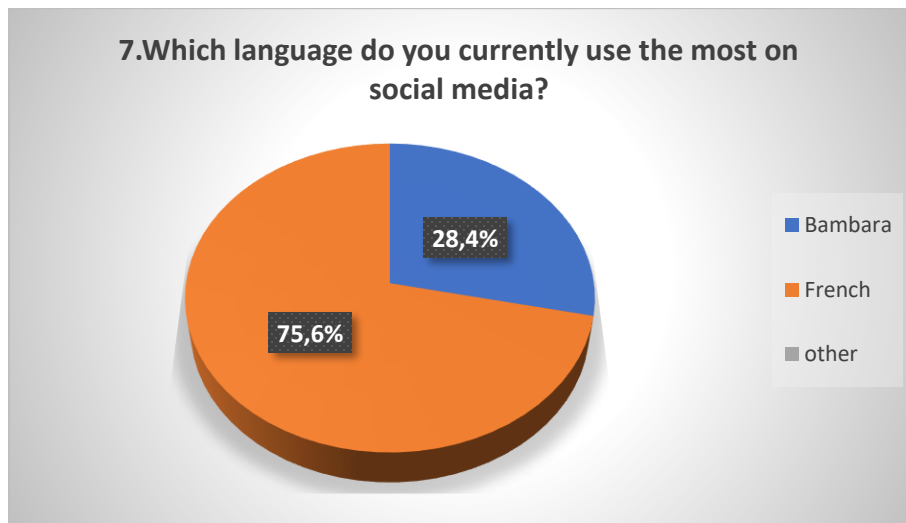
**Figure 2.3 Individual necessity of French**

Overall, the survey results indicate a varied perspective on the French language among Malians. While a majority have a negative attitude toward French, opinions regarding its importance and necessity differ. Some respondents acknowledge the necessity of French, while others may not consider it crucial in their personal lives. It is important to note that these survey results reflect the attitudes of the surveyed sample and may not represent the entire population of Mali.

**b. Attitude of Malians towards Bambara language.**

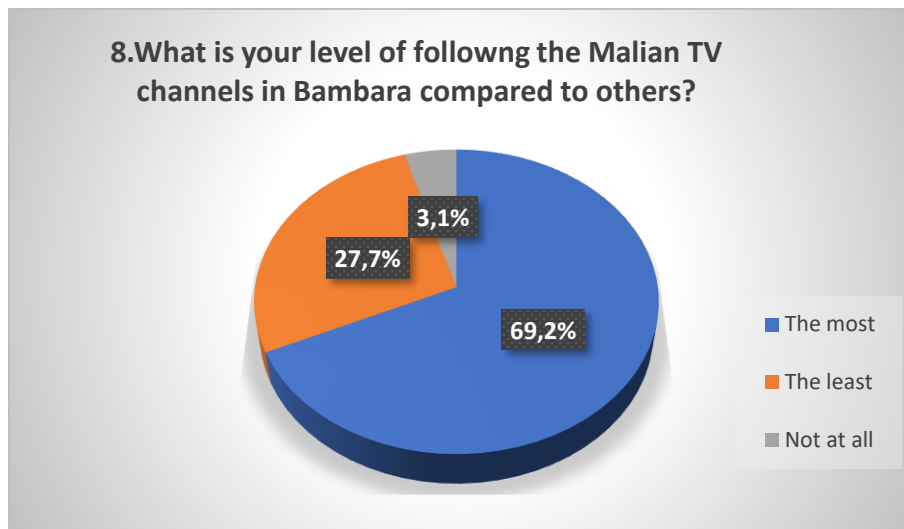
**Question 6:** To know the current attitude of Malians towards Bambara, the informants were asked whether they like Bambara or not. According to the results, 100% of the participants show a positive attitude towards Bambara. This indicates a strong and widespread positive sentiment toward the language among the surveyed population. It suggests that Bambara is highly valued and respected in Malian society. This seems to be the reason why Bambara is the most solicited language to be implemented at the formal level of education (Mali Kura, 2022).

**Question 7:** To figure out the position given to Bambara on social media which is used by almost everybody, the informants were asked to say which language they use the most on social media. According to the responses, 75,6% of the informants use Bambara the most on social media and 28,4% are French. This finding highlights the prominence and popularity of Bambara on social media platforms among the surveyed individuals. It suggests that Bambara holds a significant position and is widely used for communication in the online realm. This result shows to what extent Bambara gained popularity compared to the previous years where French was the predominant language as mentioned by Toure (2012) that Indigenous languages such as Bambara, Soninke, and Dogon are often relegated to informal contexts, limiting their use in education, media, and public discourse.



**Figure 2.4 The most used language on social media**

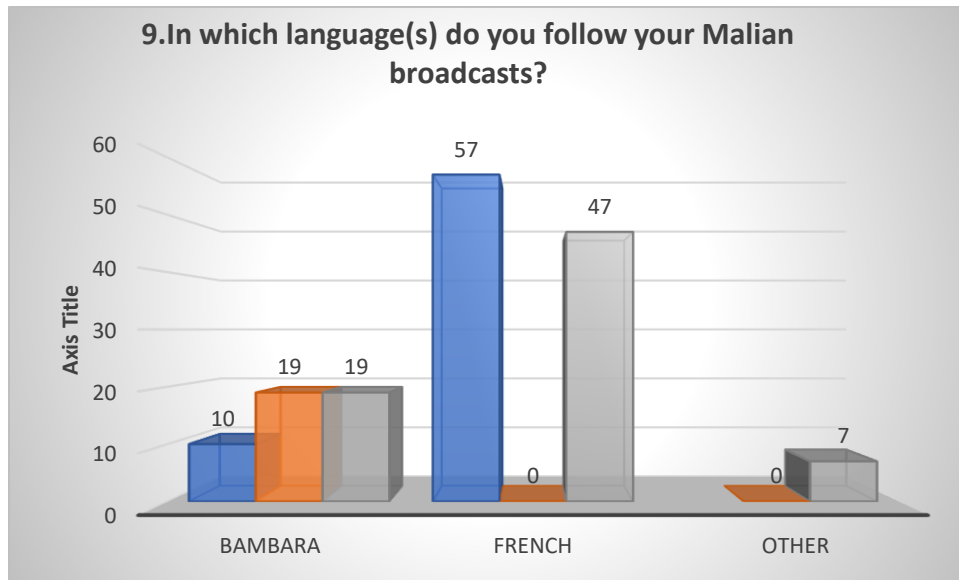
**Question 8:** The broadcasts and soap operas in Mali are always translated into most of the national languages including French. To determine the audience’s interest in Bambara, the informants were asked to provide their level of attendance at the Bambara TV channels. From the results of the responses, 69,2% follow Bambara TV channels the most, 27,7% follow less compared to the other channels, and 3,1% do not follow at all. This demonstrates a strong level of engagement and interest in Bambara-language television programming among the surveyed individuals. However, it is worth noting that a portion of respondents (27.7%) reported following Bambara TV channels less compared to other channels, suggesting a potential diversity in viewing preferences. Additionally, the dominance of French in media and literature further perpetuates the influence of Western cultural values, often overshadowing local traditions and artistic expressions (Shibamoto-Smith, 2014).



**Figure 2.5 Follows of the Bambara Tv channels**

**Question 9:** Almost all the Malian broadcasts are translated into different languages including French. To determine the level of attendance of Malian Broadcast in French informants, they were asked in which language(s) they follow their Malian broadcasts. The results reveal that the number of followers of Malian broadcasts in French is higher by 8,9% than the followers of Bambara broadcasts. This result suggests that French-language

broadcasts have a relatively larger audience than Bambara-language broadcasts. It indicates that French is more widely accessed and understood in the context of Malian broadcasts.



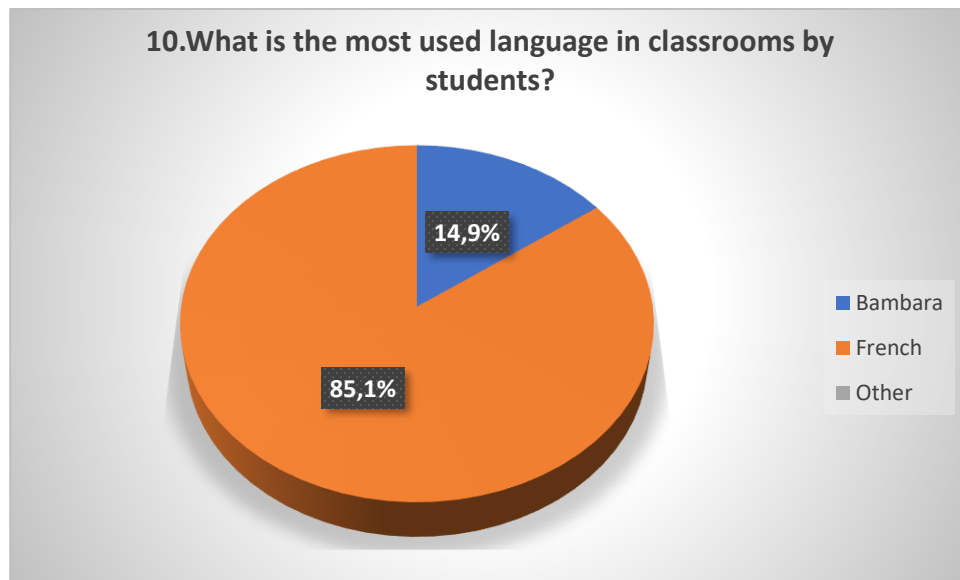
**Figure 2.6 Level of follow of Malian Broadcast in Bambara and French**

Overall, the survey results indicate a highly positive attitude towards the Bambara language among the surveyed Malians. Bambara is not only well-liked but also widely used on social media platforms, highlighting its importance as a means of communication in the online space. The high level of follows and interest in Bambara TV channels further emphasize its significance in the media landscape. These results suggest that Bambara holds a strong position as a valued and actively utilized language in Malian society. It's important to note that these survey results reflect the attitudes of the surveyed sample and may not represent the entire population of Mali.

**c. Bambara and French in education setting.**

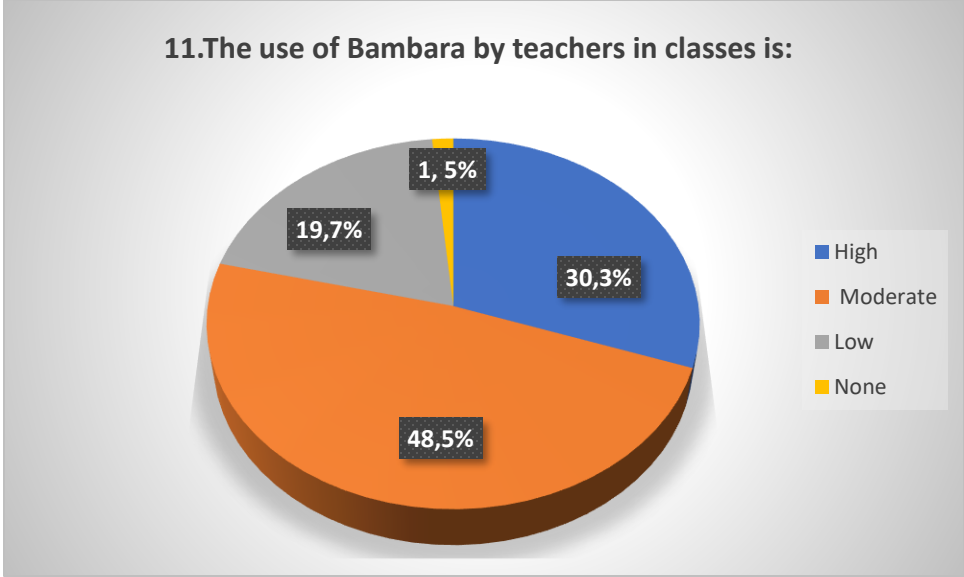
**Question 10:** To elicit data on the use of French and Bambara in classrooms by students, the informants were asked what language is used the most in their classrooms. 85,1% of the informants said that French is the most used while 14,9%, said Bambara. This finding suggests that French holds a dominant position in the educational system of Mali. It indicates that French is the primary language of instruction in classrooms, while Bambara

is less commonly used.



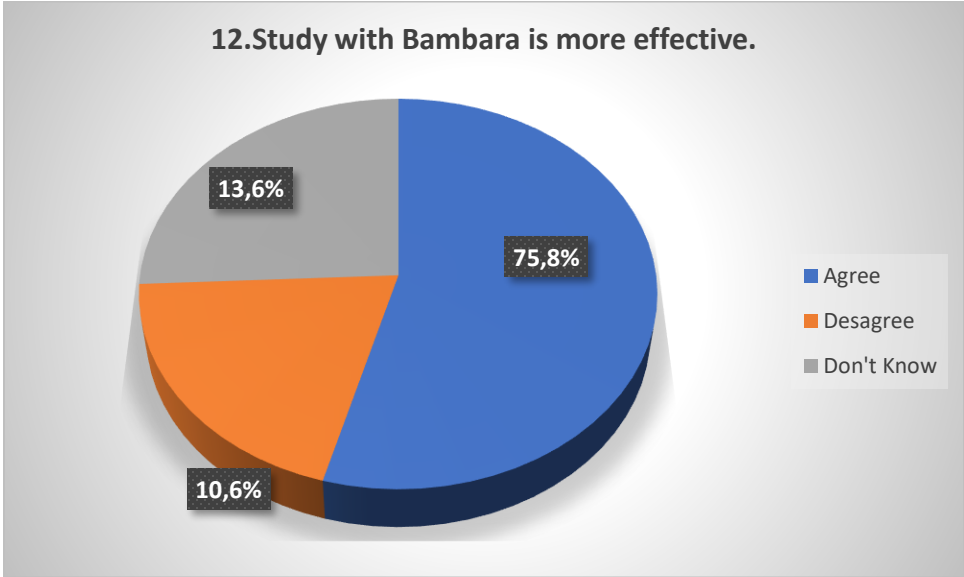
**Figure 2.7 The most used language in classrooms**

**Question 11:** Teachers sometimes uses an indigenous language to explain the lectures for better understanding; that is why the informants were asked to rate the level of the use of Bambara in their classes by teachers from high, moderate, low to none, to elicit data on the level of use of Bambara by teachers in the classroom. We remark that 30,3% of the participant affirmed that the use of Bambara in their classes by teachers is high, 48,5% said that it is moderate, and 19,7% find the use low. Only 1 person said that Bambara is not used at all in their classes by teachers. These findings indicate that there is a range in the extent to which Bambara is utilized as a teaching language in classrooms, with a significant portion of respondents perceiving a moderate level of usage.



**Figure 2.8 Rate of the Bambara use in Classes**

**Question 12:** To elicit data on the effects of the use of Bambara in classrooms, the informants were asked to tell whether they agree or not that studying with Bambara is more effective compared to other languages. This suggests that a considerable portion of respondents (75,8%) believe that learning with Bambara as the medium of instruction yields positive educational outcomes. However, it is worth noting that 10.6% disagreed, and 13.6% expressed uncertainty.



## **Figure 2.9 Effectiveness of studying with Bambara**

Overall, the survey results suggest that French is more widely followed in Malian broadcasts and is the dominant language of instruction in classrooms. While Bambara is used to varying degrees by teachers; it is perceived as effective by a significant portion of respondents. However, the specific percentage differences and the overall impact of language usage on educational outcomes would require further investigation. It's important to note that these survey results reflect the attitudes and experiences of the surveyed sample and may not represent the entire population of Mali.

### **2.2.2.2. Interview**

The choice of this instrument is based on the type of data needed to investigate the current sociolinguistics issue in Mali. To justify the chosen hypothesis, the collected data should be opened to, the opinions of people. The type of interview that we used to collect this kind of data is a semi-structured interview composed of 12 main questions and a few additional questions. The sampling method for this study is very important to collect the exact data; thus, we used a purposive non-probability sampling method. The reason for the choice of this sampling method is that anybody cannot participate in this interview which aims at collecting specialists' points of view. That means that the participants of this semi-structured interview are limited to only university teachers in the field of linguistics because we need data from specialists that are aware and can judge the situation.

The interview was conducted in French via social media (WhatsApp call and vocals) because the setting of the work is Mali, and the only way to reach out to the interviewee was via social media. The number of university teachers that we were able to interview is 10 (9 males and 1 female), in the field of linguistics and literature (teachers of English,

Germany, and French). Because of an ethnical concern, we refer to them throughout the process of this work respectively as W1, W2, W3, W4, W5, W6, W7, W8, W9, and W10.

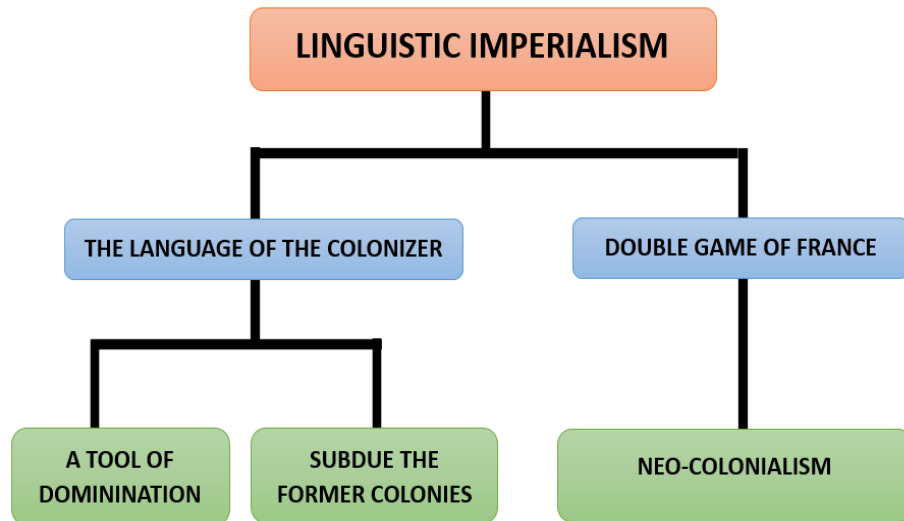
To analyze this data, we used a **content data analysis** process. This qualitative method utilizes technics to analyze the content of data collected from audio recordings, videos, textbooks, and so on. Thus, we first transcribed word for word the recordings (1 hour 31 minutes 8 seconds) of the interview into text using Microsoft Word, on 18 pages for a total number of 6905 words. After several steps of reading the obtained text, we used a **hybrid technique** including **inductive and deductive codification** which led to the obtention of 54 codes. These codes are arranged into 7 categories that we also consider as themes, which are as follows: linguistic imperialism, the attitude of Malians toward French, linguistic repercussions, national languages in formal education, linguistic conflicts, social linguistic realities, and linguistic freedom. Finally, the description of these categories leads us to the discussion of our hypothesis.

**Table 2: Information about the interviewees**

INTERVIEW WITH UNIVERSITY TEACHERS					
INTERVIEWEE	SEX	FIELD OF TEACHING	TIMING/ Minutes	WORDING	SETTING
1	<i>Male</i>	African Literature	11,06	949	<i>Whats.App</i>
2	<i>Male</i>	German	32,33	1456	<i>Whats.App</i>
3	<i>Male</i>	French	6,34	568	<i>Whats.App</i>
4	<i>Male</i>	Modern letters (French)	6,30	632	<i>Whats.App</i>
5	<i>Female</i>	Sociolinguistics	4,05	376	<i>Whats.App</i>
6	<i>Male</i>	Civilizations and Literature	6,03	475	<i>Whats.App</i>
7	<i>Male</i>	English	8,40	533	<i>Whats.App</i>
8	<i>Male</i>	English	7,53	769	<i>Whats.App</i>
9	<i>Male</i>	Language and communication	7,43	640	<i>Whats.App</i>
10	<i>Male</i>	English	6,18	507	<i>Whats.App</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>1H 31m 8s</b>	<b>6905 Words</b>	



## Meaning Categories

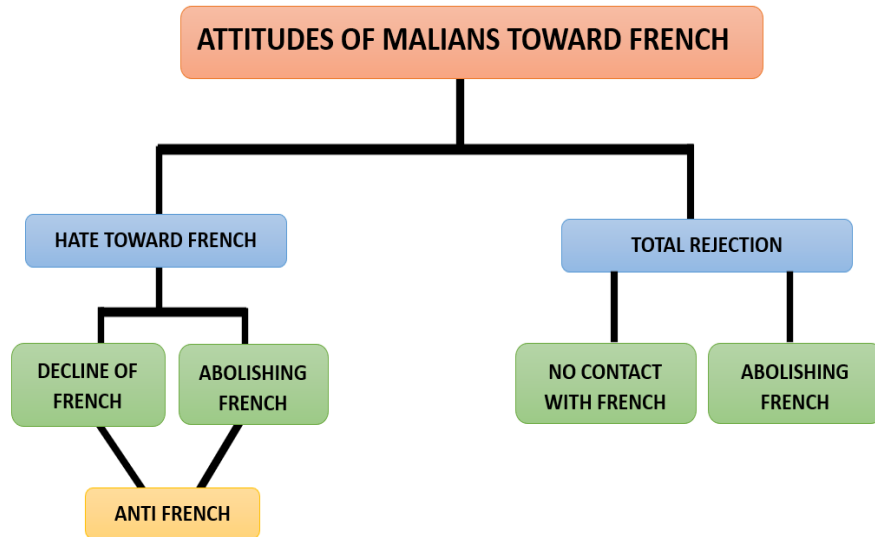


**Figure 2.10 Linguistic Imperialism**

**Note:** *this figure explains the existence of linguistic imperialism in Mali, as reported by the interviewees.*

The idea of linguistic imperialism has been commonly expressed by the majority of the interviewees. According to the latter, French constitutes a tool of dominion that seems to be used by the French authorities in Mali to neo-colonize their former colony. This can be remarked in the answer of W3, who strongly believes that France is an imperialist nation by excellence whose politics in Africa has always been to subdue her Former colonies by playing a double game which in Mali is disguised in a form of help while destabilizing the nation. This has been supported by W4 who argued that French language is a tool of control because language is a powerful weapon of dominance. Moreover, W6 believes that the presence of French language in power in Mali will always denote the presence of the colonizer. This has also been supported by W10 who argued that "... the language is also perceived as a lever of French cultural domination over Mali. ...the use of this language is

a symbol of colonization that must be gotten rid of.” Furthermore, W7 thinks that France is paternalistic toward Africa; thus, she always wants to show that position, making his language the main language of some regions in Africa. This might be related to the negative attitudes of Malians toward French language.

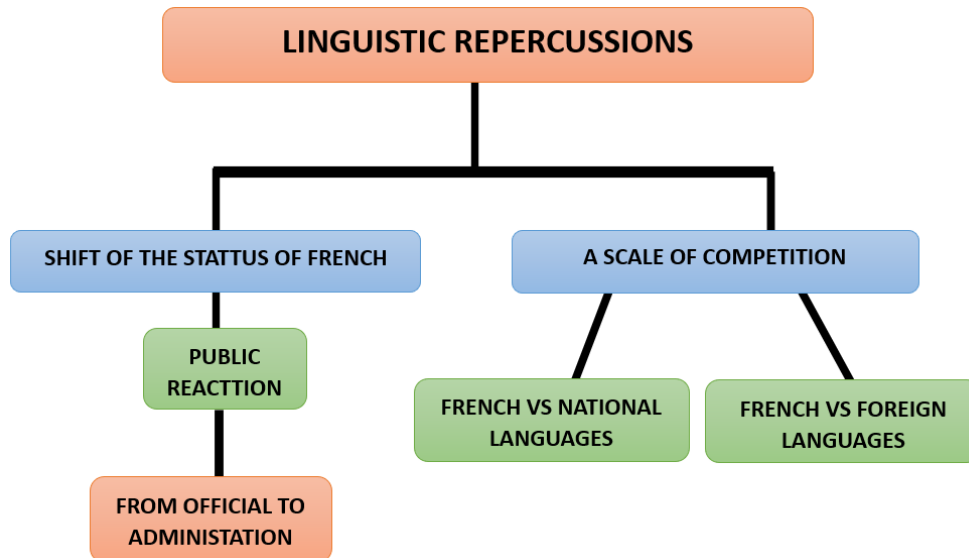


**Figure 2.11 Attitudes of Malians towards French**

**Note:** *this figure explains the answers of the interviewees on the attitudes of the Malians towards French language.*

The attitudes of Malians toward the French language have shifted according to the majority of the interviewees. According to them, the political crisis between Mali and France implies the breaking of the biggest military deal between the two nations has caused hate towards France and whatever is called French; thus, then lead to the decline of French by the majority of the population. This can be depicted in the responses of W1 who argued that “...it strongly affected the image of the French language since Malians don’t want any contact with anything called French or belonging to France, some have even become anti-France burning the flags of French”. This point was supported by W3 and W8 who believe that the crisis is profound, and the hate is already there in the heart of people to the point

that rejection is already built slightly in the learning of French at the school level. In addition to that, W4 argued it is not just French that is rejected by the majority of people, but the French culture too. Moreover, W4 mentioned that, as a teacher and part of teacher's comities, he witnesses the fact that many don't want to learn French anymore because it is the language of the colonizer; thus, he argued: "...when us, the French teachers, when we sometimes discuss with our colleagues, they always mentioned that in few years we shall be jobless in Mali. That proves that the feeling is really there." In addition to that, W2 argued: "...even before, Malians do not really like speaking French because they have considered it as a language for students, administrators, and civil servants; how much more now with this crisis.

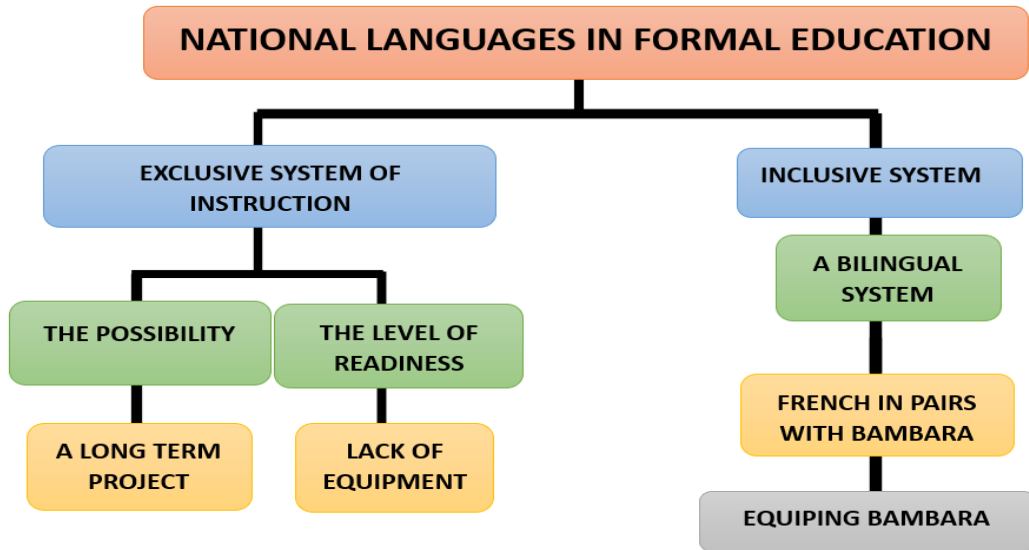


**Figure 2.12 Linguistic repercussions**

**Note:** *this figure is an explanation of the repercussions of the political crisis between Mali and France on the French language in Mali reported by the interviewees.*

The majority of the interviewees affirmed that the political crisis and the negative attitudes of Malians toward French had some repercussions on the image and the status of the French language in Mali. According to the latter, the status of French in Mali has shifted from the official language to the language of Administration and has come on the scale of

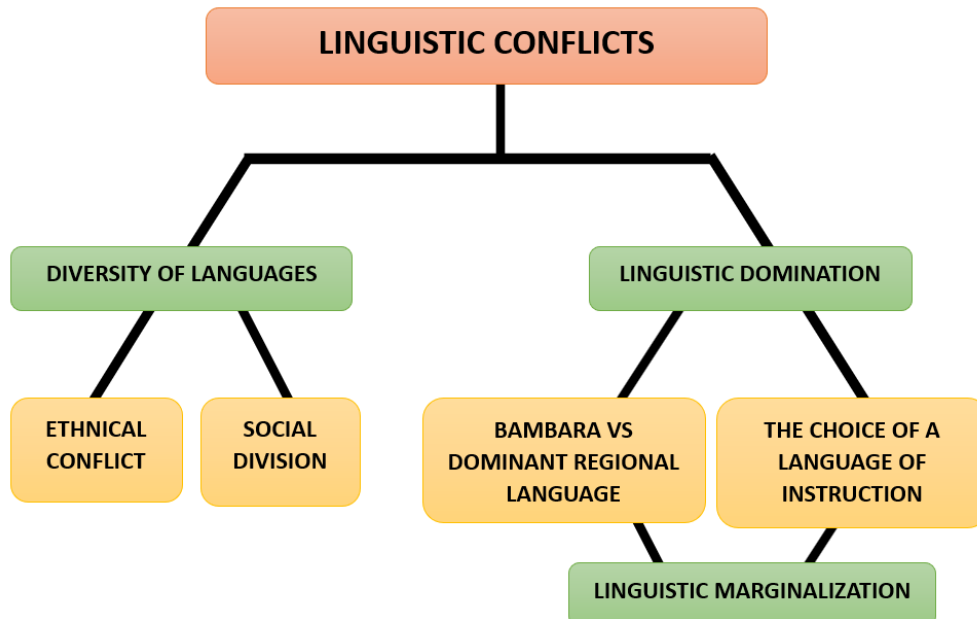
competition with other foreign languages in general and with the national languages in particular. This can be remarked in the responses of W1, W2, W7, and W10 mentioned that one of the public opinions is that French should only be used as the language of administration and the national languages shall be promoted into the rank of the national language. In addition to that, W8 mentioned the fact that recently in March the first referendum has been voted and French is now officially no longer the official language, but the language of administration. Moreover, W2 and 10 mentioned the fact that French has entered a competition with the national languages in Mali in a way that the ambition of the majority is to see the national languages replacing and doing whatever was done with French. W2 thinks that French should enter into that competition to respect Africa: “I think that it is good that French enter in competition with other languages like English, so that they respect us too, and If this referendum is fully applied, French in Mali will be in competition with our languages.” This might be the reason why the English language and Bambara are currently highly promoted in Mali.



**Figure 2.13 National Languages in Formal Education**

**Note:** *this figure explains the proposal systems by the interviewees about the question of the implementation of the national languages in the formal education of Mali.*

The idea of implementing national languages in the formal education system has been mentioned by the majority of the interviewee. According to them, one of the national languages could be introduced in the education system through an inclusive system where this latter works in pairs with French in formal instruction. This can be remarked in the saying of W1, who believes that the idea of implementing one of the national languages in formal education is a good decision, but is supposed to be done after a deep analysis of the situation: “I think it is not bad for Mali to implement that project, but under the condition that we don’t do it because of the rupture that we have with French, but rather a decision that is a result of deep analysis.” This was supported by W3, W4, W7, and W9 who mentioned that the collaboration between Bamanakan and French is possible; but it demands a lot of patience, therefore it is supposed to be a long-term project. However, they also mentioned that a majority of the population wants French to be removed completely while no national language including Bambara is yet equipped enough French completely at the formal instruction level. According to W8, he would love French to disappear from Mali but because of his analysis, this will be fatal for Mali; thus, he said: “My position, under the emotion, would be the pure and simple deletion of French in our new constitution. But from the perspective of a conscious and awakened academic teacher, the transition between the two languages (from French to Bambara) cannot be done overnight. Consequently, I understand and welcome this new status of French.” Thus, W1 argued that It will be really hard to bring Bambara to the level of French in Mali now, for it asks us a lot of work and a lot of time... we should Keep French from now, and try to equip little by little our mother tongues, our national languages that are now promoted to be official for them to fulfill all the criteria of official languages. Likewise, W3 does not share the point of view that French be removed completely now because the textbooks designed in Bambara are not enough; so, long-term means time needed for these designs. Thus, W6, W10, and W7 proposed that a process of equipping Bambara should start, and training of institutors. Thus, W10 argued: “I support this proposal to make Bamanankan one of the official languages if not the official language. Bamanankan can validly replace French even if it is possible to teach French and English as foreign languages.

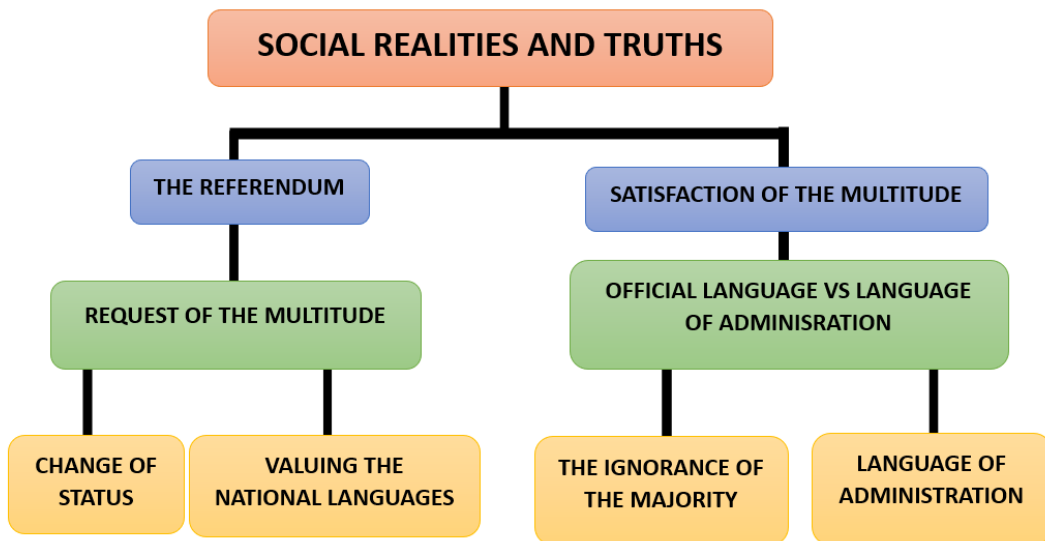


**Figure2.14 Linguistic conflicts**

*Note: this figure describes the linguistic conflict between Malian national languages that might happen during the process of the choice of one national language to be implemented in the formal instruction, reported by the interviewees.*

The majority of the interviewees mentioned a probable linguistic conflict might result from the choice of choosing Bambara to be introduced in formal education. According to them, Bambara is the dominant language in Mali, vernacular; however, when it comes to the choice of one local language to be introduced in the formal education, the diversity of languages in Mali (around 70 languages) becomes an opposition because this can be considered by many as a linguistic marginalization. No one is ready to learn and study in another local language different from theirs. They believe that this can cause an ethnic conflict or a social division. This can be remarked in the saying of W7 who argued that: “I would like that, but it risks triggering a social crisis. The other ethnic groups will want to impose their languages too.” This has been supported by W2 who also argued that: “the question was asked, but we don’t know which language shall be chosen. Nobody wants

other languages to be chosen.” In addition to that, W1 believes that there will never be an agreement about the choice, therefore the authorities have to select the most dominant language: “There will never be an agreement about the choice of a language which can work in pairs with French in the education, but the choice can be done according to a vote based on the majority. Since researchers and specialists have shown that Bambara has the greatest number of speakers in Mali, it is the one.” To avoid this possible ethnic conflict based on language, W10 said that there needs to be an appeasement of the current political situation and a process of sensibilization of the population to adopt a national behavior. In support of that, W1 argued that: “We need to collaborate to reach one goal and not be divided. The situation is already critical, reaching one goal is even hard, why should we bring another opposed goal? What we need here is collaboration and a lot of patience.” This might prevent the implementation of Bambara in formal education.



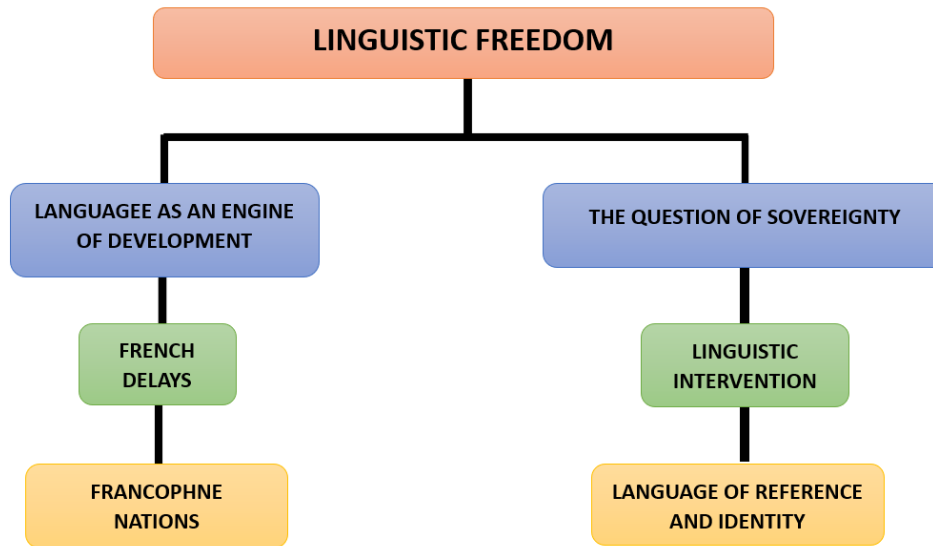
**Figure 2.15 Social Realities and Truths**

**Note:** *this figure describes the social realities and truths behind the changes in the status of the existing languages in Mali from the responses of the interviewees.*

The subject of the referendum voted In March 2023 which changes the status of French from official to language of Administration, and the 13 national languages from

national to official, has been mentioned by the majority of the interviewees. According to the latter, the validation of this referendum which is the request of the majority to value the national languages and devalue French is, in reality, a way just a way to satisfy and silence the multitude. We can remark that in the answer of W5, and W8 who think that it is just a way to ease the tensions. This was supported by W4 saying: “In my point of view, it is a way to satisfy the multitude, those individuals who claim that Bamanakan or one of our national languages should replace French.” Moreover, W2 argued that Malians are very happy about the change of status but in reality, they don’t really know much about the subject. Most of them are uneducated and easily manipulative; they follow easily without knowing. Since the questions are debated in French, many don’t really understand what is going on. Furthermore, the majority of the interviewees mentioned that changing the status does not change anything because French is still functional like before, even though its privilege has decreased. According to W8, nothing is done yet, because French, being the language of administration remains the same as the official. After all, the official language is the one used in administration and for work. Thus, he said: “...even the linguists themselves find it hard to determine the difference between official and language of administration because an official language is a language of administrations and work. But today, French is no longer considered official, that was just a way to satisfy a demand. That demand came from the majority who want to chase away France completely and whatever that belong to them.”





**Figure 2.16 Linguistic Freedom**

*Note: this figure describes the pursuit of linguistic freedom expressed by the interviewees.*

The topic of linguistic freedom has been strongly raised by the majority of the interviewees concerning sovereignty. According to them, language constitutes an engine of development of a nation, and French is one of the causes of the delay in development. Moreover, they affirm that French seems to be a language that does not allow development. This can be remarked in the saying of W7 who believes that a country cannot be developed on the language of others; thus, one needs to advance one of his languages. W2 argued that: “... and they think that French is not a language of development, we can’t be developed with French reason why I think in the past, they tried to include the national languages in the formal instruction for the first 3 years of their schooling... A real sovereignty is valued when you value your own language”. This has been supported by W9 who said that: “Is there a single country in the world that takes itself a bit seriously that doesn't take at least

one of its national languages to make it its official language? No one can claim development in all sectors of the life of his nation without this going through the promotion of at least one of his local languages. Especially in the field of school education... We have to work with our local languages. We know them better; because a language is cultural and to make it another sign of sovereignty.” Moreover, W1 and W7 mentioned that the problem of the sovereignty of Malians will never be solved until they get rid of the language of the colonizer to develop. W8 supported that idea by saying: “Our regained national sovereignty will only be complete when we have completely rejected French in favor of our local languages! A sovereign country is a country that does not cling to a foreign language for its school instructions. Obviously, failing which, our sovereignty, so claimed and even celebrated, will only be a decoy. You cannot develop if you are unable to promote your own language and your linguistic identity. Although language is only part of the puzzle to get rid of France and its imperialist allies, it is essential in this struggle, which is also called existential!” Furthermore, a minority of the interviewee proposed to imitate nations like Rwanda, which after getting rid of the French, was able to advance in development. W4 argued that Many believe that French does not allow development. This can be false or manipulative, but in reality, he believes that French is one of the ways that delayed us in terms of development. Therefore, W2 said: the reaction of Malians toward this conflict is a total rupture with France, and imitate Rwanda and other countries that are forsaking French. He also mentioned that we need a language that refers to our identity, not just a foreign language because it is a pride to also speak and work in your own language. This might be one of the reasons why Malians seem to decline French.

### 2.2.3. Discussion:

In this study, we propose the following hypothesis for the following research questions:

1. Has the diglossia situation between the French and Bambara changed in terms of prestige in Malian society?

- 1. The diglossia situation between French and Bambara got reversed in a way that Bambara became more prestigious than French, which led to the proposal of its introduction as the language of formal instruction.*

This hypothesis is grounded in the assumption that the diglossia state of Bambara and French has currently shifted compared to the past years where French was considered as high in terms of prestige; use and Bambara, in comparison to French, was low (World Factbook, 2009). It is important to highlight that the existing diglossia situation between Bambara and the French in Mali is Fishman's type of extended-diglossia. Considering Ferguson's ninth criterion of determining diglossia, (see pages 26-28) we remark that Bambara and French are in a real diglossia condition. As an explanation to that, French (H) has a more complex structure compared to Bambara and is used in formal education settings, in administrations, on official documents, the medium of formal education and literacy, etc; while Bambara (L) is mostly used in informal, casual situations and the literacy is generally acquired through informal means or oral traditions. In addition to that, French is considered the language of the elite, the educated men, in brief, the higher social class; while Bambara is considered the language of the broader range of speakers. However, the results of the questionnaire show that a considerable portion of the respondents (55,9%) perceive French as a language that cannot enhance their status or social standing (see figure 2.1). Moreover, the French language is standardized while Bambara is not fully. The process of standardization of Bambara has been in process for a long time. Many efforts have been made to standardize it, especially the works of Vydrin et al (2011), Konta and Vydrin (2014), and the creation of a Bambara dictionary with more than 13 365 lexemes (Bailleul et al. 2011). Both languages have been living in a stable

diglossia condition since the independence. However, the data seems to be reversed, meaning that it has been destabilized by the political factors previously mentioned.

We can further rely on the results of our interview in relation to the literature reviewed about linguistic imperialism, and the social and cultural factors affecting the languages. (See pages 9-11). French has been perceived as a tool of dominion used by the French authorities in Mali in order to neo-colonize (see Figure 2.10). This aligns with the notion that languages can be used as instruments of power and dominance by former colonizers. As can be remarked, the linguistic imperialism origins in Mali can be traced back to the colonial era when the language of the colonizer was used as a tool for control and assimilation (Bambara, 2012). Thus, the education system, governance, and economic structures were all designed around the French language, reinforcing its position of dominance and marginalizing local languages (Diallo, 2010). As mentioned by (2008), a lot of punishments were set up against those who speak their mother tongue to reinforce the superiority of the French language (Lavoie, 2008, p. 662). See page... According to the results of the interview, Malians are having the same feeling today; reason why there is a repost of the French language in Malian territory. Additionally, the results of the questionnaire revealed that 73,1% of the informants have a negative attitude toward the French language, meaning that they don't like French (see question 2).

As a consequence of that, Malians manifest a negative attitude toward France and its language. In fact, the majority of the interviewees expressed that negative attitude, associating it with colonization and cultural dominance. They argued that the political crisis between Mali and France has exacerbated these negative attitudes, leading to a decline in the use and desire to learn French among the population. This, thus explains the choice of the decline of French in the society (Mali Kura, 2022). we remark on a shift in the status of French in Mali, from an official language to a language of administration (ADMIN, 2023). This change is seen as a response to the political crisis as a request from the majority, a decline of French, and the desire to promote national languages (see Figure 2.12). The preliminary draft of the new Constitution initially mentioned in the introduction (l'avant-

projet de la nouvelle Constitution) first voted in March 2023 officially shifted the status of French from official language to language to administration in Article 31 of “Avant-projet de constitution de la République du Mali” (see pages 3, 20-21). This project is the desire of the majority of the Malian population as mentioned by the majority of the interviewees. The project has been confirmed and a new referendum is going to be voted on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2023 to make French a simple foreign language in Mali, at the same level as the other foreign languages, and start with the project of implementation of the national languages in formal education.

Consequently, hypothesis number one which declares that the diglossia situation between Bambara and French is reversed in a way that Bambara is now more prestigious in Mali seems to be affirmed according to the results of the interview and the questionnaire.

2. Does the decline of French prestige in Malian society affect its position as the language of instruction in the education system?

*2. The negative shift of the prestige of French in Malian society can lead to its decline as the language of instruction, thus leading to its replacement by Bambara which is highly solicited.*

This hypothesis predicts that the shift of the status of French, which is a sign of the decline of its prestige in Malian society has the repercussion of affecting its monopoly in the education system; and thus, its replacement by Bambara. Aziz Traore argued that the reason why learners drop out of school is because they fail to understand the knowledge that they are supposed to learn: the language in which the knowledge is transmitted is not comprehended. He finally said that if the learner understands the language in which the knowledge is transmitted, he will surely succeed (Mali Kura, 2022). This joins the theory of James Cummins who said that, if the L1 is well mastered before moving on to teaching L2, the child will have satisfactory cognitive development and good mastery of L2 (Cummins, 1979). The majority of the interviewees believe that language is linked to

national development and that French hinders development and advocates for valuing and promoting national languages to achieve sovereignty (see figure 2.16). We remark that French, the official language, holds a monopoly on education in Mali, even though it only accounts for 5 to 10% of the population (Skattum, 2008, p.99). This monopoly of French has been recognized as one of the major reasons for the underdevelopment of Malian education (BLONDE, 1979); yet, education is proven to be a major key to the development of a nation. According to UNICEF (2009), Mali is recognized with the rating of the 6<sup>th</sup> least developed nation in the world. According to the surveys conducted by the Institute for the Future of the French Language (IRAF: L'Institut de Recherches sur l'Avenir du Français), the fact that French is used as the medium of instruction for school subjects mainly increases the difficulty of understanding and assimilating courses by students (BLONDE, 1979) (See pages 10, 14, 15). On the same aspect, several theses in psych pedagogy supported presented at the “Ecole Normale Supérieure” in Bamako (ENSUP) highlight the difficulties encountered by children in mathematics, mainly due to linguistic problems in French (BLONDE, 1979. p. 56). Thus, the survey concludes that the repeating, dropping out, and low levels of students at the basic level are mainly linguistic. Consequently, since 1979, the government tried to implement national languages in education for better results and development (BLONDE, 1979). Thus, the project started with the creation of experimental schools of the first generation (1979-1987) using Bambara and three other national languages (Fulfulde, Songhay, and Tamasheq) for primary school subjects. Then, another project from 1987 to 2002 called “The Convergent Pedagogy” followed the failure of the first experimental schools (Skattum, 2010), which led to the creation of the Bilingual Competency-Based Curriculum introduced in 2002. This curriculum is still at work today in very few regions and schools; in 2010, eleven of the national languages were used as languages of instruction alongside French for 21.1% of primary school students (Skattum 2010).

This can be supported by the opinions collected from the interviewees speaking about the use of French in the education setting (see figure 2.13). In fact, the position of French in

the education has been affected since its monopoly is rejected. However, French cannot be totally removed from Malian education, says the majority of the interviewees (see figure 2.13). As mentioned by Professor Abou Diarra, a Malian linguist, and teacher at the University of Bamako, who believes that it is necessary to advance the national languages as official languages besides French, but gradually implement their operation (Kane, 2022). This has been supported by the young intellectual and revolutionary Aziz Traore of the movement “Mali Kura” meaning “the new Mali” who also believes that the official insertion of national languages mainly Bambara in formal instruction will ameliorate the learners’ comprehension of the lectures and therefore, they will not lose interest for school at a very young age and will guarantee school success for more than the majority of learners; however, this does not mean that French will not be learned at school, but in contrast will be aside of Bambara (Mali kura, 2022). This idea has been supported by the majority of the interviewees who propose a bilingual education system using French and Bambara (see figure 2.13). this then leads to the conclusion that the French monopoly in Malian formal education is reversed to the proposal of a bilingual education system. The reason why they propose a bilingual education system and not a substitution is because, even though French is the major cause of the failure of learners and does not allow development as expressed by the majority of the interviewees and by some linguists, it is the language that keeps Mali in touch with the outworld. They believe that if French is totally removed from education, the future generation will not be able to have a place in the international scale of competition: “Lacking a grasp of the French language would limit prospects for Malian children to have a place in the francophone world” (Trudell, 2007). To support that, Amadou Sangha argued that there is the question of competitiveness at the regional and international levels: “you are not aware that we want to move towards standardization of exams at the level of the sub-region within the framework of ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and the WAEMU (West African Economic and Monetary Union) (Kane, 2022)”. According to him, it will be dangerous to change the school program because of the issue of regional and international competitiveness. Finally, Skattum (2000) showed that students in a French-Bambara bilingual experimental school

students had better results than those in a monolingual French school. However, implementing harmonious bilingualism in education requires redefining the role of French in Mali and its relationship with national languages, as well as linguistic planning.

Consequently, hypothesis number two, which predicts the substitution of French by Bambara in the education system cannot be affirmed according to the result of the research; rather, the suggestion is a bilingual education where French and Bambara work in pair, thus redefining the language planning in Mali.

### 3. Can Bambara be implemented as a language of formal instruction in Mali?

*3. Bambara can be introduced as the language of formal instruction in Mali by creating a new education system that excludes French; developing and equipping Bambara to be able to substitute French in the formal education setting.*

This hypothesis predicts the possibility of introducing Bambara in the formal instruction setting in Mali by creating a new education system that excludes French and gives access to the project of equipping Bambara to substitute French.

As previously mentioned, the interviewees and some linguists suggest a bilingual education system whereby the two languages, French and Bambara work together for better education success. They propose a collaborative model where one national language, such as Bambara, is introduced alongside French. This suggestion reflects the ongoing debates in language planning literature regarding the role of national languages in education and the need for inclusive language policies (see page 22). Bambara seems to be the choice of the majority to be officially introduced in formal education. We remark that according to the results of the questionnaire, 100% of the respondents show a good attitude toward Bambara (see question 6). Additionally, these findings highlight the prominence and



popularity of Bambara on social media platforms among the surveyed individuals, showing to what extent Bambara gained popularity compared to the previous years when French was the predominant language on Mali media and indigenous languages such as Bambara, Soninke, and Dogon were often relegated to informal contexts, limiting their use in education, media, and public discourse (Toure, 2012). Additionally, the findings show that a considerable portion of respondents (75,8%) believe that learning with Bambara as the medium of instruction yields positive educational outcomes (see figure 2.9). However, they believe that Bambara is not enough equipped to replace French (see figure 2.13). As mentioned in Vydrin (2022), the standardization of Bambara is still in process and many efforts are made to equip this language. According to Skattum (2008: 107), Bambara is gaining ground in the field of writing. We can find publications in this language, such as a monthly rural press of 12 pages (Kibaru), scientific popularization brochures in the fields of health, agriculture, and technology, a quarterly scientific popularization magazine, another quarterly magazine with humorous content featuring comics, and textbooks in various disciplines: morality, grammar, history, geography, physical and natural sciences (Cannut, 1996). But Bambara has not yet developed enough school textbooks and materials that can allow it to replace French (mentioned by the majority of the interviewees). Therefore, despite that Bambara is solicited by the majority of the Malian population, it needs to pass through the process of standardization. That implies the adoption of the project of the "draft of the new Constitution" which also seeks to introduce national languages in formal education (projet de nouvel constitution, 2022). This draft is a long-term project that starts with the promotion of the national languages to the level of official languages (voted and approved in March 2023) and ends with their standardization and implementation in formal education. In brief, Bambara can only be implemented in formal instruction alongside French because of its lack of equipment; cannot therefore stand-alone now. This can further be supported by the results of the questionnaire that shows the level of necessity of French in the personal life of the respondents. These results show that the majority (66.2%) consider French partially indispensable, suggesting that they

acknowledge its importance but may while 15,4% find it indispensable (see figure 2.2); we also remark that 43,9% find French very important in Malian society (see figure 2.2).

However, the choice of Bambara to be introduced in formal education seems to be another subject of debate because of the multilingual situation in Mali. The interviewees anticipate potential linguistic conflicts and ethnic divisions if a specific national language, such as Bambara, is chosen to be introduced in formal education (see figure 2.14). They argue that the diverse linguistic landscape of Mali, with around 13 official languages, could lead to opposition and marginalization of other local languages. This corresponds with the literature on language planning, which recognizes the challenges of selecting and promoting one language while ensuring inclusivity and avoiding linguistic marginalization (see pages 19-24) As mentioned in Dumestres (2003), the trinomial French-Bambara-national languages are exposed to a diglossic condition in a way that French is High compared to Bambara and Bambara is High compared to the other national languages. We remark on an upcoming social or ethnical conflict between the national languages of Mali if Bambara is chosen to be introduced in the formal education as mentioned in figure 2.14 by the interviewees. Thus, Ibrahim Maiga, said that adopting the Bamanankan language as an official language would really exclude the people of northern Mali and would be a very serious situation that could endanger the unity and social cohesion among the population (Kane, 2022).

Consequently, hypothesis number three predicts the possibility of introducing Bambara in the formal instruction setting in Mali by creating a new education system that excludes French and gives access to the project of equipping Bambara to substitute French cannot be confirmed because of the lack of equipment of Bambara and the oppositions due to the fact that this choice can generate a social, ethnical conflict.

In conclusion, the research findings indicate that the diglossia situation between Bambara and French in Mali has undergone a recent shift. French has experienced a decline in prestige, while Bambara has gained recognition and popularity. Factors contributing to

this shift include the complex structure of French compared to Bambara, the perception of French as a tool of dominance and linguistic imperialism, and negative attitudes towards French due to historical and political reasons.

The results show that a significant portion of the population sees French as a language that does not enhance their social status. French is viewed as the language of the elite, associated with colonization and cultural dominance. The political crisis between Mali and France has worsened these negative attitudes, leading to a decreased use and desire to learn French. Consequently, there is a proposal to downgrade the status of French from an official language to a language of administration in Mali.

In the education system, French has monopolized despite a small percentage of the population being proficient in it. This monopoly has hindered the development of education in Mali. The research suggests that French poses linguistic challenges, particularly in subjects like mathematics, impeding comprehension and assimilation of courses. To improve learning outcomes, national languages, primarily Bambara, have been introduced into the education system. However, a complete substitution of French with Bambara is not favored. Instead, a bilingual education system that includes both languages is proposed to redefine the role of French, ensure international competitiveness, and enhance educational success. The research emphasizes the need for standardizing Bambara and developing appropriate teaching materials before fully replacing French in formal education. The ongoing standardization process and the adoption of the "draft of the new Constitution" are seen as crucial steps towards implementing national languages in the education system.

In conclusion, while the diglossia situation between Bambara and French in Mali has shifted, completely replacing French with Bambara is not currently feasible. Instead, a collaborative bilingual education model that values both languages is proposed to improve educational outcomes and promote linguistic inclusivity.

## **General Conclusion:**

Language is a vital tool for social interaction and the formation of societies. Sociolinguistics, which emerged in response to Chomsky's linguistics, explores the societal aspects of language, studying language's relationship with society, language variation, and attitudes towards language. It examines how social factors like gender, age, and social class influence language use within communities, including language planning such as bilingualism and diglossia. In Mali, a country with over 70 languages, language diversity poses ongoing challenges. Recent political conflicts between Mali and France have sparked discussions on the importance of national languages, particularly Bambara. A preliminary draft of the new Constitution proposes making Bambara an official language alongside other national languages, while French would remain the language for official work. These tensions arose after the removal of the elected President and the subsequent termination of the military deal between Mali and France. Linguists are divided on the proposal to promote Bambara as the language of education in Mali. Despite this opposition, the majority of the population seems to reject the prestige associated with French and supports giving more importance to Bambara. The proposal to elevate Bambara has gained momentum through social media and has become a subject of debate among linguists, intellectuals, and the media in Mali.

Therefore, the research was divided into 2 chapters. The first chapter which was concerned with the sociolinguistic concepts and the linguistic situation of Mali. These two points are concerned with the concepts of language policy and planning in relation to the case of Mali and the concept of diglossia and bilingualism in relation to the Malian situation. The second chapter was concerned with the methodology adopted to investigate the issue, explaining and describing the research techniques, and instruments used for the data collection and analysis.

This study examined the diglossia situation between French and Bambara in Mali and proposed several hypotheses regarding the reversal of this diglossic relationship, the decline of French as the language of instruction, and the potential introduction of Bambara

as a language of formal education. Through a combination of literature review, interviews, and analysis of the current linguistic landscape in Mali, the findings shed light on the changing dynamics of language prestige and the implications for education in the country.

The first hypothesis, which posited a reversal of the diglossia situation with Bambara becoming more prestigious than French, was supported by the evidence gathered. The historical context of linguistic imperialism and the negative attitudes towards French as a tool of domination contributed to the perceived decline in French prestige. Furthermore, political factors and the desire to promote national languages, including Bambara, were identified as key drivers in reshaping the linguistic landscape.

However, the second hypothesis, predicting the complete substitution of French by Bambara in the education system, was not confirmed. Instead, the research findings pointed towards the possibility of a bilingual education system, where French and Bambara coexist as languages of instruction. The interviewees and linguistic experts emphasized the importance of maintaining a grasp of the French language for international competitiveness while also valuing and promoting national languages.

Regarding the third hypothesis, which explored the introduction of Bambara as the language of formal instruction by creating a new education system excluding French, it was determined that the lack of adequate linguistic resources and potential linguistic conflicts posed challenges to its implementation. The diverse linguistic landscape of Mali, with numerous official languages, raised concerns about the potential marginalization of other local languages and the unity of the population.

Overall, the study highlights the complex dynamics of language choice and the need for careful language planning in education. While acknowledging the changing status of French and the desire to promote national languages, including Bambara, a comprehensive and inclusive approach that recognizes the multilingual nature of Mali is crucial. Further research and collaboration are necessary to develop appropriate language policies,

standardize Bambara, and ensure a balanced bilingual education system that respects linguistic diversity and promotes educational success in Mali.

In the course of this research, several limitations have been encountered among which are the issue of distance, the lack of collaboration, and the limitation of resources. In the first place, the distance between us and the participants affected the results of the research. In fact, this study is field work research; however, since we are in Algeria and the participants are in Mali, there was a problem of adaptation, knowledge, and skill on how to reach out to the participants and which kind of question is pertinent to bring relevant answers to the research. In the second place, we encountered a lot of cases where the participants refused to collaborate. As a matter of fact, many people refused to participate in the survey because the theme is recent and implies some political data, and some interviewees did not give favourable answers to the call of being interviewed; that thus led to a time-consuming. At last, it was a challenge to find enough official sources of information about the issue under investigation, because it is recent and a lot has not been written about it: only one research was found on the issue dealing with the referendum acceptance by the population. Nevertheless, the research was conducted with the resources at hand, available on different social platforms and journals.

In fact, this research would spark other subjects of research such as how to bring development through the channel of education and the right choice of language. The investigation of this subject can lead to an enlightenment of the real causes of the delay in the development of Mali and other regions, and how the choice of the language of education can affect development. Thus, this can answer the following question: What is the role of language in the development of a nation?

In conclusion, one might say that language issues affect all the domains or areas of a nation. Language is the second element that constitutes a community, and the diversity of languages in a community does not necessarily imply social divisions; rather can constitute a harmonious multilingual community. While speaking about development, the choice of language is crucial since commercial exchanges and international businesses and

competitiveness require the use of predominant languages in the specific area; otherwise, one might be isolated from the outward world. Therefore, the teaching of languages must be reviewed especially in Africa for it takes effort, time, strategies, and maliciousness to raise a language like English into the state of global language.

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## APPENDICE 1:

### Sociolinguistic questionnaire

I am DEMBELE Marka of Malian nationality, a student in Master 2 at the University of Tlemcen in Algeria. I am currently in the process of writing my dissertation.

This questionnaire aims to collect real data concerning the current situation of Bambara and French in Mali. Please be truthful in your answers. Concerns only persons of Malian nationality.

Thanks in advance.

*Je suis DEMBELE Marka de nationalité Malienne, étudiant en master 2 à l'université de Tlemcen en Algérie. Je suis actuellement en phase de rédaction de mon mémoire de fin d'études.*

*Ce questionnaire a pour but de collecter des données vraies concernant la situation actuelle du Bambara et du Français au Mali. S'il vous plaît soyez véridique dans vos réponses. Concerne uniquement les personnes de nationalité Malienne.*

*Merci d'avance.*

.....  
.....

#### I. Respondent's datasheet

##### Occupation

- Students
- Teacher
- other

##### Age

- 18-24
- 24-30
- More

##### Current country of residence :

- 
1. Are you aware of the current political tension between Mali and France?  
*Êtes-vous au courant de la tension politique actuelle entre le Mali et la France ?*  
Yes  
No

#### II. The attitude of Malians toward the French

2. Do you like the French language?  
*Aimez-vous la langue Française ?*  
Yes

No

3. Do you sometimes use French to feel important before others?  
*Utilisez-vous le Français souvent pour vous sentir instruit aux yeux des autres ?*  
Yes  
No
  
4. How do you rate the level of importance of French in the Malian society?  
*Comment évaluez-vous l'importance du Français dans la société Malienne ?*  
Very important  
Important  
Less important  
Not important  
Neutral
  
5. How do you rate the level of necessity of French in your life?  
*Comment jugez-vous le niveau de nécessité (besoin) du Français dans votre vie ?*  
Indispensable  
Partly indispensable  
Not necessary

<b>III. The attitude of Malians toward Bambara</b>
--

6. Do you like the Bambara language?  
*Aimez-vous la langue Bambara ?*  
Yes  
No
  
7. Which language do you currently use the most on social media?  
*Quelle langue utilisez-vous le plus actuellement sur les réseaux sociaux ?*  
Bambara  
French  
Other
  
8. What is your level of following the Malian TV channels in Bambara compared to others?  
*Quel est votre niveau de suivis des chaînes de télévisions Malienne en Bambara comparé aux autres ?*  
The most  
The least  
Not at all
  
9. In which language(s) do you follow your Malian broadcasts?  
*Dans quelle langue(s) suivez-vous vos émissions Malienne ?*  
Bambara  
French  
Other

#### IV. Bambara and French in the education setting

10. What is the most used language in class by students?  
*Quelle est la langue la plus utilisée en classe par les étudiants ?*  
Bambara  
French  
Other
11. The use of Bambara by teachers in classes is:  
*L'utilisation du Bambara en classe par les profs est :*  
High  
Moderate  
Low  
None
12. Studying with Bambara is more effective.  
*Etudier avec le Bambara est plus efficace.*  
Agree  
Disagree  
I don't know

## APPENDIX 2:

### Semi-structured interview guide

*Only University teachers*

Date and place of the interview:

<b>I. Respondent's datasheet</b>
----------------------------------

**Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Full Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sex:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Occupation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Field of teaching:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>II. Awareness of the issue</b>
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1. I believe that you are aware of the current political conflict between Mali and France which contributed to the breakdown of the military agreement Barkane, French troop fighting against terrorism in Mali!

*Je pense que vous êtes sans ignorer le conflit politique actuel entre le Mali et la France qui a contribué à la rupture de l'accord militaire Barkane, troupe Française de lutte contre le terrorisme au Mali !*

<b>III. Attitudes toward the issues</b>
---

2. In your opinion, does this have repercussions on the image of the French language in Mali? (How ?)

*A votre avis, cela a-t-il des répercussions sur l'image de la langue française au Mali ? (Comment?)*

3. What are the current reactions of Malians vis-à-vis the French language following this conflict? (What is your reaction too ?)

*Quelles sont actuellement les réactions des Maliens vis-à-vis de la langue française suite à ce conflit ? (Et quelle est votre position également ?)*

4. In your humble opinion, do Malians still have this notion of the superiority of French compared to the national languages before?

*A votre humble avis, est-ce que les Maliens ont toujours cette considération de supériorité du Français comparé aux langues nationales comme auparavant ?*

#### **IV. Attitude toward the New reforms and position**

5. What do you think of the draft of the new constitution of Mali (presented to the interim government) which changes the status of French from an official language to a working language or language of administration in Mali? And what is your position?

*Que pensez-vous de l'avant-projet de nouvelle constitution du Mali (présenté au gouvernement de la transition) qui change le statut du Français de langue officielle en langue de travail au Mali ? Et quelle est votre position?*

6. This draft of the new constitution also proposes the possibility of making the national languages of the country official languages, in particular Bambara which is already much in demand. What is your opinion about that?

*Ce projet de nouvelle constitution propose également la possibilité de rendre les langues nationales du pays des langues officielles, notamment le Bambara qui est déjà beaucoup sollicité. Quel est votre avis par rapport à cela?*

7. Do you think that the current political conflict between Mali and France is also a cause of the choice to lower the status of French and raise the status of our national languages?

*Pensez-vous que le conflit politique actuel entre le Mali et la France est également une cause du choix de diminution du statut du Français et d'élévation du statut de nos langues ?*

#### **V. National languages in formal education**

8. As it can be remarked, many even propose that Bambara be used as an official language of instruction in schools in Mali. Do you share this opinion?

*Comme on le remarque, beaucoup proposent même que le Bambara soit utilisé comme une langue d'instruction officielle dans les écoles au Mali. Partagez-vous cet avis ?*

9. Please justify your answer. *Justifiez votre réponse s'il vous plaît.*

10. We notice the opposition from two sides: those who think that Bambara should replace French at the level of school instruction, and those who think that the two languages should work together. Justify your position on this, please.

*Nous remarquons l'opposition de deux côtés : ceux qui pensent que le Bambara doit remplacer le Français au niveau de l'instruction scolaire, et ceux qui pensent que les deux langues doivent collaborer ensemble. Justifiez votre position par rapport à cela s'il vous plaît.*



11. Finally, what proposals (also personal opinions) would you suggest in these cases to improve the linguistic situation in Mali and its school education?

*Pour finir, quelles propositions (avis personnels également) suggeriez-vous dans ces cas pour rendre la situation linguistique du Mali et son éducation scolaire meilleures.*

12. Do you have anything to add to what has been said?

*12. Avez-vous quelque chose à apporter sur tout ce qui a été dit ?*