

Samatar Abdallah Doualeh, University of Montpellier and CRIPEN Djibouti

/Bruno Maurer, University of Lausanne

Djibouti

Abstract: As in other African countries, French is the most widely used Romance language in Djibouti, the only French-speaking country in East Africa. After a brief presentation of the sociolinguistic landscape of the country, this article will discuss the historical factors leading to the establishment of the French language in this region of the world and its continuance, for socio-political reasons, after independence. As a result, French has a non-negligible presence in some social spheres (schools, in particular), which is a guarantee of a certain degree of prestige, unlike that attached to the first languages of Djiboutian speakers. We shall see, in fine, that French, coming into contact with national languages, is thus brought to experience some variations (lexical, in particular) although the appropriation of French remains limited in Djibouti, compared to what can be observed elsewhere in Africa.

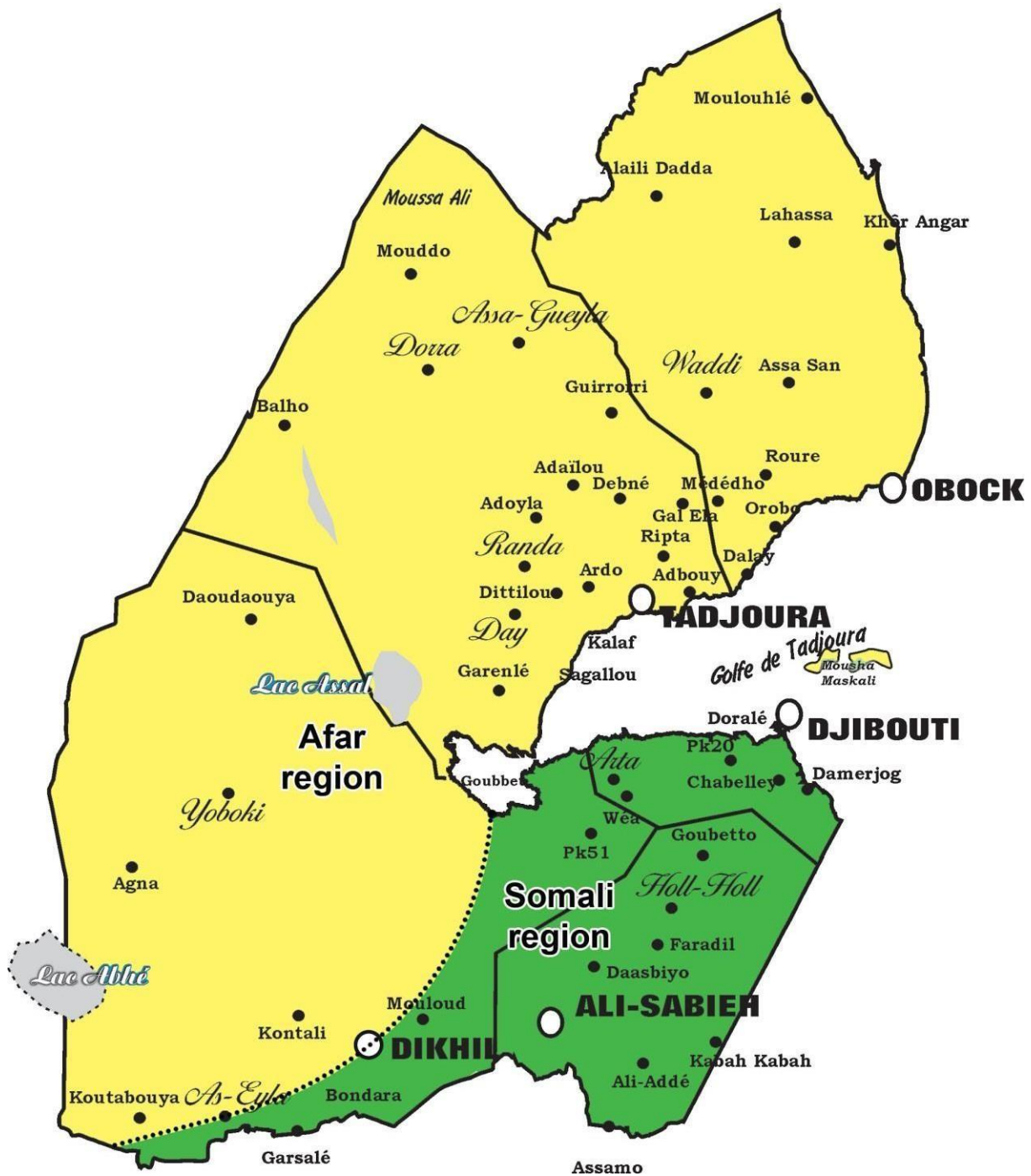
Keywords: Djibouti, French, linguistic change, language appropriation, language policy.

1. Sociolinguistic Situation

1.1 Geographical Distribution

From the perspective of the languages involved, the sociolinguistic status quo in Djibouti depends on the history of the country and its geography (Martinez 2005, 46f.). The ethnic diversity of the country is matched by a significant multilingualism at the national level. The existing languages can be divided into two groups.

Mother tongues - The mother tongues of indigenous peoples date back to time immemorial. They are Somali and Afar, two Couchite languages, the first of which belongs to the Chamito- Semitic family and the second to the Afro-Asian phylum. They are the languages of the two main communities in Djibouti and belong, on the national scale, to two clearly distinct geographical areas as shown on the map below: in the north, the regions where Afar is spoken, and in the south, the Somalophone area.



Map 1: Maps of Djibouti (Cripén 2020).

Djiboutian Arabic, with its two varieties (*Suuqi* and *Haqmi*) must be added to this first group of mother tongues. Imported mainly by Yemeni traders from south-western Yemen, Djibouti Arabic is probably the oldest established foreign language in this territory (Morin 1982, 1). It has now become the mother tongue of the third community in Djibouti and, with the exception of the town of Obock and its surroundings, marked by the very recent and massive arrival of Yemeni migrants fleeing the war, is spoken almost exclusively in the capital, Djibouti City.

Foreign languages - In addition to the local languages, there are foreign languages with unequal political status and prestige, as we shall see below: Ethiopian languages (especially Amharic and Oromo) are the languages of the region (the Horn of Africa) whose presence is most notable because of the high level of illegal immigration that the country has been confronted with since its independence and owing to the many bilateral agreements with Ethiopia, most of whose commercial imports pass through the port of Djibouti. Three languages of international scope complete this range of services: firstly, French for both historical and political reasons (see below). Then there is English, whose fullness and success has not been denied for two decades, due notably to the installation of the only American military base in Africa as part of the fight against terrorism and piracy, the multiplication of private companies requiring English skills and the growing success of private English-speaking educational institutions. Finally, the economic and trade agreements signed with China, whose military presence in Djibouti is growing (with the recent opening of a base for ten thousand Chinese soldiers), guarantee some visibility to the Chinese language in the social field and even, albeit still timidly, in a few professional areas (the industrial sector in particular).

1.2 Social Distribution

Afar, Arabic and Somali are the vernacular languages of the ethnic groups bearing the same name: Afars, Arabs and Somalis. From a sociolinguistic point of view, although they share a number of characteristics due to their status as minority languages, these languages, which are the most widely spoken in Djibouti, are not strictly equal in the social functions they fulfil respectively, in their geographical distribution or in the number of speakers.

Afar and Somali - As we shall see below, the language policy in Djibouti has led to a diglossia between official non-native languages, which are those of prestigious (or formal) language use and official discourse, and so-called national languages, which are those used daily by Djibouti speakers. Thus, Afar and Somali are languages that are not used in official documents and are excluded from the written press. Their reduction is also due to the fact that they are de facto absent from the education system in that they are not taught, although each has an alphabetical writing system, dictionaries and grammars from

generally academic work (Hassan Kamil 2004/2015, Morin 2004/2012, Diriye Abdulle 1996, Puglielli/Cumar Mansour 2001/2012, etc.).

However, there are differences between Afar and Somali. In terms of geographical distribution, Afar ranks first: as shown on Map 1, it benefits from a strong dispersion on a national scale given that three quarters of the territory is Afar. However, due to a concentration of population in the capital (almost 60% of Djiboutians live in the capital according to the Djibouti National Institute of Statistics) and a strong demographic imbalance (around 77% of inhabitants in the south-east against 23% in the north-west), Somali has the largest number of speakers (of mother tongue). Indeed, according to the Ethnologue website (Eberhard/Simons/Fenig 2020), the estimated number of Somali native speakers is 524,000 compared to only 335,000 Afar speakers. But it is in terms of vehicularity that the real domination of Somali appears clearly:

‘In this field, Somali occupies the dominant position, probably even before French. A sort of imperialism of this language even originated in the capital, which is populated mainly by Somalis. One of the polyglossic functions of this domination is the emergence of the Djiboutian lexeme which designates the regional variety of Somali spoken in Djibouti. The uniqueness of the language thus designated removes the other minority languages from the linguistic reality. Another of these polyglossic functions is the asserted rejection of the language of the Other, both among the Afars and the Somalis. Under these conditions, members of both communities prefer to address the Other either in their mother tongue or in French.’ (tr. MA)¹

Djibouti *Arabic* - With a lesser territorial presence, Djibouti Arabic, the language of the Djibouti Arabs, descendants of traders from southern Yemen (Rouaud 1997, 329f.), has few speakers compared to Afar and Somali: it is estimated that a little over 71,000 native Arabic speakers live mainly in the capital. In spite of its low demography, it should be noted that Djiboutian Arabic, in its *Suuqi* variant, which is widely used in the capital's commercial centers, is also a language that is spoken by communities with different first languages:

‘Demographic weakness [...] is made up for by the economic strength of this community, all of whom originated from Yemen’ (Coubba 1993, 18). The mother tongue is used in the family and in relations with other members of the same linguistic community. Each can recognize another's dialectal origins, as characteristic features are not totally blurred when different Arabic speech forms come into contact. This community has also been instrumental in the propagation of a form of trade Arabic used in relations with speakers of other mother tongues (Afar and Somali)’ (Simone-Senelle 2005d, 655).

¹ “Dans ce domaine, le somali occupe la position dominante, sans doute même avant le français. Une sorte d’impérialisme de cette langue prend même naissance dans la capitale peuplée très majoritairement de Somalis. Un des fonctionnements polyglossiques de cette domination est l’émergence du lexème djiboutien, qui désigne la variété régionale de somali parlée à Djibouti. Le caractère unique de la langue ainsi désignée évacue de la réalité linguistique les autres langues minorées. Un autre de ces fonctionnements polyglossiques est le rejet affirmé de la langue de l’Autre, aussi bien chez les Afars que chez les Somalis. Dans ces conditions, les membres des deux communautés préfèrent s’adresser à l’Autre soit dans sa langue maternelle soit en français” (Dumont/Maurer 1995, 88).

Like Afar and Somali, this variety of Arabic is a minority language since it is not taught, has no written tradition and is completely excluded from the media sphere and official discourse (written and oral). Djiboutian Arabic suffers from the diglossia between the two varieties, standard and dialectal. Indeed, modern standard Arabic is an official language (CDJ, art. 1). It is taught as a subject at school, from primary to secondary level and at the University of Djibouti. As this is the language used in classical Arabic texts (and intimately associated in the collective imagination with the Arab-Muslim civilisation), it benefits from a long written tradition that local Arabic does not have, confined to everyday use. Moreover, it is because it is in permanent contact with the languages spoken in the city's neighborhoods and markets that Djiboutian Arabic is more subject to the phenomenon of borrowing. On the other hand, literary Arabic, which is fixed because it is mainly written and almost sacred because of the weight of traditions (Islamic in particular), is less inclined to the phenomenon of linguistic mixing.

2. Linguistic History

2.1. The establishment of French

Surrounded by English-speaking and Arabic-speaking countries, Djibouti is the only French-speaking state in the Horn of Africa. With a surface area of 23,000 km² and a population of less than one million inhabitants, the country remains, partly due to its geographical location, little known not only in the world but, at times, even within French-speaking institutions. Historically, together with several neighboring regions, it constitutes what has been known since ancient Egypt as the 'Land of Pount' ('Pays de Pount'). A country from which the ancient Egyptians imported various trade products, including gold, incense, myrrh, etc., and from which they also imported a variety of other goods. (Oberlé/Hugot 1985, 55f.).

However, it was not until the second half of the 19th century that France, the second colonial power at the time, took a growing interest in this part of the world: firstly to counter the expansionism of the English, who had been living in the Gulf of Aden since 1839 (Joint-Daguenet 1992, 11f.). On the other hand, by the signing of two important "peace treaties" with the country's local ethnic groups, for economic and commercial reasons in the context of the ongoing colonial expansion:

'Thus, by diplomatic acts, the Afar sultans conceded territories, in return for financial compensation: the modest initial domain of Obock was enlarged in the direction of Ghoubet-El-Kharab, at the bottom of the Gulf of Tadjoura. The first [sultan], by the treaty of 9 April 1884, ceded the coastline of Adaeli to Ambado, the second, by the act of 21 September 1884, made a donation to France, in full ownership of Ras Ali, Sagallo and Rood Ali. The treaty of 26 March

1885, signed between Léonce Lagarde [French diplomat and founder of Djibouti] and the chiefs of Goubet-El-Kharab and Ambado, consolidated France's rights in this region'. (tr. MA)²

The emergence of Djibouti in the 1880s was largely based on the geostrategic and economic interest that the country represented for France. It became a gateway city very early on, the construction of the Djibouti-Ethiopian railway, completed in 1917 was a determining factor in the drawing of the borders of this new colony (Imbert-Vier 2011, 125). Along with the exploitation of the Saltworks (Dubois 2003, 127), among others, it enabled France to establish itself durably in the Horn of Africa. The economic growth of the city at the time attracted the main ethnic groups that make up the city today: Somalis, Afars and Arabs from Yemen. It is in this context that the first two public schools (for girls and boys) were born, belonging to two religious orders, financially supported by the colonial administration: the Capuchin Friars (1884) and the Franciscan Sisters of Calais (1889). Although the primary aim was to convert the local population to Catholicism, missionary schools played a more or less indirect and important role in the establishment of the French language:

The religious motive of the missionaries (Capuchins, Friars of St. Gabriel, Franciscans of Calais) is what comes first: to teach the principles and dogmas of the religion, because every human being is a child of God and must be saved. There is therefore an obligation for missionaries to evangelise, whatever opinions they may have on who should be introduced to religion [...]. The religious motive may be limited to catechism, but it is accompanied by the creation of schools where children (boys and girls) will learn to read, write and learn various subjects as well as practical knowledge (vocational schools)'. (tr. MA)³

However, Jules Ferry's laws on education, promulgated at the end of the nineteenth century in France and establishing the principle of compulsory, free and secular schooling, as well as the law of separation of church and state (1905) had disastrous consequences on missionary schools, many of which were condemned to close immediately, notably for lack of financial means (Dubois/Soumille 2004, 88-102). In 1907, a committee of the *Alliance Française*, a private law association whose main objective was "the propagation of the French language in the colonies and abroad", took charge of the education given to the "natives", but its action was

² "Ainsi, par actes diplomatiques, les sultans Afars concédèrent des territoires, moyennant compensations financières: le modeste domaine initial d'Obock s'agrandissait en direction du Goubet-El-Kharab, au fond du golfe de Tadjoura. Le premier [sultan], par le traité du 9 avril 1884, céda le littoral de Adaeli à Ambado, le second, par l'acte du 21 Septembre 1884, faisait donation à la France, en toute propriété de Ras Ali, de Sagallo et Rood Ali. Le traité du 26 mars 1885, passé entre Léonce Lagarde [diplomate français fondateur de la ville de Djibouti] et les chefs du Goubet-El-Kharab et d'Ambado, consolidait les droits de la France dans cette région" (Dubois 1997, 39).

³ "Le motif religieux des missionnaires (Capucins, Frères de Saint-Gabriel, Franciscaines de Calais) est celui qui paraît en premier : faire connaître les principes et les dogmes de la religion, car chaque être humain est un enfant de Dieu et doit être *sauvé*. Il y a donc obligation pour les missionnaires d'évangéliser, quelles que soit les opinions qu'ils puissent avoir sur les personnes à introduire dans la religion [...]. Le motif religieux peut se limiter au catéchisme, mais il s'accompagne de la création d'écoles où les enfants (garçons et filles) apprendront à lire, à écrire et à apprendre diverses disciplines ainsi que des savoir pratiques (écoles professionnelles)" (Pénel 2017, 181f.).

stopped, as was that of the Congregational schools, in 1922, "on the grounds that it was using secular Brothers due to a lack of qualified personnel" (Pénel 2017, 195).

In the same year the public school was born. As the First World War had affected public schools very negatively, it was agreed, following heated debates within the colony's administration, to set up public education. This was a further step in the affirmation of French versus the languages spoken by the people first concerned, as Pénel points out:

For a long time, the issue of knowledge of local languages or at least Arabic was considered a necessary skill for teachers. From 1922 onwards, one could no longer even mention or refer to the languages of pupils in any way, if not very occasionally; Article 10 (Title I) of the internal regulations of the decree of 27 October 1922 imperatively states: 'The French language shall be the only language used in school'. This decision would remain in force for decades and it would take a very long time for it to become an important pedagogical problem again, after independence.' (tr. MA)⁴

2.2. Milestones in Further Development

At the end of the Second World War, Djibouti became a French overseas territory. Djiboutians became full citizens, have the possibility to elect territorial assemblies and send representatives to the metropolitan assemblies. However, the "apprenticeship of democracy" (Oberlé/Hugot 1985, 117) was achieved at the cost of ethnic tensions and sporadic bloody clashes which marred the desire for autonomy of many social groups. A first referendum on the country's independence, held in 1958, kept Djibouti in the French fold. The sporadic political unrest culminated in General de Gaulle's stopover in August 1966. A new statute for the territory was prepared in Paris and adopted by Parliament in December 1966. Voters were to vote by referendum on 17 March 1967 for the status of autonomy or in favour of independence. The results were a victory for those in favour of maintaining France as a whole. At the end of the ballot, Djibouti, formerly known as *French Somaliland* (*Côtes françaises des Somalis* - CFS) officially became *French Territory of the Afars and the Issas* (*Territoire français des Afars et des Issas* - TFAI). This did not prevent, during the following decade, the persistence of political and social tensions against the backdrop of tribal conflicts that remained strong. The pro-independence momentum of local political parties was at its height when a final consultation of the population by referendum in May 1977 was organised: this time, the votes for independence

⁴ "Pendant longtemps, la question de la connaissance des langues locales ou au moins de l'arabe a été considérée comme une compétence nécessaire pour les enseignants. A partir de 1922, on ne pourra même plus évoquer les langues des élèves ou s'y référer d'une manière ou d'une autre, si ce n'est d'une manière très épisodique; l'article 10 (Titre I) du règlement intérieur de l'arrêté du 27 octobre 1922 déclare impérieusement: '*La langue française sera seule en usage dans l'école*'. Cette décision restera en vigueur des décennies durant et il faudra fort longtemps pour que cette question redevienne un problème pédagogique important, après l'indépendance" (Pénel 2017, 195).

won a large majority. The country's independence was proclaimed on 27 June 1977, giving birth to the current Republic of Djibouti, one of the last countries to be decolonised by France.

After independence, despite the stated commitment to preserve national unity through the integration of all the country's ethnic components, the establishment of institutions was extremely slow and marked by strong tribal rivalries: the country's constitution was only drawn up in 1992 in a climate of civil war between the Issas and the Afars. At the political level, although the preamble of the constitution proclaims "attachment to the principles of democracy and human rights" and the "determination (of the Djiboutian people) to establish a rule of law and pluralist democracy," in practice multi-party politics is prohibited, and the ruling party has remained the same since independence.

For the past two decades, in a context of anti-terrorist struggles and the war against piracy, Djibouti has been a haven of peace and, due to its geographical location, has become a strategic crossroads for the world:

Djibouti has for some years concentrated the military presence of international powers and attracts foreign investment from all over the world. The diplomatic games played there are particularly revealing of the evolution of the international system. This island of tranquillity of 23,200 km², in a region shaken by conflicts, hosts French, American, Japanese, European and soon Chinese, Saudi and perhaps Russian troops. The most powerful states have taken up positions there to fight piracy, terrorism or, more recently, as a rear base in the war in Yemen. Djibouti also represents a major economic asset. Although this territory generates no wealth, it could play a role as a regional platform and a centrepiece in the economic integration project supported by Beijing. An international garrison, a platform for maritime correspondence and regional logistics, Djibouti the forgotten country is now at the heart of the new great international game' (tr. MA).⁵

The economic opportunities of such a situation should not, however, obscure the dangers of what some call "trade of military bases" (Martineau 2018) which can jeopardise, among other things, the country's sovereignty.

⁵ "Djibouti concentre depuis quelques années la présence militaire des puissances internationales et attire les investissements étrangers du monde entier. Les jeux diplomatiques qui s'y jouent sont particulièrement révélateurs des évolutions du système international. Cet îlot de tranquillité de 23 200 km², dans une région agitée par les conflits, accueille les troupes françaises, américaines, japonaises, européennes et bientôt chinoises, saoudiennes et peut-être russes. Les plus puissants États y ont pris place afin de lutter contre la piraterie, le terrorisme ou, plus récemment, comme base arrière dans le cadre de la guerre au Yémen. Djibouti représente également un atout économique majeur. Bien que ce territoire ne produise aucune richesse, il pourrait jouer un rôle de plate-forme régionale et une pièce maîtresse dans le projet d'intégration économique, soutenu par Pékin. Garnison internationale, plateforme de correspondance maritime et logistique régionale, Djibouti l'oublié se trouve désormais au cœur du nouveau grand jeu international" (Le Gouriellec 2016, 13).

3. External Language Policy

3.1. Legislation

As mentioned above, the political management of languages in Djibouti is diglossic in the sense that it distributes the social functions of languages very unevenly. Officially, the state of Djibouti is bilingual Arabic-French as stipulated in the constitution:

The State of Djibouti is a democratic, sovereign, united and indivisible Republic. It ensures equality before the law for all without distinction of language, origin, race, sex or religion. It respects all beliefs. Its motto is "Unity - Equality - Peace". Its principle is government of the people, by the people and for the people. Its official languages are: Arabic and French' (tr. MA).⁶

In reality, however, it is an unbalanced and unequal bilingualism. A bilingualism that is more of a symbolic nature:

'As a result of the Republic's membership of the League of Arab Countries, it was decided that Djibouti would move towards bilingualism and that initially all official documents would have a bilingual French-Arabic character. In fact, the headings of official letters and all correspondence are bilingual; on the number plates of Djibouti vehicles, the two numbering systems appear side by side. But that's about it' (tr. MA).⁷

Moreover, the French version of the constitution prevails over its translation into Arabic:

'This Constitution shall be submitted to a referendum. It shall be registered and published in French and Arabic in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Djibouti, the text in French being authentic' (tr. MA).⁸

As a general rule, laws are first drafted in French and then translated into Arabic. *The Official Gazette*, which records all laws enacted, is only available in French on the internet.

Finally, in order to be eligible for election to the National Assembly, the organic law on elections requires language skills in French or Arabic: 'Any Djiboutian aged 23 or over, who is eligible to stand for election to the National Assembly and who is able to read, write and speak French or Arabic fluently' (tr. MA).⁹

⁶ "L'État de Djibouti est une République démocratique, souveraine, une et indivisible. Il assure à tous l'égalité devant la loi sans distinction de langue, d'origine, de race, de sexe ou de religion. Il respecte toutes les croyances. Sa devise est "Unité-Egalité-Paix". Son principe est le gouvernement du peuple, par le peuple et pour le peuple. Ses langues officielles sont: l'arabe et le français" (CDJ, art. 1).

⁷ "Du fait de l'adhésion de la République à la Ligue des pays Arabes, il fut décidé que Djibouti marcherait vers un bilinguisme et que dans un premier temps tous les documents officiels auraient un caractère bilingue français-arabe. De fait, les en-têtes des lettres officielles et de toute la correspondance sont bilingues; sur les plaques minéralogiques des véhicules djiboutiens figurent côte à côte les deux systèmes de numération. Mais c'est à peu près tout" (Dumont/Maurer 1995, 85).

⁸ "La présente Constitution sera soumise à un référendum. Elle sera enregistrée et publiée en français et en arabe au journal officiel de la République de Djibouti, le texte en français faisant foi" (CDJ, art. 89).

⁹ "Est éligible à l'Assemblée Nationale, tout Djiboutien âgé de 23 ans révolus, ayant la qualité d'électeur et sachant lire, écrire et parler couramment le français ou l'arabe" (loi organique 1/AN/92, art. 11).

3.2. Public Authorities

In the Djiboutian administration, French is the working language. Administrative documents (memorandum, organisation chart, work report, internal regulations, press release, etc.) are always written in French. Working meetings are also held in French, but informal exchanges between office staff are often conducted in their mother tongue.

A sort of functional division of languages does indeed exist in the administrative field: switching from one language to another is common practice depending on whether it is a written or oral communication. In writing, exchanges are monolingual: the State addresses its citizens in French, the official language, who are generally obliged, in turn, to use French in the civil service (applying for a job, filing a complaint, letter of motivation, letter of complaint, etc.) in order to benefit from public services. On the other hand, it is perfectly possible to address all State services in one's own language. It should be added that public notices, street signs and road signs which are the responsibility of the State are almost always bilingual French-Arabic, and are thus more in line with the bilingualism claimed in the constitutional text.

On the other hand, with regard to official speeches, the use of one language rather than another depends on several parameters (theme, circumstances, target audience, location, language skills of the speaker, etc.) which can be combined: speeches and interviews with the President of the Republic (who is always of Somali ethnicity) are mainly in French and Somali. Exceptionally, the same speech may also be delivered in standard Arabic on special occasions (during religious holidays, for example). During his tours in the regions of the country, some adaptation can be observed depending on the audience: to Afar citizens in the north he speaks in French, to Somali speakers in the south in Somali. At the national assembly, the debates are exclusively in French, which serves as a vehicle between representatives with different first languages.

The question of languages in Djibouti often crystallises the ethnic tensions that have been running through society since its beginnings: French appears in such a context as a kind of escape route, a means of ensuring a certain national cohesion:

A French-speaking island lost in an Arabic-speaking ocean, Djibouti has resolutely chosen the French language as the means of expression of its national identity and its political sovereignty vis-à-vis its neighbours.] This deliberate choice is also justified, in the eyes of the Djiboutian authorities, by internal considerations within the country itself since French is felt by all political

leaders as a very powerful instrument of national unity, the true cement of the Djiboutian nation' (tr. MA).¹⁰

3.3. Education

Apart from foreign languages taught as subjects in their own right, general and technical education in Djibouti is unilingual. French is both a subject and the only medium of instruction in schools. The curricula for basic education and secondary education emphasise this respectively:

French serves a dual purpose. It is both a language of instruction and a language of teaching, and its mastery is a prerequisite for successful learning. Consequently, the teaching of French must allow natural communication at a very early stage, both oral and written' (tr. MA).¹¹

As a language of instruction, French is both a subject to be taught and a vehicle for all learning. Thus, it takes on a transdisciplinary dimension and thus participates in the psychological and cognitive development of the pupil. The mastery of French is therefore a prerequisite for academic and social success' (tr. MA).¹²

This has a non-negligible impact on the amount of time allocated to this subject, from primary school to high school. In Table 1, we reproduce, in part and as an example, the weekly hourly volume of primary education:

	Cycle 1		Cycle 2	
	<i>1st year</i>	<i>2nd year</i>	<i>3rd year</i>	<i>4th year</i>
French	14h	12h30	10h30	8h30
Mathematics	4h	4h30	4h30	4h30
History-Geography	0	1h40	1h40	1h40
Experimental sciences	0	1h	1h	1h

¹⁰ “Ilôt francophone perdu dans un océan arabophone, Djibouti a résolument choisi la langue française comme moyen d’expression de son identité nationale et de sa souveraineté politique vis-à-vis de ses voisins. [...] Ce choix délibéré se justifie aussi, aux yeux des autorités djiboutiennes, par des considérations d’ordre interne au pays lui-même puisque le français y est ressenti par tous les responsables politiques comme instrument très puissant de l’unité nationale, le véritable ciment de la nation djiboutienne” (Dumont 1990, 81f.).

¹¹ “Le français répond à une double finalité. Langue enseignée et langue d’enseignement à la fois, sa maîtrise conditionne la réussite des apprentissages. Par conséquent, l’enseignement du français doit permettre très tôt une communication naturelle tant à l’oral qu’à l’écrit” (CRIPEN 2012, 16).

¹² “En tant que langue d’enseignement, le français est à la fois matière à enseigner et vecteur de tous les apprentissages. Ainsi, il revêt une dimension transdisciplinaire et participe par là-même au développement psychologique et cognitif de l’élève. La maîtrise du français conditionne donc sa réussite scolaire et sociale” (CRIPEN 2015, 15f.).

Manual and Technical Education	2h	1h	40m	40m
Physical and Sports Education	2h20	1h40	1h	1h
Arabic	0	0	4h	6h
Islamic Education	2h	2h	1h30	1h30

Table 1: Distribution of lesson hours for primary school (Curriculum 2012, 6)

The considerable number of hours, compared to the rest of the subjects, also reflects the desire of those involved in the education system to ensure that the basic skills required in French are acquired as early as possible, so that learning in other subjects can continue. The same exclusive use, the same domination of French is noted at the University of Djibouti where, with the exception of foreign language courses, all academic teaching is in French.

It is clear that the Djiboutian languages are excluded from the field of education. Nevertheless, a law (Law No. 96) , since the end of the 1990s, was intended to give concrete expression to the project to introduce mother tongues into schools:

3.1) Education and training is provided in the official languages and in the national languages. 2) A decree issued by the Council of Ministers sets out the modalities of education in French, Arabic, Afar and Somali' (tr. MA).¹³

But the project has remained a dead letter due to a lack of human and material resources.

In French classes, the attitude towards mother tongues varies from one level to another. In primary school, for example, the new teaching guide for teachers recommends the use of standardised French in the classroom and prohibits the use of pupils' languages: 'care should be taken to produce correctly constructed sentences and avoid the use of familiar vocabulary. You must always express yourself in French.' (tr. MA)¹⁴. Whereas in secondary education, the question of linguistic variation and the use of mother tongues as aids to learning French is clearly raised in official texts.

¹³ “1) L'éducation et la formation sont dispensées dans les langues officielles et dans les langues nationales. 2) Un décret pris en Conseil des ministres fixe les modalités de l'enseignement en français, en arabe, en afar et en somali” (loi n° 96, art. 5).

¹⁴ “[...] il convient de veiller à produire des phrases correctement construites et d'éviter l'emploi d'un vocabulaire familier. Il faut s'exprimer toujours en français” (Guide pédagogique 2019, 5).

3.4. Media

Print Media - As far as the written press is concerned, there is only one newspaper in Djibouti which appears in French (*La Nation*) and Arabic (*Al Qarn*). The choice to publish in the country's two official languages reflects the political will, because this media as well as the RTD (Radio and Television of Djibouti) belong to the Djiboutian state, to overcome ethnic tensions and rivalries by providing information in exogenous languages. Due to a very low literacy rate, the rather low circulation of the newspaper limits the presence of French in this area.

Audiovisual Media - On the audiovisual side, RTD is made up of 7 channels broadcasting in national languages (except dialectal Arabic) and official languages. In this sector, Afar and Somali are dominant and each has a channel that broadcasts news and cultural programmes. As for French it is reduced to the bare minimum: apart from the television news in French, less than half an hour long and broadcast by the first three channels, twice a day, and channels 4 and 6 which continuously broadcast French-speaking films and cartoons (or dubbed into French), RTD's French-language production is almost nil and is a good illustration, on its own, of the decline of French in Djibouti. In terms of information and entertainment, the massive presence of foreign and paying French-speaking channels (Tv5, Canal+, M6 etc.) constitutes, for those who have the means to subscribe to them, an alternative to the local media.

4. Linguistic Characteristics

This part is not simple since, since Maurer's thesis (1993), no studies have been published on the lexicon, morphology, syntax and phonetics of the French spoken in Djibouti. There is a gap in knowledge that can only be noted and regretted, and this article is beginning to fill it, in the hope that its reading will give rise to new contributions. To describe the French spoken in the Republic of Djibouti we will use two complementary concepts, that of continuum and that of conviviality.

The notion of interlinguistic continuity comes from the field of creolistics (Bickerton 1978), and considers that instead of always quite distinct varieties, a poorly defined zone of contact between the so-called superior variety (mainly French or English) and Creole-speakers appears in Creole-speaking areas. The analysis of the speakers' productions shows that these are organised in the Creole domain mainly according to a continuous spectrum, from the so-called basilectal form (Creole therefore) to the acrolectal form, the international language, the main part of the productions being possibly categorised in the so-called mesolectal zone. Thus a model of interlinguistic continuity is established.

Wald et al (1973) hypothesised a continuous relationship between the French language and African languages to account for their relationship in several African countries. They did so in an article entitled 'Sociolinguistic continuity and discontinuity. Hypotheses for research on French in Black Africa'. For these authors, the diglossic hypothesis of the distribution of the use of two languages makes it possible to distribute sociolinguistic situations along an axis going from a situation they call A to a situation B. Situation A is characterised by the fact that French, which covers reserved, restricted, very particular domains, is confronted to the presence of a perennial African language which covers the totality of inter-ethnic communication for a given region, apart from the specific functions granted to French (1973, 21). In situation B, on the other hand, there is no indisputable African vehicle and French, in various forms, also ensures inter-ethnic communication.

Djibouti undoubtedly falls within situation A which allows us to note a discontinuity between communications in French and those in the African language with, as a first consequence, the continuance of a variety of French which, if not standardized French, keeps at least as a reference the so-called "international" standard, in reality a reference to the national standard language spoken in the French media. Taking up again the hypotheses of Wald et al, we can say that the *interlinguistic discontinuity* between French and African languages will consequently create a continuity between the different varieties of French, which can be described as *intralinguistic continuity* between the different ways of practising this language, which we will therefore position on a new continuum, different from the Creole-French continuum.

In this, we are in line with Manessy, who described French as a continuum from the "very pure language of intellectuals" to an "undecided zone where the realisation of the French structures and the languages of the substratum does not stand out well" (1978, 93).

We are now going to attempt the difficult exercise of describing these uses of the French language, having to categorise them in a minimal way and knowing that "African speakers cannot be characterised by the preferential use of an identifiable and analysable sub-system, but by the extent of competence between two poles, one of which is close to the (academic) norm and the other shows significant deviations" (Manessy/Wald 1984, 16).

In this context, isolating varieties of French is therefore not easy. The very definition in terms of a continuum makes the task perilous. It is in fact difficult to discriminate between different varieties in a linguistic subject which is precisely continuous, if one looks at linguistic criteria alone. It would be arbitrary to decide that a particular form or use is to be classified in one variety or another. Moreover, it is far from obvious that sufficient regularities can be found between the different linguistic practices to infer the existence of true varieties. Since the linguistic criterion proves to be inoperative for these reasons of obvious linguistic continuity, we have to resort to sociolinguistic criteria of differentiation. From this point of view, an attempt can be made to articulate the continuum starting from the function of the varieties in question. This involves starting from the use that speakers make of French to try to see which "varieties" meet its communication needs. This is a complete reversal: it is no longer a question of defining varieties on the basis of linguistic forms and then specifying their uses, but of using these uses as a starting point to see which linguistic practices they correspond to. Variety, as we understand it, is therefore a set of linguistic practices - not all obeying a single 'grammar' but also subject to variation - used in certain functions, in certain communication situations. Sociolinguistic analysis thus comes to the fore. At the same time, we avoid falling back into the trap of confusing variety of French with level of schooling.

We will distinguish four varieties of French, corresponding to different functions: elementary French, occasional French, regional French, prestige French.

Elementary French - There is no trace of pidginised or, even less so, creolised forms in Djibouti. This means that there are no varieties with superficial analogies to French, but which are constructed according to grammatical structures borrowed from the mother tongue; from a lexical point of view, these varieties are characterised by a hybrid vocabulary; and finally, the phonological system is overwhelmingly that of the mother tongue.

There is nothing like this in Djibouti where the simplest forms of communication in French are already close to "elementary" French, whose grammatical system, however simplified and without redundancy, is nonetheless French. Inflectional paradigms are reduced, the lexicon is limited and the phonological system, in order to be globally French, is not free from interference. From a functional and sociolinguistic point of view, the uses we group together under the heading of elementary French serve essentially for episodic contacts with French expatriates or French-speaking foreigners. As a result, Elementary French is exchanged in very specific communication situations: sales, offering of various services; from a learning point of view, this Elementary French is the result of a limited educational background, most often incomplete primary schooling. The limited language skills of the speakers prevent them from using this French in other circumstances. For example, this French does not have a marked vehicular function; this will be provided, among users of this variety, by Somali or dialectal Arabic.

Occasional French - Functionally, occasional French meets the same communication needs as basic French and allows contact with foreigners for commercial purposes, this word being taken in a very broad sense. However, this French, which is said to be "occasional", can also be used, and this is its specific character, for more "private" purposes: for example, in the representations of speakers, mention is made of the use of French in situations where one wants to hide something from a non-Francophone Djiboutian or to seduce girls. Still from a functional point of view, it should be noted that this occasional French is not used for vehicular communication, this function being fulfilled for those who use it by their first language, mainly Somali or Arabic dialect in the capital.

Regional French - This name must be justified. It should not be assumed that this variety is characterised by reference to a local or regional standard. Its users are often unaware that they use a different language from the French language and only exceptionally claim a divergence. Most often, they proclaim their conformity to the "French of France" and only with difficulty do they recognise any particularities, referring to them as an irregular and individual phenomenon. In other words, if they accept to give them a reality in speech, it is not the same in language. If we speak of "regional French", it is to underline that it is in this variety that the djiboutisms, the lexical particularities of Djibouti, are the most numerous, while keeping in mind that the speakers are not always aware of a real difference with the French customs. It is also this variety that is most affected by the phenomena of crossbreeding that we will describe later

in 4.2, such as codic alternation. The use of this variety also functions as a marker of social categorisation, because of the prestige attached to the use of the French language.

The type of speakers using this variety are individuals with a more complete educational background than for the previous varieties, mostly with a secondary school leaving certificate.

Prestige French - We are dealing with a variety traditionally defined as belonging to the acrolecte, in a linguistic typology, and traditionally defined as belonging to standard or supported French. This strictly linguistic approach is highly debatable in Djibouti, as several features deviate from the forms usually used in these situations which are linked to representational functions and which manifest themselves in very formal contexts: television or written news, political speeches, interviews with an official in the context of his or her functions. It follows from these employment contexts that speakers using this variety are generally credited with an educational level at least equal to those using regional French. The study of this variety was carried out on a double corpus of written and oral documents. It appears that some of the lexical peculiarities of regional French appear in prestige French, sometimes distanced by typographical procedures, as we shall see in section 5.3 "Uses in the media".

Another interesting feature is the continual shift from one language register to another, from the sustained to the familiar in discourses that usually do not accommodate this kind of stylistic variation.

In conclusion, it can be said that the gap between the lower and higher varieties in this continuum is relatively small, probably much more than in West African countries. The mode of appropriation of French undoubtedly plays a major role: the vast majority of speakers having learned French in a school setting and not informally, the gap is narrowed from the bottom up. At the same time, we do not seem to detect in the prestige forms of French these phenomena of hypercorrection which are characteristic of the corresponding productions in the rest of French-speaking Africa: the gap is also reduced from the top down.

Conviviality between French and Djiboutian languages: codic alternating and mixed discourse - Our attention was very quickly drawn to the fact that users of what could be called mesolectal or acrolectal forms said they spoke in French even though they constantly alternated French with their mother tongue, practising a codic alternation which is not peculiar to speakers of Djibouti and which has often been described elsewhere.

Until now, such linguistic manifestations have been approached from a linguistic or micro sociolinguistic point of view, in the interactionist mode of J. Gumperz, rarely from a macro sociolinguistic angle. Without taking anything away from their relevance to the other types of

approach, we think that we should also consider codic alternation based on this hypothesis of sociolinguistic continuity, as revealing an interlinguistic continuity of a type somewhat different from that characterising B situations.

In Djibouti, but the phenomenon is undoubtedly observable under the same conditions elsewhere, alternation always appears in the educated part of the population. Our analyses on Djibouti even tend to establish that alternation increases with the degree of schooling and that it peaks among speakers who also have a very good command of the standard French. It is as if the mastery of French brought by schooling goes hand in hand with an alternating use of this language and a Djiboutian language.

In fact, it is only a paradox on the surface. We believe that subjects who have long attended school, very often the only place where French is spoken and to which the Djiboutian languages do not have access, are undergoing a process of acculturation, the main signs of which are the loss of whole sections of the mother tongue and that they are used to speaking about certain subjects in French: sport, work, love relationships or politics, etc. Thus, without anything changing from a statutory point of view, shifts are taking place at the corpus level, leading to functional overlaps. French then competes with the Djiboutian languages in certain areas which are said to be private and which are normally the prerogative of the first languages. It is these functional overlaps which allow the emergence of a mixed discourse and allow us to speak of a real continuity which we shall call, to distinguish it from the previous one, *conviviality*. Contrary to what happens with pidgins and Creoles, for which we can speak of an *interlinguistic continuity* "from below", we are in the presence of an *interlinguistic continuity* "from above".

To put a little more simply the difference between the two types of continuity, "from above" and "from below", we can say that the two types of continuity are not the same. From the "bottom up", it can be noted that the first is the result of complete school learning, whereas the second is most often the result of incomplete language acquisition outside the school context. While the latter favours morphosyntactic interference (simplification of systems through subdifferentiation), semantic interference (multiplication of borrowings) or phonetic interference, *conviviality* or '*interlinguistic continuity from above*' favours the form of discursive interference which is codic alternation. On the one hand, mixed languages, on the other hand, mixed discourse.

In Djibouti, there is no mixed form of language, but a very important place for mixed discourse, as the following examples show:

Maad waalatay? ['You've gone crazy'] You left the kids home alone?! *Maxaa ku qaatay?* ['What's gotten

into you?'].

Li waran saaxiib, sidee tahay? ['Tell me about yourself my friend, how are you?'] 'How are the children?
And your parents? *xaajiyadii sidey tahay?* ['How is your wife?'].

4.1 Pronunciation

A scientific study of this part would imply the implementation of important means to determine the articulatory and acoustic characteristics of the speakers' achievements. The authors of this article do not have this possibility and no study to date has been carried out in Djibouti phonetically and phonologically. We will limit ourselves to recording the most noticeable and easily perceptible phenomena and consider the possible repercussions on the other components of the language.

The first remark that can be made about phonetic variation in elementary French is that it is undoubtedly of lesser magnitude than that reaching the lexical, morphological or syntactic domains. Djiboutians are generally very proud of their French accent, which they consider to be much better than that of other French-speaking African countries, and an examination of these elementary forms would tend to prove them right.

Thus, while national languages do not have nasal vowels, it could be hypothesised that many vowels would be nasalised and followed by a nasal consonant. However, even among those whose competence is at the lower end of the continuum, real nasal vowels are produced in greater numbers than nasalized vowels. An examination of the contexts suggests that these tend to be realised in the final position, but this phenomenon is not entirely general.

The absence of phonemes [ə] and [ø] in the Djiboutian languages could also be a major source of interference. However, the realization in e, expected in this case as a replacement, is already close to realizations conforming to the French pronunciation.

In the Djiboutian languages the R is rolled. However, the usual french R ("grasseyé") is clearly attested in elementary French, in a frequency in our opinion higher than the R apical. The position of the R seems to have an influence on the realisation: the intervocalic position as in *Arabic* or after occlusive consonants as in *travail* 'work' seems to favour apical realisation whereas the initial position, as in *Ramadan*, or the final position, as in *Afar*, are favourable to uvular realisation. Another peculiarity is the frequent use of *b* instead of *p*, which does not exist in Arabic, Afar or Somali. Here again, however, the phenomenon is context-related, and the same speaker can be used for both. It is also possible to record the realization of *v* in *f*, the sound constrictive not existing in any of the three languages of the country, that of *z* in *s* for the same reasons and that of *ge* in *ch*.

It is clear that the phonetic peculiarities are actually quite reduced and that from this level of the continuum, we are indeed in a system referring to the norm and the French phonological system, and not to that of the first languages.

All in all, there is no doubt that elementary French is in a position of intralinguistic continuity with other varieties of French, with reference to the French norm perceptible in all parts of the discourse. Elementary French can be seen as a kind of interlude for French or foreign French speakers, used in very specific and fairly limited communication situations.

In the forms of prestige French we note the centralisation of [e] which is sometimes pronounced [ə], in a phenomenon which we interpret in the first instance as hypercorrection, the mute [ə] of French being often realised [e] in elementary French.

4.2 Morphology

Elementary French - A limited vocabulary range leads to notable syntactic peculiarities such as the frequent use of nominal sentences and the extension of the use of *y'a / y'a pas* and *c'est / c'est pas* presenters, which go far beyond their use in standard French. While in French they are used simply to assert existence, and are therefore relative to a being, they are used in elementary French to deny or actualize a fact, a process (*y'a pas parler; y'a connait*).

Morphological simplification and syntactic consequences - The second characteristic of elementary French is the reduction of morphological paradigms. A number of subject-verb agreements are not realised, in the present tense, which may indicate a lack of knowledge of conjugations. This leads to the generalisation of the use of the form *sont*, followed by the most frequent verbal form of the verb that should be conjugated (*ils sont paRl*, instead of *ils parlent* 'they speak', *paRl* being the most common phonic form of the verb in the present tense). We see here the generalisation of a system of auxiliaries which makes it possible to limit the paradigmatic variation of the verb *être* 'to be' alone, followed by an invariable or at least generalised form.

The pronominal system is also greatly simplified, with a total absence of object pronouns in speech as well as a total absence of feminine pronouns. From a syntactical point of view, this paradigmatic reduction is not without consequences. It leads to the extension of the use of personal forms such as *on*, *i*, or *il* 'he'. The absence of the series of object pronouns leads to the very frequent use in elementary French of transitive verbs used in an absolute way, without object complement. Speakers, not possessing the pronoun capable of avoiding repetition, prefer to do without the complement altogether rather than repeat the nominal complement, which is

felt to be superfluous and useless for communication. This phenomenon is accentuated by the absence of the adverbial pronoun *en* 'it', which also generates absolute uses.

Still in the field of pronominal morphology, the category of relative pronoun is also reduced to its simplest expression, *qui* 'which': recourse to the parataxis is therefore frequent in elementary French because of this deficiency. Subordination is used very little, if at all, which excludes any structure of indirect speech.

Occasional French - This variety is characterised by much more extensive lexical skills, with the use of a much greater number of verbs and a better knowledge of conjugation paradigms, at least for the indicative, which is the only conjugation mode used. The consequence of this double aspect is the occasional elimination in French of the extensive use of presenters that we noted earlier. The personal system is also much more complete, concerning the forms of the subject pronouns, as the forms of the object pronouns are still relatively little used and the absolute use of transitive verbs therefore continue to exist to a large extent.

At this level, the use of relatives is more important with constructions in *que* 'that' and even in *où* 'where', even if it sometimes remains poorly mastered. On the other hand, circumstantial and complementary subordinates remain very little used, which leads to a deficit in the use of indirect speech.

The most interesting discursive phenomenon is undoubtedly the appearance in occasional French of forms that we will call *punctuants* in accordance with the work of Diane Vincent (1986), who cites among these forms: *là* 'there', *tu sais* 'you know', *n'est-ce pas* 'don't you', *je veux dire* 'I mean', *vois-tu* 'do you see', etc. In occasional French, it is punctuation marks *comme ça* 'like this' and *là* 'there' that are very noticeable. *Comme ça* 'Like this' acts as a point of reference in the course of the sentence, causing a slowing down of the sentence, giving rhythm to the speech, like a beacon breaking the linearity of the discourse.

We call this feature "focusing" when the words are in the middle of the sentence. Placed in the final position, they signal to the interlocutor the end of the speaking turn and participate in the co-control of the turns, according to Cosnier's formula (1989). These punctuators can also be used in a final function, which we will call "eluding". For occasional French speakers, French is still a foreign language that is poorly mastered. Faced with difficulties of expression, subjects shorten a sentence due to a lack of the linguistic means necessary to complete it. The punctuator then functions as a connector of cooperation, inviting the interacting person to fill in the gaps in the discourse.

In the end, the use of these forms in occasional French demonstrates a communicative competence that speakers of elementary French did not demonstrate.

Regional French - Syntactic and morpho-syntactic variation

To go back to the question of personal pronouns, we see that the object series has been completed but that for the subject pronouns, the reduction of forms to a single masculine gender persists, the feminine forms being little used. Thus, *eux* 'them' frequently replaces *elle* 'her' in speech. The absolute use of transitive verbs is becoming rare. From the point of view of verbal tenses, the subjunctive is widely attested as well as the conditional.

The use of subordination is generalised, with complementary subordinate propositions constructed with indicative and/or subjunctive. Circumstantial propositions diversify with the appearance of oppositional propositions (*même si* 'even though', *alors que* 'while'). The relative *dont* 'Of which' appears and, in this context, it is not surprising to see the use of reported speech in an indirect way.

In general, the syntax is close to the constructions of standard French.

4.3 Vocabulary

Elementary French - The major characteristic of elementary French is certainly the limited vocabulary range, particularly regarding the use of qualifying adjectives, extremely under-represented in speech, which is quite indicative of a strictly functional use of the language. This fact is also noticeable in the verbal domain with a rather small number of verbs.

Regional French - To date, there is no exhaustive survey on lexical variation in Djibouti's regional French, but our own surveys make it possible to identify a large number of terms in both the daily oral and written usage of students that are not attested in standard French. The limitations of this article prevent us from making an exhaustive survey, but we can already say that these particularities bring into play all types of lexical creation:

- semantic neologisms: *court* 'short' for *petit* 'small', *long* 'long' for *grand* 'big'; *trop* 'too' for *très* 'very';
- morphological neologisms: by derivation (*khater* 'Chewing khat'; *khateur/khateuse* 'person who chews khat often', *khatage* 'the action of chewing khat'; *choufer* 'to see' becomes *surveiller* 'to keep an eye on'; *dévierger* 'to take virginity', *enceinter* 'to impregnate', etc.) or by composition (*bras cassé* 'to be fired')
- syntactic neologisms: *se raconter* 'to tell oneself' for *se souvenir d'un épisode particulier* 'to remember a particular episode', *se tenir* 'to hold' for *bien se porter* 'to be well', etc.

The two most represented categories are the following two and we limit ourselves to a few more examples

- neologisms by borrowing: *cadi* 'judge', *imam* 'imam', *madrassa* 'Koranic school', *mabraze* 'place where khat is consumed', *mirgane* 'to get high by consuming khat or state of consciousness caused by khat', *charchari* 'import-export trader', *diri* 'women's clothing', *fouta* 'men's loincloth'. All these borrowings are morphologically integrated and take the masculine or feminine gender.

- neologisms by copying first languages: to *have turns in the stomach* 'suffering from diarrhoea', to *break a tongue* 'to speak a language poorly or wrongly', to suffocate someone 'to annoy (someone)', *the film has come in* 'to begin', to *pour honey* 'to be a cheater or hypocrite', etc.

5. Internal Language Policy

5.1. Linguistic Purism

Assessing the standard of French in French-speaking African countries necessarily means considering the emergence of a possible conflict between two reference models: on the one hand, that constituted by the international uses of French, and on the other, that represented by the legitimate speakers of French in the country. On the one hand, there is an exogenous norm, and on the other, an endogenous norm in which regional, lexical and phonetic peculiarities come into play, commonly used by what might be called the Djiboutian notables.

In Djibouti it is clear that the norm against which all statements produced in somewhat formal contexts are reported is the exogenous norm. The Djiboutian forms of French are the subject of a somewhat stigmatising discourse, even if they are formulated in a humorous manner. It is therefore not surprising to hear, in many everyday conversations, the expression *français frappé* 'struck french' (struck in the sense of tortured), pronounced with strong rolled R to underline the ridiculous nature of the speaker. Equally common is the designation of local forms of *français fatigué* "tired French" (the adjective being no doubt a carbon copy of the Somali term *khaatiyaan*, borrowed from Arabic and also meaning chaotic). It is generally among literate speakers (teachers in particular) that we encounter the most violent reactions to the now classic phrase *ce n'est pas du français!* 'this is not french' or even *c'est du n'importe quoi* 'that's nonsense!'.

5.2. Description of Linguistic Characteristics

As mentioned above, Djibouti's forms of the use of French are not the subject of particular attention. You can even speak of a relative lack of interest, which is particularly evident in the absence of university research on this subject. There are therefore no scientific articles on the subject, and a fortiori no works of dictionary type, descriptive or prescriptive grammar.

A booklet on the lexical particularities of Djibouti (Kassim-Mohamed/Larocca 2015) is worth mentioning. It is a 20-page glossary published by the French Institute, of which just 8 pages list terms, with only an explanation of the meaning, without any details on the contexts of use. It is available online (cf. bibliography). Apart from Maurer's early work (1993), this booklet, although largely incomplete, is the only document to present some data on the variation of French in Djibouti. As the degree of appropriation of French is out of all proportion to what can be observed in certain French-speaking countries in sub-Saharan Africa, there is currently no codification (dictionary, grammar, etc.) of the French language in Djibouti. The variation in French is generally perceived negatively.

5.3. Usage of Linguistic Characteristics

Djiboutian literature does not hesitate to make use of what is called "Djiboutism", without necessarily being aware of these uses or demands. For example the novel by Mouna-Hodan Ahmed (2002), which has been quite successful in the country, features at the end a glossary of terms deemed by the author to be non-transparent for a non-djiboutian audience. This part is included without any explanation, which makes it impossible to understand the author's intention, his epilinguistic representations. Its mere presence, however, testifies to the awareness of a deviation from standard international French.

The majority of Djiboutian writers, including the emblematic Abdourahman Wabéri, are generally satisfied with a few footnotes clarifying the intended meaning of each occurrence. Let us mention two realms that are recurrent in Djiboutian literature and which are referred to in a number of Djibouti literary works: *khat*, the euphoric herb that energizes the lives of Djiboutians, from which neologisms are created by derivation for example (*khateur/khateuse*, *khatage*, *khater*, etc.). The novel by Abdallah Houssein Ali (2018), *Khatastrophe, l'euphorie d'un instant* 'Khatastrophe, a moment's euphoria', also contains a compound neologism, easy to understand for non-Djiboutian Francophones.

There are also neologisms borrowed from the world of nomadism and life in the bush: *Heelo/Sadexley* 'traditional Somali dances', *gabey* 'poem', *okal* 'wise man of a family, a village, a tribe', *gorof* 'milk jug', *toukoul* 'traditional house, hut', *xeer* 'customary law', etc. In this respect, we should mention the novel by Omar Guedi Ali (2013), *Paix et lait dans le monde* 'Peace and Milk in the World', whose title is a copy of the Somali (*Nabad iyo caano*), a traditional greeting

(or invocation depending on the context) of the people of the bush (milk here refers to prosperity and a state of abundance).

School, that is secondary education, is at the moment the only area where the question of the standard of French is acutely raised. As stated in the curriculum (2015, 16), the teaching of French aims to 'take into account the language practices and socio cultural identity of the learner in a plurilingual and pluricultural context where French is a second language'. The systematic study of the language in high school, while remaining generally attached to standard French, which serves as an absolute reference, nevertheless very explicitly takes Djiboutisms into account, which are supposed to be the subject of reflection in class with the students:

The study of French language remains essential in high school in that it allows the student to consolidate the linguistic bases necessary for the understanding and production of different types of written and oral discourse. In particular, the phenomenon of contact between languages (French and the national languages), which is often a source of interference, must be taken into account in the pupils' productions. It is an opportunity to pose with the pupils the limits of acceptability of Djiboutian forms, which are normal and admissible in some contexts, debatable in others' (tr.MA).¹⁵

This is a strong and original way of putting at a distance pedagogical practices that have always been in place, in Djibouti and in French-speaking Africa in general. In short, a tolerance for the local forms of French which, in the French textbook for the Classe de Seconde, for example, provides an opportunity for a comparative didactic approach aiming at enabling pupils to look into the matter of linguistic norm and variation (French manual 2013, 14f.): *Il piétine pour rentrer chez lui* 'he stamps home': a semantic shift in the verb *piétiner* 'to stamp' meaning here to walk. *L'heure est tombée* 'The hour has fallen': copy of Somali phrase for "Il est tard" (It's late). Considering the examples in the textbook and the accompanying pedagogical documents, the linguistic variation in French seems to occur more in speech than in writing, owing in part to the normative school practices, and is more acceptable when it only affects the lexicon and phonetics rather than morphology and syntax.

The survey carried out in 1992 on the use of Djiboutism in the written press (*La Nation*) (Maurer, 1993) showed the use of some forms of regional French.

We noticed then that for five issues over five weeks, we found only 18 lexical particularisms attested in writing. The most frequent category was that of borrowings, which were regularly put in inverted commas, underlining that their integration into French was not well achieved

¹⁵ "L'étude de la langue reste indispensable au lycée en ce qu'elle permet à l'élève la consolidation de bases linguistiques nécessaires à la compréhension et à la production de différents types de discours écrits et oraux. Il s'agit notamment de prendre en compte, à partir des productions des élèves le phénomène de contact des langues (le français et les langues nationales), souvent source d'interférences. C'est l'occasion de poser avec les élèves les limites de l'acceptabilité des formes djiboutiennes, normales et admissibles dans certains contextes, discutables dans d'autres" (CRIPEN 2015, 16).

and that they were considered as xenisms. These words were not always integrated orthographically, with sequences of two successive a's (as in *malaama* 'Koranic school') or with the use of the digram <kh>. It even happened that the meaning of the borrowing was explained, for audiences who were mostly Djiboutians. Massively we can consider that these lexemes were felt by the writers to be foreign to French, falling under another norm. The terms used in inverted commas were those belonging to the lexical field of *khat*, the practice of consuming this plant being widespread among the population as a whole.

In 2020, the situation is almost the same, except that particularisms are becoming rarer. In the August issues, five per week, we found none. When looking through the older issues of the current year, the variation, often lexical, appears most of the time in the "Society/Culture" section of the newspaper. In about 20 articles in this section, published between January and July of this year, we found 16 particularisms. We only mention those that were not mentioned in the previous paragraphs:

- Borrowing neologisms (the most frequent) : *Waqfs* 'religious goods of', *gad* 'traditional Afar song', *dhalinyaro* 'the young people', *assajog* 'born in the town of Ali-Sabieh', *wadad* 'marabout, a term often with negative connotations', *kouli* 'construction worker', *kassow* 'afar poem', *qaaci* 'vintage song', *googa* 'riddle', *Xeer Ciise* 'legal corpus of the Issas tribe among the Somalis' and *Krich boy* 'boy who collects money on the city buses'.
- Morphological neologisms by derivation such as *divorçable* 'a person who can be left after marriage for a valid reason according to custom' and *Djiboutian* 'archetype of Djiboutian'.

Djibouti's political discourse, in the broadest sense, generally varies according to particular parameters (oral/written channel, recipient(s), place, subject, etc.). In official writings (laws, decrees, circulars, presidency and government sites, etc.), the international standard of French is strictly observed. As well as in speeches prepared in advance and read on major occasions (Independence Day, for example) which are nothing more than verbalized writing.

It is rather in spoken language, in more spontaneous uses of language (unprepared interviews, heated debates in national assembly session, etc.) and where there is low supervision, that some more accepted Djiboutian forms of French (*khat* and its semantic field, recourse to the Somali phatic *enn* 'hum' for example) may arise. An overlap in style is sometimes observed with the transition from *vouvoiment* to *tutoiement* for various reasons

(the first being undoubtedly that *vouvoiement* to a single person is non-existent in the Djiboutian languages).

The awareness among some politicians of a deviation from the norm in their way of speaking is also notable. From the use of a rolled R in a national context (probably as an identity marker), some spokespersons may switch to a R “grasseyé” in the French-language media by exaggeratedly punctuating their speeches with a phatic "euh", a phenomenon of hypercorrection originating in a linguistic insecurity felt in the presence of speakers often qualified as "native" and perceived as unbeatable expert models.

Bibliography

- Ahmed, Mouna-Hodane (2002), *Les enfants du khat*, Paris, Sépia Editions.
- Bickerton, Derek (1975), *Dynamics of a creole system*, London, Cambridge University.
- CDJ = République de Djibouti (1992), *La constitution de la République de Djibouti*, Djibouti, Secrétariat Général du Gouvernement, <http://www.insd.dj/accueil.php> (29/9/2020).
- Cosnier Jacques (1989), *Les tours et le copilotage dans les interactions conversationnelles*, in: Castel Robert/Cosnier Jacques/Joseph Isaac (edd.), *Le Parler frais d'Erving Goffman*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 233–244.
- CRIPEN = Centre de Recherche, d'Information et de Production de l'Éducation Nationale (2012), *Curriculum de l'enseignement fondamental*, Djibouti, CRIPEN, <http://www.cripen.dj/ressources/programmes-enseignement-base-2012> (28/9/2020).
- CRIPEN = Centre de Recherche, d'Information et de Production de l'Éducation Nationale (2013), *Manuel de Français*, Djibouti, CRIPEN.
- CRIPEN = Centre de Recherche, d'Information et de Production de l'Éducation Nationale (2015), *Curriculum de l'enseignement secondaire*, Djibouti, CRIPEN, <http://www.cripen.dj/ressources/programme-seconde> (28/9/2020).
- CRIPEN = Centre de Recherche, d'Information et de Production de l'Éducation Nationale (2019), *Caravane de Français : Guide du maître (Première année)*, Djibouti, CRIPEN, <http://www.cripen.dj/ressources/guides/guide-maitre-francais> (10/10/2020)
- Dubois, Colette (1997), *Djibouti 1888–1967. Héritage ou frustration?*, Paris, L'Harmattan.
- Dubois, Colette (2003), *L'or blanc de Djibouti. Salines et sauniers (xix^e–xx^e siècle)*, Paris, Karthala.
- Dubois, Colette/Soumbille, Pierre (2004), *Des chrétiens à Djibouti en terre d'islam (xix^e–xx^e siècles)*, Paris, Karthala.
- Dumont, Pierre (1990), *Le français langue africaine*, Paris, L'Harmattan.
- Dumont, Pierre/Maurer, Bruno (1995), *Sociolinguistique du français en Afrique francophone*, Vanves, EDICEF.
- Eberhard, David M./Simons, Gary F. /Fenig, Charles D. (edd.) (2020 [1951]), *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Dallas, SIL International, <http://www.ethnologue.com> (30/09/2020).
- Guedi-Ali, Omar (2013), *Paix et lait dans le monde*, Paris, Pantheon Editions.
- Houssein-Ali, Abdallah (2018), *Khatastrophe, l'euphorie d'un instant*, Namur, Soleil levant Editions.
- Hymes, Dell (1984), *Vers la compétence de communication*, Paris, Hatier-Crédif.
- Imbert-Vier, Simon, (2011), *Frontières et limites à Djibouti durant la période coloniale (1884–1977)*, Marseille, Université Aix-Marseille 1, Doctoral Thesis.
- INSD = Institut National de la Statistique de Djibouti (2018), *Enquête djiboutienne auprès des ménages pour les indicateurs sociaux*, Djibouti, République de Djibouti, <http://www.insd.dj/accueil.php> (29/9/2020).
- Joint-Daguenet, Roger (1992), *Aux origines de l'implantation française en Mer Rouge*, Paris, L'Harmattan.
- Kassim Mohamed, Souad/Larocca, Christiane (2015), *Le français de Djibouti, petit inventaire*, Djibouti, Institut français de Djibouti/Université de Djibouti, <https://fr.calameo.com/read/004255541d773bc59cb36> (8/9/2020).
- Leclerc, Jacques (2015), *Djibouti. L'aménagement linguistique dans le monde*, Québec, CEFAN Université de Laval.
- Le Gouriellec, Sonia (2016), *Djibouti dans le jeu international*, Esprit. Les États désunis d'Amérique 10.
- loi n° 96 = Président de la République (2000), *Loi n° 96/AN/00/4ème L portant Orientation du Système Educatif Djiboutien*, Journal officiel n° 15 du 15/8, <https://www.presidence.dj/texte2.php> (29/9/2000).

- loi organique = Président de la République (1992), *Loi organique n° 1/ AN /92 relative aux élections*, Journal officiel n°1 du 16/7, <https://www.presidence.dj/PresidenceOld/org1.2.htm> (10/10/2020).
- Manessy, Gabriel (1978), *Français d’Afrique noire, français créole ou créole français*, Langue Française 37, 91–96.
- Manessy, Gabriel/Wald, Paul (1984), *Le français en Afrique noire, tel qu'on le parle, tel qu'on le dit*, Paris, L’Harmattan.
- Martineau, Jean-Luc (2018), *Djibouti et le “commerce” des bases militaires: un jeu dangereux?*, L’Espace politique 34/1, <https://journals.openedition.org/espacepolitique/4719#:~:text=51Le%20commerce%20des%20bases,principales%20arm%C3%A9es%20de%20la%20plan%C3%A8te> (8/9/2020).
- Martinez, Pierre (2005), *Contacts de langues et de cultures dans la Corne de l’Afrique*, Synergies France. Revue du Gerflint 4, 46–57, <https://gerflint.fr/Base/France4/pierre.pdf> (8/9/2020).
- Maurer, Bruno (1993a), *Le français et les langues nationales à Djibouti: aspects linguistiques et sociolinguistiques*, Montpellier, Université Montpellier 3, Doctoral Thesis.
- Maurer, Bruno (1993b), *Djibouti: des formes régionales en quête de légitimité. La lexicographie variationniste en situation de contact*, Travaux & Documents. Revue de la faculté de Lettres et Sciences Humaines 3, 67–79.
- Mohamed, Hassan Kamil (2015), *L’afar: description grammaticale d’une langue couchitique (Djibouti, Erythrée et Ethiopie)*, Paris, Université Sorbonne, Doctoral Thesis.
- Morin, Didier (1982), *Aspects du multilinguisme djiboutien*, Northeast African Studies 4, 1–8.
- Oberlé, Philippe/Hugo, Pierre (1985), *Histoire de Djibouti: des origines à la République*, Paris, Présence africaine.
- Pénel, Jean-Dominique (2017), *L’école à Djibouti: 1884–1922*, vol. 1, Paris, L’Harmattan.
- Rouaud, Alain (1997), *Pour une histoire des Arabes de Djibouti, 1896–1977*, Cahiers d’études africaines 37/146, 319–348.
- Simone-Senelle, Marie-Claude (2005), *Djibouti/Eritrea*, in: Kees Versteegh et al. (edd.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, vol. 1, Leiden, Brill, 654–656.
- Vincent, Diane (1986), *Que fait la sociolinguistique avec l’analyse du discours et vice versa*, Langage et société 38, 7–17.
- Wald, Paul et al. (1973), *Continuité et discontinuité sociolinguistiques: hypothèses pour une recherche sur le français en Afrique noire*, Bulletin du centre d’étude des Plurilinguismes, Nice, IDERIC/CEP.