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## **French as a "spoil of war" and a springboard for accelerated teaching/learning and effective mastery of other foreign languages, especially English in Algeria in the era of globalization.**

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*naouel.mokdad@oeb-univ.dz***Abstract:**

This study aims to highlight the value of French (L2) as a starting point for the teaching/learning of other foreign languages in Algeria, in particular the dominant English language. Recently, the latter has become more valuable in Algerian society and continues to occupy an increasing place in the language market and in the Algerian university. The influence of a foreign language on another target language, which was previously considered negative (impact), can now have a positive contribution in that it is likely to bring linguistic gains that facilitate the acquisition and proficiency of a second foreign language, such as English, which is considered a second foreign language in Algeria. In this perspective, we will try to analyse the different sociolinguistic situations and representations of the teachers of French-speaking English students who learn English at the level of the Intensive Language Teaching Centre of the University of Oum El Bouaghi with the intention of knowing the contribution of French as a support language to the acquisition of the English language, in particular the vocabulary. In addition, it will be analysed in order to understand and discover the importance of the French language as a spoils of war in the teaching/learning of English through language transfer. Therefore, the closed questions, but especially the open questions, will aim to get more information from the target speaker of the Intensive Language Teaching Centre of our university, especially the English language teachers.

**Keywords:** L2 language transfer, (target), foreign language acquisition, acquisition process, English, French. Globalisation and teaching/learning.

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**Introduction:**

The use of the L1 (source) as a strategic resource in the appropriation of the L2 (target) is a very common and important acquisition process which has attracted the interest of many researchers in language science, especially psycholinguistics. Kellerman (1979, 1980) states that the influence of the source language in foreign language acquisition is a function of the learner's representation of the specificity of the languages concerned. It should be noted that Jordens (1979) agrees with Kellerman on this last postulate. The influence of a foreign language on another target foreign language is an idea with a predominantly negative dimension in the perceptions of many learners and even pedagogical and didactic specialists. It can be stated today - beyond all ideological and historical considerations - that it has a significant positive contribution because of the palpable effectiveness of this influence in the transformation and exploitation of pre-acquired linguistic skills in favour of the acquisition and mastery of a second foreign language; in particular English; the second foreign language in Algeria and the most dominant in the world.

In this context, Jim Cummins (1981, 2013) has hypothesised that: Competence developed in one language leads to the development of competence in another language and allows for the transfer of learning.

**1. Issue:**

Given that French is used significantly and realistically by the majority of Algerians, even in everyday life, where its use ranges from phrases to words that permeate the local dialect of each region, under social and even

ideological linguistic pressure, especially English which dominates in language teaching/learning in intensive language teaching centres, it is already under threat and is increasingly giving way to English.

This sociolinguistic situation in Algeria is problematic and needs to be addressed in the sense that less interest in French than in English may affect the sociolinguistic diversity of Algeria in particular, especially since Algeria is now the third largest French-speaking country in the world, with more than 1500 people.

Therefore, we propose to use French favourably as a bridge language for the mastery of English, which has recently started to take seriously a wider field of interest for teaching it in Algerian society, especially in the university centres for intensive language teaching, especially after the appointment of the new Minister who has given operational instructions for its dissemination and teaching at the university.

**2. The importance of the targeted study:**

The importance of the targeted study corresponds to the initiative and attempts to highlight and pay attention to the linguistic transport phenomenon "transfer linguistic" in order to learn a second foreign language, namely English, using French as a language intermediary rather than being considered, in vain and under current global transformations, as a low-value foreign language. (Status/Careers) Compared to English by gradually making room for the latter for reasons that seemed more historical and political. In the light of our progress, French will be positively exploited as a gain and as a language broker beyond these historical and ideological

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considerations to acquire or master English especially for French-speaking students in Algeria professors. In fact, the language gained over hundreds of years, which can be neglected for purely historical ideological reasons and under English's linguistic dominance, constitutes a loss and a prejudice to Algeria's linguistic social diversity. Even throughout the world, which requires reconsideration by language professionals, with the encouragement and subordination of teaching other foreign languages according to their relevance and in accordance with society's requirements.

### 3. Search Questions:

1. How can French be used and exploited today as a language supportive of the rapid and effective learning of other foreign languages, particularly English in Algeria and especially at the level of intensive language education centres?

- Another secondary question to the general problem of our study:

2. For a student who has previous acquisitions and skills in French and who learns English at the Intensive Language Education Centre in Algeria, can he use the language skills previously acquired in French as a first foreign language to acquire and master the English language, which is required today by the global linguistic market and such a university in terms of upgrading the university and Algerian society to the world class?

### 4. Sample and approved research curriculum:

We selected an analytical descriptive curriculum for our study, using an individual questionnaire as a systematic application tool aimed at collecting "epi-linguistic" language speeches for analysis in order to understand and discover the relevance of French; As an important historical linguistic acquisition in English teaching/learning through the linguistic transfer of French-language tribal acquisitions of English students in intensive language education centres.

### Questionnaire sent to the formators :

-What are its downsides its long-term impact?

-How can we use the language acquisition in French for the benefit of learning English?

-Is there a similarity between the two languages? What linguistic aspect do the two languages converge on?

-Does your prior linguistic knowledge in French help you to be able to understand the language more effectively or constructively?

-What is the language aspect that is difficult to control in English?

-Analysis of certain results and their interpretation in the light of problematic, hypotheses and previous data.

-Is language transfer positive or negative in the learning process-teaching English to phonophones?

-Promoting transfers, and therefore the coherence of learning among students, also means saving effort. This means, above all: seize opportunities to start from the "already there", do you agree or not? Explain how!

### 5. The theoretical concepts of the study undertaken:

Acceptances of language transfer :

The concept of learning transfer comes from psychology and refers to a process by which the learner makes use of the knowledge he has acquired, in a new situation or on new objects. This process presupposes that the learner has perceived similarities – has made analogies – between situations or between objects, which lead him to make use of the available knowledge by broadening their scope – by a process of generalisation. Transferring is not a matter of course. It is a matter of learning to make the right analogies, identifying the criteria relevant to the comparison to be made, and the teacher must be able to manage situations allowing learners to practice the transfer (cf. Astolfi 2003; Doré & Mercier 1992).

### 5.1. Aspects of linguistic transfer :

In fact we do not learn from nothing, but by relying on what we already know and which can more or less strongly predispose to new learning: on the one hand, we learn the L2 from its linguistic competence built during the acquisition of the language via the L1, and on the other hand, we build the knowledge taught in L2 from all what we know, from school and outside of school, and which was built in L1.

### Interference and transfer

Kellerman proposes a distinction between interference, understood as the purely linguistic result of the influence of another language, and transfer, which indicates the psychological process that precedes interference. In any case, there are no precise definitions of the notion of interference. Suffice it to say that interference usually means a "deception" of the L2 (or LF) due to the direct transfer of L1 rules and structures to the target language, or a process of internal mislearning about L2 (or LS) rules. According to the type of interference :

(1) Interlingual transfer: occurs when the L1 influences the learning of the target language.

(2) Intralinguistic transfer: occurs due to an incorrect didactic path in the target language. It depends on overgeneralizations or misinterpretations of metalanguage rules.

### 5.1.1. The positive and negative aspects of language transfer

Furthermore, depending on the effects it produces, transfer can be of two types :

(a) Positive: occurs when elements of the L1 (or other languages studied) interfere with the learning of the target language, making it easier;

(b) Negative: occurs when the use of words or rules from the L1 (or other languages studied) leads to making mistakes in the target language

For the FL teacher, it is not enough to have a thorough knowledge of both the language being taught and the students' mother tongue, but it will also be necessary to know the languages with which the student has contact, both culturally and through the mass media. Moreover, Italian is often not the only language studied and this causes a kind of overlap of linguistic codes of other foreign languages known or learned by the student, in addition to those of the mother tongue. The phenomenon of interference is more evident in the case of related languages, since the tendency to transfer is stronger, which is not always positive). Moreover, it is necessary to specify that it is not only the actual degree of similarity or difference between the languages that is relevant, but the proximity or distance with which the learner perceives them. This means that the transition from one language to the other depends on the student's intuition, i.e. on the perceived distance between the two languages. However, the interference does not only depend on the perceived distance, but is also due to various structural and extra-linguistic factors that may concern the diastatic, diaphasic or diatopic variety of the language). However, it is clear that interference can be conscious or unconscious. Consciously, the student can guess why he/she has not learned or has forgotten the correct usage. Unconsciously, the student may not consider that the characters

Thus, Doca (1981) distinguishes between positive transference and interference, stating that: "Transference refers to the effects of positive or facilitating transference, while interference refers to negative or inhibiting transference". It turns out, therefore, that interference refers, among other things, to the use of elements of one language in the discourse of another language.

Cook (2016) also points out that as a result of contact between languages, they are mutually enriched. Transfer is said to be a two-way process where each of the languages involved can contribute to the development of the other. This transfer can be either spontaneous or planned:

- It is spontaneous when the student carries out language transfers without external stimulus, in an unpremeditated way and without deepening his or her reflection on languages as organised systems. For example, a student may think: "The word supervisor in English is similar to the word superviseur in French. They must mean the same thing..."
- It is planned when the teacher provides activities that require students to consciously reflect on their language learning (e.g., knowledge, concepts, or skills) while

examining the similarities and differences between languages. For example, a student may say to herself, "During a vocabulary lesson, my teacher pointed out that the gender of nouns that refer to objects does not exist in English. I need to pay more attention to these nouns in French and make an effort to learn the gender that determines the noun."

### **Analysis of the results of the questionnaire addressed to the responsibility of the Intensive Language Teaching Center:**

In short, through the answers to the questions addressed to the teachers of English of the center as a First party in contact with those who are about to register to learn languages, and in particular with people who have knowledge of the French language, in particular the category of students: French students, as well as some teachers who have already been exposed to this language during their schooling;

### **2.2 Teachers' representations of their teaching practices and transfers :**

In the following, let us see how bilingual teachers themselves formulate the linguistic language issues they have to deal with in practice in their classrooms :

#### **Q1-What is the importance of foreign languages in Algeria and internationally?**

A :« Charlemagne once said to have another language is to possess another soul. Learning foreign languages is important for the development of Algerian society and its rise. It allows us to know about the cultures, history, and scientific achievements of others and this would lead to our growth in all aspects of life. It also helps us communicate with other people for different purposes such as: economic transactions, tourism, foreign political affairs, studying... »

B : « Well, apart from the fact that English is used as the language of universal commercial deals, it is also a language of research and academic publications that Algerian academics have to be aware of. »

Through the answers of the two teachers regarding the importance of foreign languages in Algeria, Informant A insists on the increased interest of foreign languages given their contribution to the development and prosperity of Algerian society; she supports her remarks by the fact that the importance of foreign languages also allows openness to otherness and therefore to the cultures of others, as well as to their histories. She adds that they also allow access to the scientific achievements of other countries, as well as facilitating communication with other people for different reasons, by agreeing with teacher B on their contribution in the field of research and studies; Thus, English, according to them, is the language of universal commercial transactions, and of academic publication of which the Algerian universities

must be conscious, tourism and foreign political affairs adds, the English teacher A, knowing that she has already had a degree in parallel, this one has proved to be very ingenious in her pedagogical practice of teaching /learning English at the CEIL /.

Therefore, it is clear that the teachers' responses to this question are quite positive in all aspects.

**Q2--What is the importance of the English language?**

A : « Nowadays, English is important because it is the most commonly spoken language around the world. It is the language of science, scientific journals, and conferences. It is also the lingua franca for internet users when they communicate with each other, especially on social media. Learning English language has become a must more than a need. »

B : « Learning English and master ingit makes people feel at ease when travelling abroad or read scientific articles. »

As for the responses of our two informants to this question, we note that they merge to demonstrate the importance of the English language in the field of science and scientific research; thus, the publication of articles in highly ranked international journals requires knowledge of the English language, likewise, participation in international conferences or colloquia certainly requires it, especially in scientific fields such as physics, chemistry, natural sciences, medicine, etc.

The first informant A added to the first common argument put forward, another one referring to the status of English as a "lingua franca", in other words a language used internationally to ensure effective as well as broad communication between several people of different linguistic backgrounds.

**Q3--What is your assessment of the level and extent of your proficiency in this language?**

A : « I cannot assess myself, but I would say I have an advanced level. »

B : « advenced »

**Q4--What foreign language is most commonly used in Algeria?**

A : « - In Algeria, French and English are the most commonly spoken foreign languages. »

B : « French »

The answers of the two informants prove that French is a foreign language whose use is omnipresent and which could not be ignored or stigmatised, regardless of the interest of English, whose socio-linguistic and political demand is very strong today in Algerian society in order to prove the international market.

In this respect, we can see that French could be used and be an efficient way of learning English, especially for Algerians who already have some knowledge of French.

Thus, French is likely to be exploited as a good means in the mastery, if necessary formal, of English through language transfer.

**Q5--Is the use of the French language in favor of learning English considered positive or negative?**

A : « I would not describe it "in favor"; it is the reality that imposes the use of the French language because there are some regions in Algeria where French is still the first language even before Arabic, so, in this case, French should be taught and given importance before English. There are some administrations that still issue papers in the French Language, and there are Algerian students who wish to pursue their studies in France. We cannot deny the position this language holds in our society. The problem, I believe, is in the way we consider this language; we are, up to now, thinking about it from a historical point of view. We relate it to the history of colonization; however, it is time to change our minds and attitudes. I do not see it as a competition between the two languages or their use from negative or positive angles. Both languages are of two ex-colonizing powers. So, I suggest that we must look at the two languages from a pragmatic standpoint; to use them for the purpose to build strong educational, cultural, economic, scientific, and political systems. »

B : « Neutra »

In the light of what informant A said and, consequently, of her representations, several observations are confirmed: among others, the deep-rootedness of the French language and its interest in spite of the ideological aspect that many people in Algeria assign to it. It is about this image which consists in judging the French as being a language of the colonizer which must be annihilated ..... This negative representation related to the history of Algeria which was colonized by the French during 132 years, thus they consider this language as an enemy far from any objectivity which implies to dissociate one from the other. a language is a richness; we can keep our language and learn those of the others; inter alia, that of the enemies; that will granulate a soul. To understand the other, even an enemy or simply a rival, the knowledge of its language is an asset that can serve as a means to understand and detect the strategies of others and benefit from it; it is the least benefit that could counter this negative representation of a historical nature and which led several Algerians to fight against this language which continues to exist as demonstrated by informant A in her remarks in all regions of Algeria and in the use covers several domains and even at the level of official correspondence of the Algerian ministry.

Subsequently, the informant calls for a reconsideration of the place and values assigned to foreign languages and insists on the fact that it is necessary to distance oneself from these negative attitudes and to try to give back to each language its interest.

Consequently, we note that French is already present everywhere, which confirms our hypothesis that French is an asset and a prerequisite that can serve as an economic and profitable gateway to access English in general in our society, which is known for the richness of its sociolinguistic landscape, and in particular for French-speaking students learning English at the centre for intensive language teaching at the university of Oum El Bouaghi.

**LQ6--What are its downsides its long-term impact?**

A : « - I don't see any downsides except in the way we treat the French Language. If we see it as a simple foreign language that may serve communicative purposes; it is fine and we may overcome all the obstacles. If we regard it as a prestigious language and a superior language; we will never advance. »

B : « Any foreign language is a merit that should be promoted and well planned in language policy regardless of personal preferences. »

**Q7--How can we use the language acquisition in French for the benefit of learning English?**

A : « - If our children get exposed to English language at an early age, they would acquire it in the same way French language is acquired. »

B : « If a learner already masters French, that is a positive gain that will help with the learning of English. »

In response to this important question, because it aims to identify, according to the representations of our informants, the strategies or means of exploiting, in particular, the linguistic preacquisites in order to transfer them positively with the intention of building a strategic gateway allowing a mastery not only of English, which is required nowadays, but particularly a rapid and effective access to meet the requirements of the international market. This is what the teacher-trainer informant tried to specify while considering the previous mastery or the little or important knowledge of French as a "positive gain" fortifying the good mastery of the language to which he is exposed and supposed to master. Informant A, who, according to her previous answers, supports the main idea that the transfer from French to English is possible and positive because it contributes enormously to the mastery of English, assumes that if Algerian speakers are exposed to both English and French at the same time, they will certainly master English as well as French. It remains to be said that studies and research are essential to affirm or confirm this hypothesis because the motives, status and realities of life of these two foreign languages are not identical; we have already mentioned the historical context of the introduction of French in Algeria which makes its position, its existence rooted unlike English. This does not deny that the proximity between the two languages can justify the possibility of maintaining this hypothesis

always referring to the principle of linguistic transfer which will exploit the omnipresence of French for a mastery of English without evoking or specifying the situation if it is of a formal or non-formal nature.

In this respect, we would say that the age, the learning situation, formal or not, will certainly lead to a nuanced quality of mastery.

**Q8--Is there a similarity between the two languages?What linguistic aspect do the two languages converge on?**

A : « - French and English are two different languages because they derive from two different families; French from Latin and English from Anglo-Saxon. I'm not a linguist to draw up the similarities and differences between the two languages, so, I'm not sure about my ability to answer this question. »

B : « Yes, there is a similarity in some aspects of grammar as both languages are SVO structures but there is a wide range of vocabulary that is shared by the two languages. »

**Q9--Does your prior linguistic knowledge of French help you to be able to understand the language more effectively or constructively?**

A : « - Yes, it does »

B : « Yes, I agree »

Following this question, all the answers were positive; the teachers have several years of experience (teaching English to adult Franco-Arabic speakers), their levels and knowledge of this language are advanced, and they have also learned French in a school context at different levels; as an example, informant A has had the opportunity, as we have already pointed out, to obtain an academic degree with distinction, followed by studies in French language studies.

**Q10--What is the language aspect that is difficult to control in English?**

A : « - Phonetics (word stress, intonation, sentence stress...)

-Analysis of certain results and their interpretation in the light of problematic, hypotheses and previous data. »

B : « Pronunciation, connected speech and phrasal verbs. »

The responses of both informants A and B come together to delineate, in general, the phonetic aspect as the most difficult in mastering English; thus A details that in relation to the phonetics of the English language; it is difficult to master the accentuation of words, the intonation, and the accentuation of sentences.

**- Q11- How can French be used and exploited today as a language supportive of the rapid and effective learning of other foreign languages, particularly English in Algeria and especially at the level of intensive language education centres?**

A : « - Sometimes, the French language is useful when it helps to teach EFL. When students cannot understand, French can be used to explain. Translation can also be used to enhance the understanding of the students. »

B : « Algeria being a former French colony, French is historically part of the Algerian dialect and, more importantly, about 7 million Algerians live in France. The latter have family ties with the inhabitants of Algeria. French cannot therefore be dissociated from Algerian education or history. »

It turns out that informants A and B are in complete agreement that French is a beneficial language and an effective way to master English quickly without wasting time reviewing rules and skills. In other words, the similarity between the grammatical rules, the vocabulary between English and French on several levels, even if it means nuances and some important phonological and phonetic differences, contribute enormously to the rapid and economic mastery of English, especially through the transfer of these.

In fact, B supports his remarks referring to the interest of French as a gateway to the effective mastery of English in Algeria by arguing that French exists in the daily conversations of Algerians since its presence dates back to the French colonization of Algeria which lasted for a long time (132 years) before Algeria gained its independence. This justifies, according to him, the omnipresence of the French language in the linguistic landscape of the country, adding that about 7 million Algerians live in France today as immigrants and that French is historically part of the Algerian dialect, so it is logically inseparable from Algerian teaching and history. - Another secondary question to the general problem of our study:

**Q12- A :« -For a student who has previous acquisitions and skills in French and who learns English at the Intensive Language Education Centre in Algeria, can he use the language skills previously acquired in French as a first foreign language to acquire and master the English language, which is required today by the global linguistic market and such a university in terms of upgrading the university and Algerian society to the world class?**

A : « Yes, strategies and tools used in learning the French language as a foreign language can be useful in EFL class. The methods and approaches to learning foreign languages are almost the same and if the student is familiar with them, they would take advantage of them to increase the chance to master English. »

B : « Yes, I agree. »

The result is that the transfer of French to English is a positive and beneficial phenomenon that can be exploited for an efficient and economic mastery of English at the CIEL and why not in all Algerian universities aspiring to the integration of English to promote other international universities and to impose itself modialistically by

responding precipitately to the requirements of the world market.

**Q13-Is language transfer positive or negative in the learning process-teaching English to Francophone?**

. A : « - I think for adult students does not cause any problem. »

Promoting transfers, and therefore the coherence of learning among students, also means saving effort. This means, above all: seize opportunities to start from the "already there", do you agree or not? Explain how! »

In all cases, when we teach foreign languages, there is always "already there". The student is not a tabula rasa, they have backgrounds and prior knowledge that would be very useful for developing their own strategy for learning. Teachers, in modern methods, should not focus on one precise method or technique, they should rely on any tool that might help them convey the message and transfer can be one of these tools. »

B : « Transfer is positive when the learned item is identical in both languages and it will be negative if the target item is not identical in terms of the rule device. »

In the light of the responses obtained, we deduce that the linguistic transfer from French to English is a positive aspect according to the replies of the two informants, and Teacher A adds that adults are more likely to take advantage of it and exploit its potential; in other words, she thinks that age is a very important factor for the learner to be able to benefit from his or her prerequisites in the French language and to take advantage of it as much as possible in order to master the English language.

In fact, we can explain this by the fact that the cerebral placticity of an adult -who is supposed to have already learned at least two languages; Arabic being his mother tongue, and French as his first foreign language- is more important and contributes effectively in the processes of positive transfer of knowledge learned in French to English.

**Q2; How could exploiting the linguistic transfer from French to English through the comparison of similar words between them help learners to economise their efforts?**

There are many related words in English and French (Walter, 2001). Examining these words with the student will arouse their interest and curiosity about languages and language learning. However, if the student is unaware that two languages may have elements in common, the

However, if the student is not aware that two languages may have elements in common, they will not be open to the idea that languages may be similar (Kellerman, 1983). This is why the systematic teaching of aspects of the language of schooling is beneficial for the student

### **Q1. Is language transfer positive or negative in the learning process-teaching English to phroncophones?**

The learner can transfer one or the other of these aspects of the language, whether superficially, by mobilizing low-level cognitive processes, or conceptually, more deeply, by mobilizing high-level cognitive processes. Moreover, depending on whether the transferred aspect is similar or different in the two languages in contact, the result of the transfer will be positive or negative. There is a positive transfer when the transferred element is similar in both languages. Although positive transfers are frequent, they are often imperceptible. The student realizes that he has made a positive transfer by asking himself questions and reflecting. There is a negative transfer when a linguistic aspect exists only in one of the two languages or when it is used differently in both languages: the learner mistakenly assumes, consciously or not, that an element applies in both languages. Although negative transfers are less frequent than positive transfers, they are easier to notice since they are usually manifest. They are also often difficult to correct, unless the learner is led to become aware of the reason for this negative transfer.

#### **Discussion :**

There may also be transfers between languages of different origin, particularly in the case of conceptual transfers. Although English belongs to the Germanic languages and French to the Romance languages, they have many aspects in common due to their frequent and prolonged contacts throughout history. "French is the most Germanic of the Romance languages and English is the most Romance of the Germanic languages" (Walter, 2001).

English and French have much in common, both culturally and linguistically, given their closely related pasts (wars, conquests, trade, etc.). The examination of the similarities between French and English cultures and languages by the student promotes the transfer of language learning and the acquisition of metalinguistic skills.

#### **Conclusion :**

Language transfer is an important part of the learning process which the teacher must take into account in order to better integrate the learner's knowledge (linguistic, sociolinguistic, cultural, etc.). Thus, when the teacher invites the learner to reflect on languages, to consider them as organised systems with similarities and differences between them, the student learns to consciously use the foundations acquired in foreign language 1 to compare his/her second foreign language. This results in a transfer of learning that not only helps the student to broaden his or her knowledge of the world, but also to develop and refine his or her time- and effort-

saving cognitive strategies. Research has shown that when teachers are concerned with making explicit connections between learners' learning, learners respond positively and actively engage in more intellectually demanding processes. Several researchers are interested in language teaching and question the role of transfer of learning between the learner's mother tongue and the language learned in the school context. We have tried to contribute to these studies by looking at the transfer of knowledge acquired, particularly linguistic knowledge, in foreign language 1 to foreign language 2 in a purely Algerian context. We can already suggest that the foreign language 1 of the Algerian learner of English would provide valuable prior knowledge that would be enriched by the learning of the second language, especially in the case of proximity between the two linguistic systems, French and English.

#### **Perspectives :**

From these representations of languages and language learning expressed by teachers, we can see the need to equip them with specific didactic tools to enable them to manage their own language and to provide them with specific didactic tools to enable them to manage the similarities and differences between L1 and L2 at different levels of language organisation .

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